

**‘Conflict Management Approaches in Palestinian Baptist intra-church conflict
in Israel between 1990 and 2016, in Dialogue with Miroslav Volf’s Theology of
Reconciliation: an Analysis and Critical Evaluation’**

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ABSTRACT

In the early 1990s, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, changed its global philosophy of ministry and withdrew from direct involvement in the Baptist churches it planted, including in Israel. Around the same time, local churches started to split.

This research project seeks to contribute towards a solution to this problem by asking and answering both a sociological and a theological question: Sociologically, what are the nature and causes of the splits and how do Palestinian Baptist churches manage such intra-church conflict? Theologically, what are the desirable conflict management practices and how should they be adapted to local cultural traditions? The primary purpose of this research is to generate a local theory regarding a Palestinian theology of reconciliation which is both theologically and culturally relevant.

This thesis argues that the primary factor for church splits is the clash between the pastors’ legacy of a ‘hierarchical-patriarchal’ approach and the younger generation’s ‘Congregationalist-democratic’ approach, both grounded in, but each offering a different interpretation of Christian *theology* and Arab *culture*. It identifies four conflict management practices that are implemented by Palestinian Baptists in Israeli and holds that the main reason that the conflicts have not been resolved effectively is the clash between contenders’ interpretations of theology and culture. The pastors’ cultural-theological approach is a combination of traditional *sulha* and hierarchical theology that was customary in traditional Palestinian churches. By contrast, the younger generation’s cultural-theological approach is a combination of alternative-legalist and Western-Baptist.

The thesis examines the relevance of Miroslav Volf’s theology of reconciliation for the cases at hand. It argues that the model is indeed pertinent to Palestinian Baptists in Israel, who are in the process of investing new meanings into their theology of reconciliation. Yet, in order to be applicable to this context it requires cultural translation in eight elements: formality, dignity, venting, community, church practices, the not necessarily linear nature of the reconciliation process, to view divine justice as compatible with divine love and thus not separate them during conflict, and since conditional and unconditional forgiveness have much in common and differ in the way reconciliation is realized the focus should be on achieving reconciliation.

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Critical Evaluation’**

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DECLARATIONS

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed  (Candidate)
Date 4/2/2018

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if approved, to be available for photocopying by the British Library and for Inter-Library Loan, for open access to the Electronic Theses Online Service (EthoS) linked to the British Library, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organizations.

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DEDICATION

To

The Arabic Church

*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the
ministry of reconciliation.*

2 Corinthians 5:18

For

My Sons

*The world tells us to seek success, power and money; God tells us to seek
humility, service and love.*

-Pope Francis

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
BCI	Baptist Convention in Israel
CECI	the Convention of Evangelical Churches in Israel
CSTC	Christian Service Training Center
ESV	English Standard Version of the Bible
IMB	the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in the US
NEC	Nazareth Evangelical College
OCMS	Oxford Centre for Mission Studies
TRC	the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Chapter One

1. Introduction

In the early 1990s, missionary organizations operating in Israel changed their philosophy of ministry and withdrew from direct involvement in the churches they had planted. This change, along with other cultural, theological and economic factors, led to splits/exits among more than 50% of the Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel.¹

The Palestinian evangelical churches in Israel, as a multicultural minority,² have a growing potential to influence Israeli society by dialoguing effectively with non-Protestant Christians, Muslims and Jews and by playing an essential role in reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. Nonetheless, Christian disunity and divisions in Israel/Palestine raise questions about their credibility before Muslims and Jews.

The need in my country breaks my heart and has provoked me to contribute to the solution. As a public prosecutor with 13 years of experience I realize that the traditional legal system gives limited solutions, for it only deals with the symptoms of the conflicts. There is a need to look for the sources of the conflicts in order to fully resolve them.

It is my desire to see growth in healthy churches instead of churches with unresolved conflicts splitting with lots of pain, as the situation is today within Palestinian evangelical churches in Israel. As a Palestinian evangelical woman, I have seen many conflicts addressed unsuccessfully without the contribution of women.

¹ In this research church *split* refers to the exodus of unsatisfied members and leaders resulting in a church splitting into two. Church *exit* refers to an unsatisfied leader who leaves church with his family and founds a new church or joins another church's leadership.

² Palestinian Arab Christians in Israel are exposed to various cultures: Muslim Arabic, Israeli Jewish and that of Western missionaries. See Chapters Three and Four.

A new approach for resolving intra-church conflicts between Palestinian evangelicals in Israel is needed. This is where a Palestinian theology of reconciliation becomes highly relevant and necessary.

My project is to understand the local causes and implications of church splits/exits,³ and to articulate a culturally-compatible theological model of reconciliation in Palestinian Baptist churches. I theologically evaluate the practices of Palestinian Baptist churches using Miroslav Volf's model, and evaluate his model in light of these practices in terms of its cultural suitability to the Palestinian context. This thesis is also an attempt to fill some of the gaps in the academic body of knowledge on the theology of reconciliation. The local knowledge and practices of conflict management represented in the findings presented here inform Volf's theory.

1.1 Research Question

What are the nature, causes and managements of intra-church conflict within the Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel and how can they handle them in the most effective ways? How might Volf's theory further illuminate Palestinian theology of reconciliation and how might it inform his theory?

The first half of the thesis (Chapters Two to Five) is considerably contextual in form and content. I focus on the context of Palestinian Baptists and explore the environment, nature, causes and managements of intra-church conflict in three cases of church splits. In the second half (Chapters Six to Nine) I relate the findings to Volf's theological model of reconciliation. I examine the existing practices of church conflict management in the Palestinian Baptist context (bottom-up models) in light of Volf's theory (top-down model), and also critically evaluate its applicability in this context. My goal is to see how his theory might further illuminate or deepen the understanding

³ Splits or exits are not unique to Palestinians but actually characterize Baptist churches in general.

of reconciliation in this context and how the context might inform his theory. The primary purpose of this research is to generate a local theory regarding Palestinian theology of reconciliation which is both *theologically and culturally* relevant.

In this chapter I briefly describe the literature on Palestinian Christian context, Palestinian Arab culture, church conflict and Volf's theology of reconciliation to give an introductory theoretical background to this research. Nonetheless, since the secondary literature plays a decisive role in each chapter, the literature will be discussed in more depth in the main body of the thesis, rather than presenting a detailed 'literature review' chapter.

1.2 Arab Palestinian Evangelical Christians in Israel

Arab Palestinian Christians in Israel have been isolated from the majority of their culture through long centuries of Muslim rule, exacerbated by the effects of the *millet* system under Turkish rule which was then adapted by the British Mandate and later by the State of Israel.⁴ In addition to this, Arab Palestinian evangelicals in particular have been further isolated three times over as a minority (Tsimhoni 2002).⁵ First, as Arab Palestinians they are an ethnic minority among Jewish citizens in Israel,⁶ a 'trapped

⁴*Millet*- The word *millet* comes from the Arabic word *millah* (ملة) and literally means 'nation'. It refers to the separate legal courts under which communities (Muslim Sharia, Christian Canon law and Jewish Halakha law abiding) were allowed to rule themselves under their own system. After the Ottoman Tanzimat (1839–76) reforms, the term was used for legally protected religious minority groups. Under Muslim rule Arab Christians survived by paying a special tax (*jizya*) which supposedly allowed Jews and Christians (*dhimmi*) to keep their religions. It did not always guarantee their safety, so that times of relative peace alternated with times of persecution. Despite their minority status, Arab and Syriac Christians contributed in a significant way to the golden era of Arab civilization. Until 1917 the Ottoman authorities implemented the *millet* system, which gave Christian communities authority to administer themselves. However, this only isolated the Christian minority even further and was undoubtedly a political strategy to 'divide and conquer' the Christian communities. The modernization of the Ottoman Empire led to a new era of Arab political activism. Christians were able to participate in a growing Arab nationalist movement. This offered them the means of escape from their *dhimmi* status (Zaky 2007). Influenced to some extent by education conducted by missionaries, Christians were at the forefront of efforts to create secular, nationalistic political orders (Bat Ye'or 2001, Cragg 1991, Sharkey 2012, Jenkins 2008, Bailey and Bailey 2003, Khūry 2006, Mansour 2004).

⁵ See Appendix 1.

⁶ 20% of the total population in Israel (8 million) are Arabs. Palestinians in Israel are discriminated against in practice in almost all aspects of life. They remained under military rule until 1966, and even

minority’ as Rabinowitz (2001) describes them.⁷ Second, as Christians they are a religious minority among Arab Muslims.⁸ Third, as evangelicals they are a denominational minority among Arab Christians.⁹ In all of life, political, social and religious, Palestinian evangelicals in Israel form a unique minority with a very complex identity: Arab, Palestinian, Israeli, Christian and evangelical.¹⁰ Being a three-fold trapped minority with an identity crisis will be discussed in Chapter Three as one of the factors that influenced the Palestinian Baptist response to church conflict.

1.3 Palestinian Arab Culture

‘Culture means humanity’ according to Barth’s definition (1962:338). In other words humanity does not live in culture, but its very being is actualized and concretized as culture. If humanity is a gift from God, then culture is also a gift from God. Yu argues, ‘All culture, no matter how inadequate, aims to achieve a certain degree of wholeness for human existence. The wholeness of humanity however can only be found in the fulfilment of humanity as the image of God. The image is not in man; it is man’ (2000:82).

after that suffered from lack of government funding and development opportunities. Furthermore, some laws are declaratively discriminative on religious-ethnic grounds (Benziman and Mansour 1992).

⁷ According to Rabinowitz, ‘The concept of “trapped minority”, developed herein from an analysis of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, adds to this debate. A trapped minority is a segment of a larger group spread across at least two states. Citizens of a state hegemonized by others, its members are alienated from political power. Unable to influence the definition of public goods or enjoy them, its members are at the same time marginal within their mother nation abroad’ (2001:64).

⁸ 9.7% of the non-Jewish population (which is predominantly Muslim Arab) are Christians (Statistical Abstract of Israel 2010).

⁹ At the beginning of the 21st Century the mainline Protestant churches still preserve a strong presence in Israel/Palestine, mainly through their education and health institutions. In Israel the growing Protestant churches are the evangelical denominations: Baptist, Assemblies of God, Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches, Nazarene Churches and Brethren Congregations. These denominations consist in general of independent congregations, connected together in an association called the Convention of Evangelical Churches in Israel (CECI). While missionaries were the main decision-makers in these churches until recently, missionaries now play either a smaller role or no role at all. It should be mentioned that these churches are not recognized officially by the state of Israel. Only 4% of the Christian Arabs in Israel are evangelicals, the others being Oriental or Greek Orthodox, Catholic, or non-evangelical Protestants (Lutherans, Anglicans).

¹⁰ Palestinian Christians are a distinctive ethno-religious group in Israeli society and, to a large extent, in other Middle Eastern countries (Munayer 2000). Palestinian Christians’ differentiation has been accompanied in the last decades by considerable tension in its relationships with both Israeli Jews and Muslim Arabs.

I present two values of Arab Palestinian culture which are relevant to this research. Understanding these values helped me to understand how the participants in this study made certain decisions during and post-conflict.

1.3.1 Patriarchal relations

The family is the basic unit of social organization and production in traditional and contemporary Arab society. It is patriarchal; pyramidally hierarchical, particularly with respect to sex and age; and extended (Barakat 1993:23, Dodd 1973).

Literature concerning Middle Eastern dispute resolution traditions has stressed the superiority of the family, with its strong patriarchal orientation, as a main social structure in many Arab cultures (Joseph 1996, Joseph 1999, Barakat 1993, Abu-Lughod 1989) including the Palestinian community in Israel (Jabbour 1993, Sa'ar 2001). The success or failure of an individual member becomes that of the family as a whole.¹¹

This centrality of the family as the basic socioeconomic unit is now being increasingly challenged by the state and other social institutions, both internal and external confrontations that Arab families are facing, and the struggle for social transformation (Barakat 1993, Abu-Lughod 1989, Sa'ar 2001). Nonetheless the network of interdependent kinship relations continues to prevail. The father continues to wield authority, assume responsibility for the family, and expect respect and unquestioning compliance with his instructions (Barakat 1993). Thus the continued dominance of the family as the basic unit of social organization and production has contributed to the diffusion of patriarchal relations to similar situations within other social, religious, and political institutions such as work, school, and church. In all of these, 'A father figure rules over others, monopolizing authority, expecting strict obedience, and showing little

¹¹ Dodd (1973) states, 'Members of a family share responsibilities and duties, and enjoy its successes and failures. They feel proud when a member of the family achieves success, and feel ashamed when a member of the family fails... If some member of the family... does something shameful; this is considered a disgrace to the whole family. Therefore, the relationships between members of the family are simply relations between interconnected members of a cohesive unit. Each member plays his/her role, but remains closely linked to roles of the other members' (43).

tolerance of dissent' (Barakat 1993:23). According to Barakat, those in leadership positions such as leaders, employers and supervisors, fill the top of the pyramid of authority, 'Once in this position, the patriarch cannot be dethroned except by someone who is equally patriarchal' (1993:23). Hisham Sharabi (1988) claims that because of the prevailing patriarchy, modernization has failed to break down patriarchal relations and forms, creating the present neo-patriarchal society, which is neither traditional nor modern, and which limits participation by its members because of the continued dominance exercised by single leaders.¹²

Regarding Palestinian families in Israeli Sa'ar (2001) states:

The Israeli-Palestinian families tend to be nuclear units that are embedded to different degrees, within patrilineal kinship networks, in which new and old concepts of familial relations are constantly being renegotiated. These networks resemble the classic Middle Eastern patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1988: 278) in the dynamics of power relations and co-operation between their segments as well as in the values of honour, shame, and group solidarity (728).

Yet despite the predominance of patriarchy, it is noteworthy that solidarity to a hierarchical group exists alongside a seemingly opposing force - an egalitarianism that encourages competition within the group (individualism) (Sa'ar 2001). Sa'ar points out that 'Arabs are seen and see themselves as highly egalitarian, with a strong sense of self and a strong drive for individual autonomy. At the same time, they are also group-oriented, highly committed to their families (Ginat 1997, Ibn Khaldun 1967).' This dual principle is largely applicable to Palestinians in Israel also.¹³ This is evident in the young laity's respect to their pastors (compromise and saving face), and yet requires them to share power, as discussed in Chapter Four.

1.3.2 Honour and shame

Pierre Bourdieu (1965) claims that honour is mostly found in societies where relationships with others have primacy over relationships with oneself. In communal

¹² Sharabi calls it 'dependent modernization'.

¹³ Sa'ar points out that, in the case of men, 'The seeming contradiction between the norms of group loyalty and individualism is resolved, Men's normative striving for freedom and their proud competitive spirit therefore frame their loyalty and sacrifice as investments rather than as altruism' (Sa'ar 2000: chap. 5).

culture, where family and community are considered more important than individual autonomy, honour will likely be the guiding norm for its members. A member of a community that places high value on honour and shame will ask not if a given action is 'right' but rather if it 'looks good', especially seeking to make his/her closest kin look good (Baker 2003:23).

Western scholarship has often claimed that one of the differences between Arab and Western culture is the emphasis in Arab culture on shame versus Western culture's focus on guilt. Shame/guilt play an important role in conflict management by encouraging opposing parties to cease their fighting without dishonour and shame. However, contemporary scholarship now problematizes this simplistic dichotomy. Barakat (1993) suggests that Arabs exhibit both shame and guilt-oriented behaviour. They do not necessarily experience guilt feelings about the same issues that motivate guilt in Westerners, such as sexual conduct. Arabs experience great guilt when they violate internalized values and expectations such as disappointing their parents, neglecting their friends, harming innocent people, or promoting themselves at the expense of others or of their country (196).¹⁴ Though honour/shame sentiments are most frequently described in communities in the Mediterranean region, honour is highly valued in many different parts of the world, and can be said to play a role in all cultures, albeit to varying extents and at different points in history (Slaughter 1993:193, Smith 2004:110, Kraft 2007:136).¹⁵

Dignity is important to every human being and any threat provokes a strong reaction. When a relationship has been broken, affirmation of dignity in others is essential for releasing the pain especially when conflict was caused by dignity

¹⁴ According to Barakat (1993), many Arabs living abroad experience extreme feelings of guilt about forsaking their countries, particularly in times of distress (197).

¹⁵ In fact, there is evidence to suggest that honour/shame sentiments are growing in importance in the West even as they lose their centrality in communities only now coming into increased contact with modernization (deSilva 2000:26-27).

violations (Hicks 2011). Honour/shame is evident in the data as seen in Chapter Five and in the theological discussion. However, the meaning differs between the pastors, who viewed dignity/shame as a fundamental factor in conflict management, and young laity who focus more on their rights rather than on honour/shame.

The above presentation shows, perhaps against simplistic stereotypes, Arab-Palestinian culture is complex. While in some matters it gives prominence to the values of honour and shame (indication of outward, collectivist orientation), in others it actually inculcates guilt (indication of inward, individualistic orientation), likewise with respect to collectivism and individualism.

Barakat suggests that traditional values continue to prevail, but that is not what distinguishes Arab culture. While the ongoing struggle between opposing value orientations such as shame versus guilt or collectivism versus individualism continues, this is a transitional period (1993:197), the impact of which is clearly discernible in church conflict.

1.4 Church Conflict

1.4.1 The nature of church conflict

The existing literature in the field of local church conflict reveals a lack of practical models available to researchers for understanding both what transpires during church fights and the fundamental nature of conflict.¹⁶ The existing literature has helpful suggestions but does not fully examine the nature of conflict. Leas (1985) provides a framework for identifying the different levels of intensity of conflict. Friedman (1985) deals with church conflict from a psychological perspective. Brubaker

¹⁶ The definition of conflict has several elements: Conflict is an intense form of interaction. Conflict involves two or more parties who have opposed interests and they engage in action directed to the defence of their interests. Conflict is a pattern of interaction that is personal, aware and intermittent (Weber 1947). Conflict is a struggle over things that are perceived as important. These may include values, beliefs, claims of status, power and resources, which one individual wishes to gain over another individual. Another interesting definition, 'Conflict is a group process that is shaped by members' understanding about the nature of authority and by their own commitment and that in most cases articulates and reinforces a public consensus on "how we do things here"' (Becker 1999:43).

(2009) deals with structure and power in church. Becker et al. (1993) have identified three broad domains for conflict: cultural, economic and administrative issues. Becker (1999) distinguishes between two types of conflict, within-frame conflict and between-frame conflict. Like Becker, Rothman and Olson (2001) mention the two types but they prefer the terms ‘interest-based conflicts’ and ‘identity-based conflicts.’¹⁷

1.4.2 The resolution of church conflict

Various authors have written works on the resolution of church conflict, such as Leas and Kittlaus (1973), Parsons (1989), McCollough (1990), Qualben (1991), Halverstadt (1991) and Hausken (1992). Some others deal with conflict from a biblical perspective, such as Flynn (1992), Gunnink (1989), and Sande (2004). All are excellent works but are nevertheless conducted in a Western context. Most works used in an Arab context are simply Arabic translations of Western-oriented literature. There is therefore a need for research into the nature of church conflict that is conducted in an Arabic context, especially with regard to Arab Palestinian evangelical churches about which no research has been done in the area of conflict and culture.

1.4.3 Conflict and power

Regarding the relationship between power and conflict, Blalock (1989) states, ‘Power and conflict processes are so closely intertwined that they cannot be separated without doing injustice to the one topic or the other’ (vii). He adds the concept of power is essential in analysing social processes such as conflict (26). Himes (1980) defines conflict in terms of power, ‘Purposeful struggles between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power, resources and other scarce values’ (14).

¹⁷ According to Rothman and Olson (2001), in defining identity-based conflicts, ‘Issues are abstract, complex, and difficult to define. Desired outcomes are intangible and difficult to identify... involve interpretive dynamics of history, psychology, culture, values, and beliefs of groups that are often, at least initially, framed in ways that are mutually exclusive’ (2001:297).

In the existing literature on church conflict, a few authors link power to church conflicts.¹⁸ Wallace (1982) believes conflict is inevitable and suggests dealing with it by understanding of abusive power, ‘Conflict is intrinsically related to power. Every conflict involves the use of power. But no organization can exist or function without power, and the church is an organization’ (47). He proposes four general causes of conflict: (a) the abuse of power, (b) the assignment of power, (c) the assumption of power, and (d) the absence of power.

Max Weber’s (1947) typology of power authority is categorized into three types: (1) legal or rational authority¹⁹ (positional power), (2) traditional authority,²⁰ (3) charismatic authority.²¹ Oswald et al. (2003) describe different forms of power within the church. They note structural power (or authority) is formal power people have as long as they hold a certain office. People who occupy important roles within a congregation have greater access to the other currencies of power. Individuals who hold certain roles for many years are very powerful. Often, congregational leaders are not able to remove them from office because they possess huge amounts of informal power within the system. They are well known (reputational power). They have access to many informal groups in the parish (coalitional people in power). They know most of

¹⁸ As Russell (1938) notes, the concept of power is key to understanding the nature of social actions. Thus, power can be used to describe goal-oriented, social activity in any culture. In church also congregants involve themselves in actions to pursue goals, whether they are generally stated purposes of the group or their own personal desires. Thus, if the Church is to understand the dynamics of social activity such as conflict, it must understand the nature of power and how people use it.

¹⁹ Legal authority organizational power tends to be impersonal. Decisions, rules, policies, and administrative acts are made to impose the will of the organization upon the individual or group submitting. It is the antithesis of legal/organizational authority and traditional authority (Weber 1947).

²⁰ Traditional authority is based upon traditional rules and regulations that have been transmitted through cultural values from generation to generation. As opposed to organizational power, this authority rests in a ‘traditional status’ (Weber 1947:341) and is cultivated by personal relationships developed through personal loyalty, not through organizational hierarchy. Thus, the leader is perceived as a ‘chief.’

²¹ Charismatic authority is ‘A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities’ (Weber 1947:358). Charismatic authority is a social phenomenon, not a power that exists or resides within a person. Thus, as the group acknowledges and follows the charismatic leader, authoritative power is created.

the congregants and know who to talk to when their position is threatened (communicational power).

Brubaker (2009) notes structure is important in any organizational system because it formally situates power (authority). A clear decision-making structure communicates who has the right to make certain decisions. Thus, power that is seen as legitimate is less likely to be challenged. He adds, a healthy structure both confers power and limits its exercise and that bylaws exist in part to protect the church and congregants from the abuse of power by individual members. Structure allocates power; so when we mess with power arrangements we should expect conflict (39-40).

As will be demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, pastors and laity misused or abused power. The structural imbalance in power between the pastor and laity is a manifestation of the huge difference between their *theologies and cultures*.

1.4.4 Church split/exit: impact of congregational characteristics

Chou (2008) explores factors that put congregations at a higher risk of developing conflict-related exit, including the characteristics of their leaders, the social composition of their members, and their theological perspectives.

1.4.4.1 Perceived legitimacy of leaders

Research has shown that many intra-congregational conflicts are related to religious leadership (Becker 1998, 1999, Herman 1984, Shin and Park 1988, Wood 1981). The stability of congregations is affected by their leaders (pastors, priests, etc.). The willingness of members to follow these leaders depends on the leaders' legitimacy in their eyes (Collins 1975). Based on all that has been studied thus far, older, male, more experienced, and more educated leaders have more legitimacy than younger, female, less experienced, and less educated ones (Chou 2008). Shin and Park (1988) found that in Korean American churches, the stability of congregations is positively related to the educational level of the head pastor. The legitimacy of leaders also grows

with age and tenure. Conflict-related exit is more likely to occur after the arrival of a young, newly ordained minister (Becker 1999, Herman 1984). This element was seen in one of the cases in this research, where the younger generation rebelled against their pastor who was less educated.

1.4.4.2 Social homogeneity of members

Collins (1975) argues that members who share similar cultural backgrounds are more loyal to their organizations. Since members of diverse social backgrounds have different lifestyles and expectations, congregations with diverse members are more likely to experience conflict-related exit. There are two possible causes of group homogeneity in voluntary associations such as congregations. First, new members are recruited mainly through the network ties of existing members particularly if their socio-demographic characteristics resemble those of older members. Second, members who are similar to the rest of the group are more likely to stay, while those who are atypical tend to leave (Popielarz and McPherson 1995). Therefore, voluntary associations, including congregations, tend to be homogeneous.²² Groups with other kinds of social diversity are also less likely to reach consensus and more likely to experience conflicts.²³

1.4.4.3 The charismatic movement

A congregation's members are more likely to comply with leaders who have important resources such as exclusive control over information in areas of uncertainty (Collins 1975). Therefore, congregations are more likely to experience internal conflict

²² Other researches show that there is more conflict in congregations with greater racial diversity (Emerson and Smith 2000).

²³ Becker (1999) examines intra-congregational conflicts by classifying congregations into different types: house of worship, family, community, and leader models. Becker found that the quantity and quality of intra-congregational conflicts are associated with these congregational models. For example, community congregations have twice the number of conflicts as family congregations. Additionally, family congregations are more likely to fight over church buildings, while community and leader congregations tend to disagree on contemporary social issues. Becker argues that local congregational cultures reflected in these models explain intra-congregational conflicts better than other variables such as size, polity, and liberal or conservative orientation that assume a homogeneous effect on intra-congregational conflicts.

when they contain members who feel that they have access to ‘special revelations.’ The rise of the charismatic movement,²⁴ with its emphasis on individual subjective experience, spontaneity, lay participation, and less emphasis on formal church regulation, has caused challenges for many congregations (Francis, et al. 2000, Jaichandran and Madhav 2003, Poloma 1982).²⁵ In this research the charismatic influence contributed to both tensions and conflict resolution.

There are several reasons why congregations affected by the charismatic movement are more vulnerable to internal conflicts. First, the charismatic movement places more emphasis on individual, subjective experience. Since individual experiences and interpretations may vary, congregations are more likely to experience conflict when a consensus cannot be reached and each experience and interpretation is equally valued. Second, the charismatic movement encourages lay participation and places less value on hierarchical or formal authority.²⁶ This type of structure is more prone to intra-congregational conflicts than a centralized and hierarchical structure (Chou 2008).

Multivariate analysis of data from the National Congregations Study (NCS) shows that the probability of conflict-related exit is lower among congregations with older leaders and racially/economically homogeneous members, and is higher among congregations involved with the charismatic movement (Chou 2008).²⁷

²⁴The charismatic movement began around 1960 among Protestants and in 1967 among Roman Catholics. It refers to groups that emphasize the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and healing. They believe that miracles and other supernatural occurrences, such as prophecy and healing, are expected to be present in the lives of Christians.

²⁵ Although research has found that congregations affected by the charismatic movement show greater membership growth (Francis, et al. 2000), many experience conflicts (Starke and Dyck 1996).

²⁶ Some argue that the emphasis on shared eldership came from Brethren leaders who became charismatic in the 1960s.

²⁷ Researchers have argued that theologically liberal congregations are prone to intra-congregational conflicts (Hoge 1976, Roof 1978, Takayama 1980), an argument which is supported by empirical research (Becker 1998, Hoge 1976). In this research, however, Zionist theology was identified as one of the main causes of conflict in one church, though not one of the case-studies.

1.5 Theology of Reconciliation

1.5.1 Introduction

What is a theology of reconciliation? Can we put such a theology into practice? What implications would it have for Palestinian Christian ministries and church conflicts in the midst of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict?²⁸

Numerous scholars with experience of world conflict situations have contributed to the development of such a theology. I neither intend in this thesis to explore the biblical roots nor to list all contributions to this field. However, I will mention some of them.

Generally theologians have focused on ‘vertical’ reconciliation between humanity and God, with very little having been done on the ‘horizontal’ reconciliation between peoples (Volf 1999). The understanding of the social aspect of the theology of reconciliation as a secondary result of personal salvation (vertical) as opposed to an inherent aspect of reconciliation with God (horizontal) has caused debates among theologians (Robinson 2014).

Theologians such as Gunton (2003) and Webster (2003) discuss reconciliation primarily as a vertical concept with the horizontal seen as secondary. Torrance (2006) offers a horizontal and vertical view of reconciliation theology, seeing the ministry of reconciliation as God’s way of aiding humanity. In these writings reconciliation is initiated by God alone. Schreier (1998) agrees with this approach, but sees it as extending to the community. On the other side of the debate are theologians such as Volf, Tutu and De Gruchy, who see the horizontal aspect of reconciliation as being an undeniable part of the vertical, believing there is a danger that reconciliation’s social

²⁸ Throughout the last century, the Israeli-Palestinian situation has been shaped by violence, cultural, economic and religious division. Christians have lived as minority groups on both sides of the conflict. Their desire for acknowledgment within the broader Israeli and Palestinian society has sometimes caused them to become more disconnected. Contemporary theological positions have also strengthened the concerns of each cultural group. However, different nations within the international community have taken different sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sometimes making the situation worse.

implications are left to politics while its vertical ideals are exemplified theologically (Robinson 2014).

Scholars use different concepts to define their perspectives on reconciliation theology, including repentance, apology, forgiveness, justice, truth, and peace. Some associate reconciliation with forgiveness and repentance. Liechty (2006), in the Northern Ireland context, sees reconciliation as involving the complementary dynamic of *forgiveness and repentance*. Schreiter (1998) takes the same approach, however, seeing reconciliation taking place with an initiation from God leading the victim who receives divine healing to forgive and this forgiveness in turn inspiring repentance.

Other scholars associate reconciliation with *justice and truth*. DeGruchy (2002), in the South African context, sees justice as the primary element in reconciliation. For him reconciliation is the restoration of justice, which means reestablishment of broken relationships, and truth acts as liberator if it works alongside justice and reconciliation. Isasi-Diaz (2006) sees reconciliation under the category of justice. Volf (1999) argues against these approaches, believing a focus on justice only will eventually lead to injustice and this is why justice should be at work under the greater structure of reconciliation. However, Volf and DeGruchy agree that the meaning of the main concepts in theology of reconciliation is relative to the particularities of a social context, DeGruchy in the South African and Volf in the Croatian contexts. Like DeGruchy, in the South African context, Volf addresses the tension between liberation and reconciliation theologies by analysing the Kairos Document, which places justice and peace as opposing concepts within the larger pursuit of reconciliation as if pursuing reconciliation means giving up the struggle for liberation.

Some scholars, such as Liechty (2006) and Clegg (2006) in the Northern Ireland context, use various concepts to explain the theology of reconciliation seeing the uniting dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth, and justice as interconnected. Volf adds the

concepts of remembrance and embrace to these. Lederach (1997) also created a creative model that shows how certain elements work together in bringing reconciliation: truth, mercy, justice, and peace.²⁹ Stevens (2004) and Liechty (2006) amended Lederach's model to include forgiveness and repentance as opposed to mercy and peace. Liechty argues that Lederach model's strength is best when all components work together equally. Stevens discusses the inherent tensions between justice/truth and peace/mercy.

Robinson (2014), through her work on reconciliation in Northern Ireland, proposes a model that takes into account the influence of the social context on theological understandings of reconciliation. This model uses the four most common concepts from reconciliation theology: truth, justice, repentance, and forgiveness. The concepts are divided into two tendencies: truth and justice (liberating tendencies) and repentance and forgiveness (atoning tendencies), which exist under the umbrella of reconciliation theology. The movement within the theology of reconciliation when influenced by the social context is seen in a modified version of Lederach's model that takes into account a sliding scale model of the swing from an emphasis on liberating tendencies (truth and justice) with a goal of freedom, to atoning tendencies (repentance and forgiveness) with a goal of peace. An emphasis on one tendency in any given context is based on the goal of those who are adhering to the theology. If the goal is freedom in a given context then there is a move towards liberating tendencies. If the desired goal is peace, then one sees a movement towards atoning tendencies. The above presentation shows that work is still ongoing in the understanding of the field of theology of reconciliation and its contested themes.

²⁹ Based on Psalm 85:10.

1.5.2 Palestinian Protestant theology of reconciliation³⁰

Katanacho (2008, 2013) finds that Palestinian Protestant theology of reconciliation exists in five major forms: *biographies*, *apologies*, *liberation theology*, *reconciliation theologies* and *Kairos theology*.

First, *biographies*, such as those of Chacour (2001, 2003), Rantisi (1990), and Raheb (2004), among others, provide personal accounts and reflections. Raheb and Rantisi describe the hardships of living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank. These writings promote peace and human dignity instead of war, advocating a loving God instead of a militant one and making theology relevant to culture. They raise thoughtful questions about the justice of God. The biographers, argues Katanacho (2008) present the issues in very general terms: Palestinians are the oppressed; Israelis are the oppressors. They over emphasize cultural concerns and have very limited insights concerning the biblical interpretation, especially of militant Judaism.

Second the *Apologies*, such as Shorosh (1979, 1988, and 2002) and Shehadeh (1986, 1990), are theologically supportive of a national Jewish state and find it difficult to find a theological justification for a Palestinian one. This belief, accompanied by sharp criticism of Islam, hinders their effectiveness among Palestinians. The spread of dispensationalism among Palestinian Evangelicals and its widespread influence in Israel have provoked a Palestinian Christian response, such as Katanacho (2013) and Isaac (2015) who advocate a Christological ownership of the land and provides a biblical study responding to dispensational Zionism.

Third, *liberation theology*, as Ateek (1989, 2017) one of the main pillars of contemporary Palestinian theology explains, 'is a way of speaking prophetically and contextually to a particular situation, especially where oppression, suffering, and

³⁰ In the early 1990s Palestinian contemporary theology started to be developed by pastors and activists who had mostly received their education in western universities.

injustice have long reigned' (1989:6). He calls to 'de-stereotype' Western images of the people of the Middle East, to 'de-zionize' the Bible, and to 'de-mythologize' the State of Israel (1989:159). Ateek focuses much of his attention on truth and justice as essential precursors to peace; for him peace begins by doing justice. Nonetheless, Ateek's socio-political justice does not present the full picture of biblical justice. Raheb (1995) is another important voice advocating Palestinian Liberation Theology. Raheb adds that, due to hermeneutical flaws, post-Auschwitz theology has not paid sufficient attention to Palestinian sufferings. Thus, he suggests corrective interpretive principles that are more sensitive to Palestinian cultural concerns. He concludes that the Church must be consumed with the promotion of justice and righteousness in creative, nonviolent resistance, which will eventually lead to peace and coexistence between two equal peoples in Israel/Palestine.

Fourth, *reconciliation theologies: sulha* theology (*sulha* means reconciliation and it is the traditional Palestinian model) and *Musalaha* theology (*Musalaha* means reconciliation). *Sulha* theology focuses on Christian-Muslim Relations. Abu El-Assal (1999) and Younan (2003) are examples of *sulha* theologians. They highlight the common ground between Christians and Muslims, focusing on coexistence and the significance of dialogue and compromise so as to avoid confrontations. Younan tries to provide an incarnational model that is less offensive to non-Christians by underemphasizing the sinfulness of humanity and the need for salvation. *Sulha* theologians have contributed to building bridges with Muslims, but it seems that they tend to compromise their doctrine (Katanacho 2008).

Musalaha theology focusses on Messianic Jewish and Palestinian evangelicals' relationships, an approach adopted by Massad (2000) and Munayer (1995). Massad (2000) focuses on forgiveness and repentance and makes justice *unnecessary* to reconciliation. He attempts to reconcile Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews along

the following lines: ‘Let us pursue not justice but a community of love. We will never reach perfect justice, but let us pursue confession, repentance, forgiveness, and love, which will prepare us to embrace one another as members of one body and will allow us to experience reconciliation.’³¹ Unlike Massad, Munayer (Munayer and Loden 2014) asserts that justice is a necessary condition for reconciliation, agreeing with Volf that there can be no justice without embrace and no genuine embrace without justice. Munayer clarifies that the cross ‘models a response’ for reconciling Arabs and Jews. First, it transforms our identity from sinners, victims, or oppressors into atoned and redeemed followers of Christ. Then it transforms how we interpret our reality and prompts us to view others in relation to creation and redemption. It equally requires forgiveness, restitution, and a favourable socio-political atmosphere (Munayer 1998).

Fifth, of the *Palestinian Kairos theology*, Katanacho (2013) sees that the Kairos focuses on faith, love, hope, the mission of the church, and the mission of the land, and develops the political reading of the Bible into an ecumenical post-liberal theo-political reading. It starts by describing the current painful reality of Palestinians using biblical categories in a healthy dialogue between the contemporary reality and the biblical reality, and presents unapologetically a theocentric reality, rooted in God the Creator and in our saviour Jesus Christ. It prioritizes and seeks socio-political justice.

As we have seen, different voices from various contexts and cultures have contributed to the field of theology of reconciliation. In this research I will bring an additional Palestinian perspective of reconciliation theology. My contribution differs from the above theologians in that it is done in a different situation, namely the Palestinian political context and culture. It also differs from the Palestinian theologians in that I neither conduct my research with regard to the inter-ethnic conflict nor the Christian-Muslim or Messianic-Palestinian evangelical relations. I examine Palestinian

³¹ Massad (2000:273-274), as cited in Katanacho (2008).

theology of reconciliation the way Palestinian Baptists perceive it with regard to church conflict and culture. In my discussion I look into the transportability of Miroslav Volf's model from an inter-ethnic conflict to one that takes place within a single church and a single ethnic group, which is nevertheless embedded in an intractable ethno-national conflict. This indeed should be one of the contributions of the thesis – the transportability of the model to a different cultural setting and also the lessons that this particular theology can contribute to (ethnic) conflict resolution on a much deeper level. Additionally, my research generates a local theory regarding Palestinian theology of reconciliation as well as informs Volf's model.

1.5.3 Miroslav Volf's theology of reconciliation

My decision to draw upon Volf's theology of reconciliation implies the analysis will be undertaken from a Protestant perspective; the horizontal element is intrinsic to the vertical element of reconciliation; that truth, justice, repentance and forgiveness are significant concepts within his theology of reconciliation.

Volf's context has a uniquely blended perspective and identity. He is well-placed to examine theology from a non-Western perspective, as Croatian, while simultaneously speaking as an insider to the West, as American.³²

Among contemporary theologians, Volf has made a significant contribution to the topic of reconciliation.³³ Volf was reared in a Baptist tradition. He developed his

³² Miroslav Volf is the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, and Director of the Yale Centre for Faith and Culture. He received his B.A. from the Evangelical-Theological Faculty in Osijek, Croatia, his M.A. from Fuller Theological Seminary, and his doctoral and post-doctoral degrees (with highest honours) from the University of Tübingen, Germany. He has written and edited more than 15 books and over 70 scholarly articles. His most significant books include *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996); *After Our Likeness* (1998) (an exploration of the Trinitarian nature of ecclesial community); *Allah: A Christian Response* (2011) (an exploration of whether Muslims and Christians have a common God); *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work; A Public Faith: On How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (2011), *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (2005) (this book was commissioned as the Archbishop's Official 2006 Lent Book); and *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (2006). Yale Center for Faith and Culture, 'Miroslav Volf', Yale Divinity School [web site] <http://faith.yale.edu/people/miroslav-volf>. Accessed 21 March 2016.

theology of reconciliation in a context of the Balkan war and out of a deep concern for the implications of the Christian faith for the contemporary world.³⁴ He addresses the question of the social meaning of reconciliation from various angles, and offers strong, biblical grounds for his theology.

I briefly present the key themes that emerge from Volf's work in relation to a theology of reconciliation between peoples. (1) *Remembrance*: Volf suggests that we need to remember wrongdoings rightly, an act which involves four elements - remembering truthfully, therapeutically, responsibly and in reconciling ways. (2) *Forgiveness*: is an unconditional divine gift, God forgives and we make God's forgiveness our own and pass it on. (3) *Justice*: can only be pursued adequately within the horizon of the will to embrace, yet embrace is conditioned by the realization of justice. (4) *Embrace*: involves the will to readjust our identity and make space for 'the other.' It symbolizes four requirements: opening arms, waiting, closing arms and opening of arms again. These themes are 'easy to formulate, but complicated to fully understand and difficult to practice' (Volf 2015:175). They will be discussed, applied and evaluated in the analysis of the conflict management approaches of Palestinian Baptists in Chapters Six to Nine.

³³ His book *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* received the 2002 Grawemeyer Award, which is awarded annually by Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the University of Louisville, and also was selected among the 100 best religious books of the 20th century by Christianity Today. This book was the product of a challenge that Moltmann posed to him in 1993: 'But can you embrace a četnik?' (Referring to the Serbian fighters who were known for the murder, rape and destruction of his people); (Volf 1996:9). Through his response and his continued reflection regarding the responsibility of Christians in a violent world, Volf has become known for his deeply challenging call to forgiveness and 'embrace.' 'The book focuses on exclusion between groups of people and reaches back to the New Testament metaphor of salvation as reconciliation. It offers the idea of embrace as a theological response to the problem of the alienation of peoples' Yale Center for Faith and Culture, 'Miroslav Volf', Yale Divinity School [web site] <http://faith.yale.edu/people/miroslav-volf-> Accessed 21 March 2016.

³⁴ Volf was born in Osijek, Croatia surrounded by different religions (Traditional Christians and Muslims) and ethnicities (Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians). Much of his reflection has grown out of his observation of the war that took place in his homeland for many years.

1.6 Plan of the thesis

Following this introduction, which forms Chapter One of the thesis, in Chapter Two, I explain the three phases of my research plan, my methodological decisions and my own position in the field.

Chapter Three gives an outline of the main features of the institutional field of Baptist churches in Israel, including structures of power, protagonists, main splits, and the main discursive issues that preoccupy the community – first among them identity. The flat structure and the absence of a Patriarch in a patriarchal community, the low level of institutionalization and lack of assets, the pastors' struggle over livelihood and power, and the young laity's 'rebellion' against patriarchy 'encouraged' splits/exits.

In Chapter Four I analyse the nature and causes of intra-church conflict in three case-studies (case-A, case-B, case-C) of churches that split. I argue that the clash between the pastors and laity is in fact a clash between each side's strong combination of its *theology and culture* working against the other side. The pastors were influenced theologically by non-evangelical traditional Palestinian churches and culturally by patriarchal-hierarchical tradition (combined powerfully to strengthen their desire to maintain their dominant position at church). The younger generation who rebelled against their pastors were influenced culturally by Western-secular ideas of individual rights and democracy, and theologically by Baptist theology, in which they justified their demands to sharing power in terms of 'priesthood of all believers.'

In Chapter Five I argue that these same main factors of *theology and culture* contributed to the ways the conflicts were dealt with from the perspective of the pastor and the perspective of the laity. Again because of the clash of those factors from each side, the conflicts were not resolved effectively. This chapter reveals that in resolving church conflict, Palestinian Baptists engage in four different practices, all operating in the field, each with a distinct (sometimes contradictory) perception, tradition and

approach to conflict resolution. There are two *cultural* approaches: (1) Israeli litigation/alternative-legal approach, (2) Palestinian traditional *sulha* approach; and two *theological* approaches: (1) hierarchical traditional Palestinian Church approach and, (2) Western-Baptist approach. The pastors' *cultural-theological* approach is *sulha* and hierarchical-traditional Palestinian church. The laity's *cultural-theological* approach is alternative-legalistic and Western-Baptist. In the case-studies a shift is observed from the first-generation (traditional), desiring to maintain the status quo, to the younger generation (modern culture), seeking change and power.

I also argue that the pastors and laity held different implicit theologies of forgiveness and reconciliation which were all imperfect. *Sulha* lacks internal forgiveness and justice. Alternative-legalistic prioritizes justice over relationships. In the hierarchical approach the pastor is the one who implements justice and the laity is expected to obey. Western Baptist theology is more individualistic and lacks some aspects of Palestinian culture. This calls for a more comprehensive reconciliation theology. Volf's theory might contribute to the solution as I show in the second half of the thesis.

In Chapters Six to Nine I progress to the theological discussion. In these chapters we see the fundamental significance of the combination of *theology and culture*. Nonetheless, this time the combination is necessary to the solution. I theologially evaluate the four conflict management approaches used by Palestinian Baptists during their church conflicts, in terms of Volf's four themes (in Chapter Six I discuss remembrance; in Chapter Seven, forgiveness; in Chapter Eight, justice; and in Chapter Nine, embrace).

I also evaluate the applicability of these theological themes within the Palestinian Baptist context and argue that Volf's *theological* model needs *cultural* translation in order to be applicable to this context.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, I bring together the whole thesis, summarising the arguments and findings, presenting my recommendations, emphasising the contribution of the work, its limitations and imperfections, and recommend further research in some areas.

Chapter Two

2. Methodology

In this chapter I first explain my epistemological perspective. Then I describe the methodological decisions made and why. After that I describe the three phases of my research plan. This is followed by a discussion of ethical concerns, including the choice to study a sensitive topic. Finally, I discuss my own position in the field and how this influenced my own reflexivity in collecting and analysing the data.

2.1 Theoretical Framework and Epistemological Perspective

2.1.1 Practical theology

This research is located in practical theology. Practical theology is a complex theological enterprise (Swinton & Mowat 2006). It draws from the empirical research methods of the social sciences in order to explore and describe the nature of values, religious beliefs and practices (Kurian 2012). While biblical studies interpret Scripture and systematic theology interprets doctrine and tradition, practical theology interprets practice within the context of the Church and the reign of God. It examines theories and assumptions underlying that practice, discerns discrepancies and points to alternatives.

Practical theology dialogues with the other theological disciplines. It is located within the tension between the script of revelation (scripture, doctrine and tradition) and the continuing innovative performance of the gospel (Swinton & Mowat 2006). It is both theoretical inquiry (understanding, evaluating, criticizing) and practical discipline (guiding, transforming of practices) holding theory and practice together in creative tension.

2.1.2 Epistemological perspective

The epistemological position I take in this research is a Palestinian evangelical. Like Jones and Yarhouse (2000) I advocate critical realism: ‘We are critical realists which means that we believe that there is a real world out there where it is possible to

know and know truly (“realism”), but we also believe that our theories and hypotheses about that world, and our religious presuppositions and beliefs about reality, colour and shape our capacity to know the world (“critical realism”)' (14-15).

I have a theocentric view of the natural world and my evangelical understanding is affected by my experience, culture, personal belief and background.³⁵ I am neither a theologian nor a sociologist; I am a socio-theologian. Volf’s approach works well with this – for him practice and belief are always interconnected and Volf talks about both, calling for a specific practice in light of a Christian faith (2002).

Another issue to discuss is my bias which is part of a conscious choice to do a theologically-committed, action-oriented research. Researcher bias happens when the researcher’s personal beliefs, experiences, and values influence the study methodology and results. The insider researcher should take care to avoid directing the researcher’s own viewpoint onto interviewees or data analysis. When an insider researcher overcomes personal bias, richer themes may be explored (Smyth and Holian 2008). Multiple sources of data and methods of data collection, sharing and checking interpretations with informants, and the support of my advisory team helped me to overcome my bias as an insider.

2.2 Choice of Qualitative Methodology and Methods Used in the Study

2.2.1 Theology and fieldwork

In this research I want to understand how Palestinian Baptists relate to church conflict; I want to explore the complexity of their situation as a threefold trapped minority, while managing their church conflicts. Systematic theology is relevant to

³⁵ As someone whose childhood faith formation was in the Greek Orthodox Church, my theological agency is shaped by sacramental sense in a way that is different to my current Baptist church. I have carried that in my flesh from Orthodox tradition to Baptist tradition, and it has managed to stay alive despite the transition. Because *habitus* is not only generated by field practice but can also be transposed across them, similarities appear across different fields that have little or no relationship to each other (Wigg-Stevenson 2014).

reflect on their practices theologically, but not as a way to frame the complex formation of their lived situation (Fulkerson 2007:8-9). Volf argues that often theologians have done theology as a theoretical science, which has contributed to a sense that theology is unrelated to real life. I agree with Volf that the purpose of theology is not simply to deliver knowledge about God, but to serve a way of life (2002:247). Fieldwork has the potential to close the gap between what we say about the church and how we act as the church. When theologians look at complex realities of local ecclesial situations like those of the Palestinian Baptists, this may help in doing theology that serves the church and God's redemptive work in the world.³⁶

Scharen (2015) argues the social science of Pierre Bourdieu suggests a way to do fieldwork in theology which may serve the church to get involved in what God is doing in the world (5). Bourdieu's approach to fieldwork includes interviewing, participation and other research methods. It also includes theoretical concepts such as *capital*, *field* and *habitus* and methodological frames such as *reflexivity*, 'Yet it is grounded even for Bourdieu in a religious frame, making clear his openness to move in the direction of fieldwork in theology' (112).

With regard to *habitus*, Paul Fiddes (2012) speaks about an interaction between the ecclesial model of the body of Christ and models of body developed in the social sciences, such as *habitus*, which are likely to be drawn on in empirical studies:

For instance, there is the model of body *habitus*. The self is understood as an 'embodied history' where the body is a site in which social structures are internalised over a length of time. Social customs and conventions are 'written' on the body, and this *habitus* determines our response to the situation in which we are placed. What is learned by the body, Bourdieu comments, is not something that one has but something that one is. The *habitus* is thus an embodied 'system of structured,

³⁶ Over the past several decades, theologians have turned to methodologies from social sciences to better understand how cultural situations shape lived faith such as found in the church. This has both complicated and constructed new theological thinking for contemporary ecclesiology. While much theological research has been concentrated on systematic and philosophic theology as its primary discussion in the mid-twentieth century, it presents again a tension between the particular and the universal in theological reflection. In the 1980s a turn to practice began; theologians began to think critically about the dynamic relationship between faith and action. Some claim that a turn to culture and practice could bridge the gap between academic theology and the lived experience of actual churches (Snyder 2014).

structuring dispositions, which is constituted in practice and is always orientated towards practical functions' [Bourdieu 1997]. Bourdieu aims to overcome the dualism between subject and object and there is obvious overlap here with the Christian model of the body of Christ, which is as we have seen a highly participative idea (32).

For the last several decades practical theologians, theological ethicists and liberation theologians have used ethnography for theological reflection; they use ethnographic research methods for creating thick descriptions that ground their projects, seeking to establish 'what is' before engaging theological resources to argue for 'what ought to be.' There is a new theological ethnography movement that claims a field of study can have 'embedded and embodied within its life substantive contributions to theology and ethics' (Wigg-Stevenson 2014:167).³⁷ I agree that the turn to fieldwork in the study of the church is an encouraging development in contemporary ecclesiology. According to Snyder, 'Pluralism and modernity have challenged old lines of authority, a history of colonization demands healthy practices of humility' (2014:5), but perhaps also de-colonization of the mind, as it were, by bringing power and history into the analysis.

The purpose of this research is to analyse conflict management approaches of Palestinian Baptist intra-church conflict in Israel and the development of a culturally-compatible theological model of reconciliation in churches.

Bourdieu's theory of practice enriches the conceptual framework of understanding social and cultural practices in wider institutional and cultural contexts. I follow Bourdieu's approach. I use multiple qualitative methods to create thick descriptions:³⁸ participant-observation, case-studies, semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, recording, writing field notes, field-mapping, relevant documents and a focus group. I

³⁷ In the early 2000s, a number of young scholars started to accept ethnographic methods as a way of grounding their theological work. They developed theoretical and theological arguments for theology as ethnography and not only applied from social science, they understand ethnographic studies as theological work (Snyder 2014).

³⁸ Qualitative research is referred to in social science as interpretive or descriptive research (Denzin and Lincoln 2003:4) and involves the collection, study, and analysis of empirical materials; it is phenomenological, inductive, explanatory, and process oriented.

will explain each data collection technique (field-mapping and case-studies will be discussed in Section 2.3).

2.2.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is an important tool in this research. In keeping with the holistic understanding of knowledge presented above it allows one to trace non-verbal knowledge, including embodied, symbolic, and practical knowledge. Juxtaposing these forms of knowledge to what I then obtained from formal interviews and documents allowed me to see gaps and contradictions. According to Bourdieu the language of the body is more ambiguous and more overdetermined than ordinary language (1977:120). It reveals the multiple voices and interpretations that always exist within a single cultural setting, and people's agency in negotiating meaning, interest, and power. Hence it opens a window into the culture's internal mechanisms of both change and reproduction. As I explain in Chapters Three and Four, participant observation attempts to understand the multilevel influences of historical, theological, social, economic, cultural, and ecological systems of subjects' perspectives and behaviours. Bourdieu suggests that we should examine actual performance, body movements and investigate the way in which nearly all important categories, such as ritual, are 'based on movements or postures of the human body, such as going up and coming down... going to the left then going to the right, going in, coming out... sitting and standing...' (1977:119). He asserts that the dialectical relationship between the body and a socially structured space is important in the 'embodying of the structures of the world... Thus practices take on objective meanings, and classification schemes are embodied in the world of objects... it is not that one causes the other, but that both are structured by dispositions' (1977:89-91).

Keeping a field diary in which I also recorded my ongoing thoughts, informal conversations, visits to church services, attendance of church business meetings,

conferences and meetings of the Association of Baptist churches in Israel (ABC), as well as scattered events that are less directly related, allowed me to identify key symbols and contradictions in the field.

2.2.3 Interviews

The interviews began in February 2014 and continued through to August 2016. In the field-mapping phase I completed 16 semi-structured interviews with current pastors. All these interviews took place at my office; some of them were face to face, and the rest were through phone conversations. I wrote the answers in a notebook. I also conducted 17 in-depth interviews with leaders, pastors and missionaries. The majority of interviewees were men. Further, I conducted another four open interviews with denominational leaders and pastors from other Arab countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt for comparison.

Table 2.1 Field-mapping interviews

Semi-structured interview	Pastors	16
In-depth interview	Pastors	5
	Lay leaders	5
	Women	4
	Missionary	3
Open-interview, other countries	Pastor + 2 leaders	3
	Woman	1
	Total	37

Additionally, for the three case-studies phase, I completed 54 in-depth interviews with those involved in church conflicts, ranging in age from 30-85.

Table 2.2 Case-studies interviews³⁹

	Case-A		Case-B		Case-C	
	A	A2	B	B2	C3	C2
Church						
Pastors	7	2	1		1	
Lay people	1	7	1	2		2
Women	2	7	2	3	1	1
Missionaries	3					
Third-party	6		2		3	
Total	35		11		8	

Most case-A in-depth interviews were conducted at my office or at the participant's house (this mainly applied to pastors and women of senior age). In case-B and case-C I travelled to homes for interviews. I interviewed three people using Skype video call, two through phone calls and three via email. Most of the interviews were recorded but three people preferred I took notes. Throughout the study, assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were given to all participants due to the sensitive nature of the topic within a small intertwined community. One leader requested that I delete his interview a few days later, explaining that his relationship with his pastor is very good and he did not want any written document to portray a different view.

I interviewed couples together mainly when I interviewed pastors and their wives in their homes. The wives' presence often helped to build trust quickly and develop a comfortable conversation. Some wives tended to add additional details and provided

³⁹ I will give further details regarding the differences in the numbers of the interviews in Section 2.2.3.

different insights. Sometimes important information was mentioned that the pastor would not have shared if we had been alone.⁴⁰

I chose an open-ended interview style, in which participants were asked to tell me about the conflict leading to the church split. Most of the topics I wanted to cover had been covered by the end of the interviews. I also pursued follow-up interviews to clarify emerging themes.⁴¹ The interviews took from one to three hours to complete and were conducted in Arabic, and in English for missionaries. The interview transcripts were typed. Shortly afterward I would typically write additional notes and observations while the interview was fresh in my mind.⁴² My notes and the transcripts were written in Arabic; therefore, the quotes presented in the thesis are my translation of the records. I was committed to remain true to the narrative provided by participants in both transcribing and translating.

2.2.4 Textual resources

Material collected from the field research included reports and church records, mission records, church and ABC business meeting protocols, letters, third-party reports, emails and sermons.

2.2.5 Focus group

The focus group was held after the primary analysis of the data collected via the interviews, observations and documents, and served for triangulation. This was the last method; it enabled me to observe personal interactions between participants, and assisted me in clarifying what had been said before (Morgan 1988). The focus group meeting was held in a seminary. Six participants came – three seminary professors and

⁴⁰ In one case a pastor's son joined the conversation and added information the pastor was not comfortable mentioning.

⁴¹ I had a few follow-up interviews during 2016-2017.

⁴² Miles and Huberman note that 'Write-ups usually add back some of the missing content; raw field notes stimulate remembering things' (1994:51).

three ABC leaders; all except one are Palestinian Baptist leaders. The meeting was held only to discuss the relevance of Volf's four themes to their context.

2.3 Research Plan

The research plan is designed to follow two main phases of fieldwork; a third phase of study involves a theoretical analysis.

2.3.1 First phase: field-mapping

Since there were no existent studies on Palestinian Baptist church conflict, the field-mapping was exploratory and aimed at identifying factors affecting intra-congregational conflicts that result in members' exit or church split. Field-mapping is also an effective and helpful method to identify general patterns and categories to be used in case selection in the second phase. I focus on 18 Baptist churches which are connected together under the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel (ABC), and represent 60% of Palestinian evangelicals in Israeli.⁴³

Topics discussed in the field-mapping interviews:

- 1) Congregational demographics: size, church membership⁴⁴/attendance,⁴⁵ ages, gender, and location (urban, rural, mixed town).
- 2) Congregational structure: plural/single elder leadership.
- 3) Types of capital: economic (building, local/foreign funds), cultural, symbolic, social.
- 4) Congregational change: projects, pastor/staff turnover, attendance, decision-making patterns.

⁴³ The rest of the evangelicals in Israel are: Assemblies of God, Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches, Nazarene Churches and Brethren Congregations.

⁴⁴ Baptist churches count members according to people who request membership and only after they are baptised as adults.

⁴⁵ People who attend church on a regular basis include: members, children (not yet baptised and therefore not members) and others who prefer to remain members in their mother traditional churches for different reasons.

- 5) Congregational conflict: personal differences, leadership style, lay/clergy, building, finances, generational, new/old members.
- 6) Conflict outcomes: a split, pastor/leader exit,⁴⁶ resolution without damage, relationships damaged but no departure, new procedures/structure developed.
- 7) Third-party intervention: ABC, missionaries, other individuals.

2.3.2 Second phase: case-studies

Based on the field-mapping, I selected three case-studies from the 18 churches according to the categories listed in the following table. Since the initial mapping revealed that a main element in church conflict is generational (younger generation rebelling against older pastors) this became a criterion in the case selection. In this phase I analysed the nature, causes and management of conflict in three cases. The following table presents the different cases.

Table 2.3 Categories used in case selection

Category	Case-A	Case-B	Case-C
Generation of pastors	First-generation	Second-generation	Second-generation
Generation of members	First, second and third-generation	Mostly second-generation, some third-generation	Mostly third-generation, some second-generation
Church location	Town	Town	Town
Church Size	100 members 150 attenders	50-60 members	50-60 members
Age of conflict	Very old ⁴⁷	Fairly old	Recent
Property	Church building	Church building	No church building

⁴⁶ Exit to another church or establish a new church/ministry.

⁴⁷ Although the conflict took place many years ago interviewees were able to describe many details of the conflict. In addition, many protocols and documents from locals and missionaries were helpful in providing information about this conflict.

2.3.3 Third Phase: theoretical analysis

This phase involves a theoretical analysis using Volf's theological model of reconciliation. His model is particularly relevant because he broadly belongs to the same theological tradition as the churches I am studying, namely Baptist. Additionally, his model emphasizes the issues so central to Palestinian evangelicals in Israel, namely identity and culture. Volf's model is normative theology and proposes a way of reconciliation. As all theological discourse comes from cultural settings, I will examine the applicability of his model in the Palestinian context.

2.4 Content Analysis

Content analysis is described as a process of identifying patterns and themes in experiences of the nature of conflict and conflict management practices. As I did my analysis, I tried to understand deeply both the given meanings and find hidden meanings (Josselson 2004:21).

I followed a coding procedure to analyse transcripts of interviews, field notes and relevant documents. I entered them into a qualitative data analysis program called MAXQDA-11. It is a functional program that works well as a filing system and helps by keeping interviews and documents reasonably organized with names and dates in the computer. MAXQDA-11 is useful for quickly accessing different parts of the interviews, but not for actual analysis. Therefore, the main part of my analysis involved reading interview texts, taking notes both on the transcripts and in my notebook, drawing charts and tables to organize my thoughts in order to explore themes.

I started the coding by analysing a whole sentence or paragraph.⁴⁸ While coding a sentence or paragraph, I asked, 'What is the major idea brought out in this sentence or

⁴⁸ Coding began with selecting sentences, or ideas, from the interviews. Coding progressed to more abstract levels where text segments are integrated into working categories and concepts establishing linkages between code and categories and arriving at one or several core categories that represent the central category.

paragraph?’, then gave it a name. Afterward I undertook more detailed analysis of that concept. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998:120) this approach to coding is useful when the researcher already has several categories and wants to code especially in relation to them. Using this approach I identified many concepts, I grouped them in subcategories and then in categories.

The delicate relationship with the interviewees does raise concerns about the conclusions of the research. I know there are people who are waiting for the results and desire to use the information to strengthen the churches. However, I also think they expect me to reach certain conclusions and if I produce a conclusion that differs to their expectations, I am concerned about their reaction. I have a good personal relationship with some of the participants, a few are close relatives or were even my pastors, and therefore there is a natural preoccupation that this could affect our relationship. I am also worried about what constitutes a proper use of the trust they have placed in me, particularly those who shared openly, perhaps, because they expect me to consider their opinion. I tried to relate to the data with academic integrity, without damaging the trust given to me during the interviews, keeping in mind that helping churches in my community will involve raising questions of *criticism*. At the same time, I tried not to be *judgmental*.

2.5 Research Ethics

In fieldwork there are ethical considerations that must be taken into account, especially with a sensitive topic such as church conflict, and this was done in accordance with the regulations of the institution supervising the research. As an insider researcher I have taken this concern seriously, exercising maximal caution. Assurances of confidentiality were given to all participants. I have changed the names of the informants, churches and locations to protect the identities of those involved.

I believe this research has great potential to benefit the researched community. More importantly, perhaps, I decided to study this topic after hearing, a few years earlier, some leaders/pastors who expressed concern about the ongoing splits. Before starting this project, I consulted with the ABC about conducting the research within its 18 churches. They were happy to give me permission. I was surprised by the openness of participants to share about their church conflict.⁴⁹ Most of them were sad about the church splits of the last 25 years. Some of them were still hurt from such experiences. In general, most expressed their wishes that these conflicts end and saw potential benefit in this research.

I considered all the ethical issues such as honesty, privacy and responsibility, which are inseparable from any research. As a lawyer and mediator, I tried to avoid providing consultation to churches regarding current problems. I introduced my research at the ABC during a strategic planning conference in 2014. I was asked several questions about the research and its benefits to the ABC. Furthermore, during my observation in a meeting of the ABC-Committee regarding the conflict in case-C, I sat at a distance taking notes without participating. As the only woman in the room, I believe my presence affected the meeting in some way. Later, I was asked by a member of the ABC-Committee to act as a mediator between Pastor-C and the ABC. Following the policy I stated above, my response was negative.⁵⁰ I did not interfere with any situation relating to the cases throughout the research process.

⁴⁹ With a two exceptions: one interviewee was not comfortable to be interviewed and only got back to me after three days emphasising the fact that she was ready to be interviewed only because of the benefit this research would bring. Another man was hesitant to meet me; after we scheduled a date he called and cancelled.

⁵⁰ However, I had mixed feelings: should not that have been a great opportunity to observe conflict management practices closer? After consulting my supervisor I decided not to accept the position and remained an observer.

2.6 My Own Position in the Field

In qualitative research the researcher is an irreducible part of any study of social reality. As such, it is important that observers be clear about their own social and cultural location to make their research credible. Researchers take on a variety of roles in the research setting. These roles can extend from an insider to an outsider (Adler and Adler 1994). In general insider-researchers study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group (Breen 2007). Nonetheless, I agree with Hellowell (2006) that instead of worrying over whether one is more of an insider or outsider, researchers should insist on being both. There is much to be gained from being close to one's research and keeping one's distance and having an outside perspective. Narayan (1993) suggests that writing texts that mix lively narrative and rigorous analysis involves enacting hybridity, regardless of our origins or being either an insider or outsider.

Chavez (2008) argues that unlike traditional training for outsider researchers that starts with 'getting to know the field,' insider scholars need to get into their own heads first to know in which ways they are similar/different from their participants and which of their social identities can advantage or complicate the process (491). I approach this study as a Palestinian Baptist woman who lives in Israel. I am thus an *insider* to this community, politically, culturally and religiously. Since the late 1980s, I have attended a Baptist church though not one included in this research. After marriage, I became a member of one of the Baptist churches that had split from the mother church three years previously. My husband and I were not involved in the conflict in any way and I knew only minimal details about it.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to being an insider-researcher. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) identified three key advantages of being an insider-researcher: (1) having a better understanding and sensitivity both of and to the culture,

speaking the same language and understanding local values, (2) not changing the flow of social interaction unnaturally, and (3) having an established profound closeness which assists the telling and the judging of truth. Further, insider researchers generally know the politics of the institution, the formal and informal power structure and know how and where to reach the right people and get easy access to documents (Unluer 2012, Smyth and Holian 2008).⁵¹

I know many of the participants, and thus during the data collection process my requests were almost never rejected. Additionally, being married to an ABC leader was beneficial in establishing a good position and of course having excellent access to textual resources. For example, leaders of the ABC and the churches that split very generously gave copies of different documents and forwarded many relevant emails. When I wanted to set interview times they reacted positively and quickly, showing respect by sharing their narratives and expressing willingness to be observed in their churches. Many church members shared information and allocated time for this project on a voluntary basis. I could easily complete the missing data by asking for clarification. I had spontaneous conversations with leaders and members which enriched the data.

Another important advantage was knowledge of the personality of participants which assisted the interactions between us.⁵² Additionally, knowing what was happening in the ABC in general, as an insider, helped me to give meaning to implicit messages and provide clarification.

⁵¹ Insider researchers have the advantage of being accepted as political allies unlike outsider researchers. Insider researchers are working in the midst of long term relationships which extend beyond a research relationship, because they involve their families, communities, organizations, and local networks (Smith 1999:15).

⁵² For example, one of the interviewees has a hearing problem and was not responding to my questions directly himself. His wife often jumped in and answered 'for him'. If I had not known his disability, I would probably have had a different analysis.

In this manner, I succeeded in collecting valid data; I believe I made good use of these advantages which an outsider in such a study might not have experienced.

Although there are various advantages to being an insider, there are also disadvantages. One clear disadvantage is the lack of detachment from the field which can cause issues including: overlooking certain routine behaviours, making assumptions about the meanings of events and not seeking clarification, and assuming to know participants' views and issues. Participants may also tend to assume an insider already knows what they know, closeness to the situation hindering the researcher from seeing all dimensions of the bigger picture while collecting the data. Greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity (Unluer 2012, Smyth and Holian 2008).

An insider will likely have more difficulty in being objective in analysing a community than an outsider, but many native researchers question such an assumption. Gatson and Zweerink (2004), native researchers, suggest there is a difference between compartmentalizing their roles as researcher and insider, and denying the one to excel at the other (Kraft 2007:68). As an insider, I do not claim to be objective but rather strive to have two roles.

Smith (1999) recognizes that no indigenous researcher is fully an insider.⁵³ The critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity. Based on my experience in this research, I propose that defining researchers as insiders or outsiders is less significant. On the one hand there may be contexts in which the researcher is fully an outsider. On the other, as Smith suggests, when an insider becomes the researcher, s/he is no longer truly an insider.⁵⁴ My position in this research was certainly as an

⁵³ Narayan (1993) argues that 'Given the diversity within cultural domains and across groups, even the most experienced of "native" anthropologists cannot know everything about his or her own society... by opening up access to hidden stores of research materials, the study of anthropology can also lead to the discovery of many strange and unfamiliar aspects of one's own society.' (678-679). According to Smith, 'Indigenous research approaches problematize the insider model in different ways because there are multiple ways of both being an insider and an outsider in indigenous contexts' (1999:137).

⁵⁴ I agree with Narayan that 'the process of doing fieldwork involves getting to know a range of people and listening closely to what they say. Even if one should already be acquainted with some of these

insider, but there were elements in which I became an outsider which were crucial to the effective development of this project.

Personally, I am not originally from the same town as the cases I am studying nor was I a member of these churches during the conflicts. I know many of the members and church participants in most churches, but did not have close relationships with most of them. As a researcher my knowledge about the conflicts in the three cases was general and minimal. I thus, consider myself not an insider participant observer. I carried out the research from within only in the sense that I was on site.

Professionally, as a lawyer and mediator I did not have any mediation or administrative role at any church or the ABC. I did not have power or authority which could affect the data collection process negatively (Smyth and Holian 2008). This actually gave me an element of an outsider status.

I tried to overcome some of the disadvantages by taking a preventative approach. I did not reveal any observations that I made to any participants. This guaranteed participants' confidence in me. When participants assumed I already knew what they knew, I asked for more clarification. Furthermore, advisors play a role in supporting the research while conducting insider research. In my study my two supervisors, an evangelical Croatian-American theologian and an Israeli Jewish anthropologist, brought significant input and I believe could criticise my 'insider' work.⁵⁵

people before one starts fieldwork, the intense and sustained engagements of fieldwork will inevitably transmute these relationships' (1993:679). In fact, I was amazed to realize that my knowledge about the participants after the interviews became much deeper.

⁵⁵ Another aspect important to evaluating a project involving fieldwork, suggested by Cassell (1980), is the quality of the interaction between the researcher and the researched. I feel our relations were characterized by honesty and openness. Before I started each interview, I informed the participants that I had ABC permission to do this research. I was open to answer their questions but insisted on confidentiality especially when we both knew the same people. Additionally, I let the participants choose where they wished to meet. Most of them seemed happy to have someone interested in their story.

2.7 Reflexivity

Bourdieu explains the importance of a reflexive sociology in which sociologists conduct their research with a great awareness of the influence of their own position and power, and how these may distort or prejudice their objectivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Mauthner and Doucet (2003) argue that situating oneself socially and emotionally in relation to participants is a crucial part of reflexivity since ‘Our emotional responses to respondents can shape our interpretations of their accounts’ (418). This requires the researcher to determine what that appropriate level of distancing is, which is no easy task. Taylor notes, ‘Where the researcher-self is a part of the other’s narrative, the narrative of the researched and the researcher become entwined. The researcher, then, is forced to look both outward and inward, to be reflexive and self-conscious in terms of positioning, to be both self-aware and researcher-self-aware and to acknowledge the intertextuality that is a part of both the data gathering and writing processes’ (2011:9 cited in Greene 2014:9).

There are multiple methods by which insider researchers can develop reflexivity. Diaries and external perspectives stimulate reflexivity; that is, their importance as a form of ‘self-triangulation’. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest triangulation as a technique that may be employed to establish credibility in research. Triangulation refers to the researcher’s use of multiple theories, methods and sources (Denzin 1978 cited in Lincoln and Guba 1985:305).

I employed a multiple methods approach in my research. Additionally several theoretical frameworks, primarily in the areas of peace studies, sociology and theology, influence my interpretation of the findings. Being an outsider during these conflicts, I kept reminding the informants to explain what happened from the beginning as I knew nothing. This approach helped me to be more reflexive. This is also the reason I chose

in-depth interviews, where I only interrupted when I needed more explanation. I also asked some questions to which I knew the answers in an effort to act like an outsider.

Another important issue is the researcher's power. According to Smith, 'Researchers have the power to distort, to make invisible, to overlook, to exaggerate and to draw conclusions, based not on factual data, but on assumptions, hidden value judgments, and often downright misunderstandings' (1999:176). It is important that the researchers be aware that their power is no greater than it should be while conducting the research.

Although there is no racial or class tension in my situation, being connected to an academic institution might create a sense of authority that one senses in response to the researcher (Edwards 1993).⁵⁶ On the one hand, in the Middle Eastern context, being a woman from a younger generation decreased my power position. I felt that participants placed emphasis on my feminineness more than on my university identity, particularly as most of the participants were men aged 50 to 85. I also asked my husband to initially talk to a few pastors before I approached them to make sure it was acceptable for them to be interviewed regarding their churches' splits. Because of that, many participants met me as the wife of my husband (which might have given me some power) and not as a university researcher in my own right. On the other hand, my extensive knowledge in conflict resolution, the experience I have as a lawyer and my position as a public prosecutor, I feel, earned me the respect and trust of the participants and thus I did not face the challenges associated with being a woman doing sensitive research in a patriarchal community. I believe that this helped to significantly balance the power dynamics. However, as a woman I was privileged to gain certain additional understanding when meeting other women which would be harder for a male researcher

⁵⁶ Merriam et al. state that 'During fieldwork the researcher's power is negotiated, not given' (2001:409 cited in Greene 2014:6). Thus, as an attempt to minimise the power between insider researchers and participants, insider researchers can present themselves as advocates (Breen 2007).

due to the patriarchal Arab culture. It was very important that the participants assumed I was approaching them from an equal position.

Finally, I had to reflect constantly on how my actions might affect the people I was researching. I tried to be ‘reflexive in real time’ (Nagar Ron 2014). I was aware that I was interviewing pastors in a patriarchal community where there are obvious power dynamics (man/woman, old/young, pastor/member). Sometimes, I felt that I would not ask confrontational questions so I would not harm our relationship. At other times I felt I was treated with a great deal of respect, interestingly perhaps because of my background as a public prosecutor. Some participants even consulted me, after the interview, regarding personal legal issues and I was happy to help. Another matter I had to manage was to hide my investigation techniques. In this regard I insisted on having in-depth interviews to overcome my desire to ask investigational questions. Additionally, being aware of the dialogue in the context of the patriarchal culture, I treated the pastors with great respect and sensitivity.

Reflexivity continued throughout the analysis. I shared my analysis with a few of the participants, as Josselson (2004) suggests research conducted with the purpose of distilling, elucidating and illuminating, must involve a good deal of dialogue with the researched, and careful reflexivity on the part of the researcher (5, 11). During the process of my research, I also had the opportunity to test some of the proposals and arguments of this thesis by presenting papers in a number of conferences.⁵⁷

For all the reasons outlined above, I believe I am uniquely placed to analyse the topic of Palestinian Baptists in Israeli and their intra-church conflicts. Particularly as I worked through the analysis of the data, I had the sense that I was approaching it neither from the uncritical eye of an insider, nor from the unsympathetic eye of an outsider. I

⁵⁷ In January 2013, I presented a paper on generational conflict at the Hebrew University in Israel. I also presented some of my chapters several times at my college (OCMS) and at the Langham consultation in Cambridge.

am neither solely a woman; wife and mother, nor just a Palestinian Christian, cultural Middle Easterner, British academic, Israeli citizen, lawyer who studied in secular Jewish universities and worked as a public prosecutor in the Israeli establishment. I am all of those identities together. I navigate between them; some of them, without my control, are more dominant than others. It is not easy to evaluate to what extent each identity influenced my fieldwork. However, I believe my professional identity affected my fieldwork both in doing the investigation as well as giving me the passport to enter the field freely.

When analysing the data, I similarly tried to look at it from all of these perspectives and even from an outsider perspective as best I could. As Ruth Behar (1996) said, ‘I am here because I am a woman on the border... between identities, between languages, between cultures... one foot in the academy and one foot out’ (162). The portrait presented in this thesis, therefore, reflects that unusual combination. I believe the combination of these characteristics, as well as my normative motivation in doing this research within my own community, helped me to become even more reflexive.

From the discussion above I do not claim that my analysis is ‘pure’, but I want to explain the reflexive position from which I have written. I do intend for the findings of this research to be used to help improve the practices of church conflict management.

I felt comfortable being away from the field for two years (in the United States) after finishing the data collection to continue working on the analysis. The distance helped me to be more reflexive and self-critical.

It seems that through this research I also tried to answer personal frustrating questions, even when I did so unconsciously. I sought to undertake this research from the secure distance of researcher and critical observer to understand beyond stereotypes and the struggle between the identities. Being both personally involved and culturally

close, yet constantly maintaining distance within my researcher's mind throughout the process of questioning and analysis, was an enjoyable experience for me.

Chapter Three

3. The Environment of the Palestinian Baptist Churches in Israel

3.1 Introduction

Having described the context, presented a brief literature review and explained my methodology, I now move to describe the environment and map the field of the Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel.

A church 'split' or member 'exit' from a church is a dramatic decision leading to a member's withdrawal from relationship with and active participation in the congregation. Since conflict-related split/exit is easier to observe and measure than voice (an attempt to repair or improve the relationship through communication of the complaint, grievance or proposal for change),⁵⁸ I examined factors affecting intra-congregational conflicts resulting in the exit of leaders or a church split. In this research *church split* refers to the exodus of unsatisfied members and leaders resulting in a church splitting into two. *Church exit* refers to an unsatisfied leader who leaves church with his family and founds a new church or joins another church's leadership.

In this field-mapping I visited churches and completed 37 interviews (semi-structured and in-depth). The interviews were analysed to identify: (1) the environment and nature of the conflict, (2) general patterns, (3) categories to be used in case selection, and (4) to locate processes and types of conflict management.

The findings in this phase provide evidence of two distinct periods of time in Palestinian Baptist life, which influenced their responses to conflict. The first period (1911-1990) was before the missionaries' departure; during eight decades no splits and only a few exits were recorded. The second period (1990-2016), was after the

⁵⁸ Voice is manifested in democratic institutions. It is especially important when exit is costly. As Hirschman noted, 'this is very nearly the situation in such basic social organization as the family, the state, or the church' (1970:33).

missionaries' departure; during two decades 32 church conflicts ended with church splits or leaders exits, and 12 churches were founded after these splits/exits.⁵⁹

This differentiation between the two periods led me to conduct additional interviews with some first-generation Palestinian Baptists and missionaries to explore why splits/exits happened mainly after the missionaries' departure. Seemingly, the missionaries' departure left the field with no centralized authority and funding, contributing to church splits/exits.

It is not possible to understand the present situation of Baptist churches in Israel without taking the missionary legacy and other factors into account. Therefore, I will present (separately for each period) several factors identified based on literature and the interviews as contextual background for the examination of intra-church conflict. These factors are historical, political, economic, social, structural, theological and cultural.

3.2 Before the Missionaries' Departure (1911-1990)

3.2.1 Historical background

Baptist work in the Holy Land was started in 1911 by Shukri Mosa, a Palestinian from Safed. Mosa (1870–1928) was born into a Catholic Melkite family and travelled to the United States in 1909 due to the difficult economic, social and political situation in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁰ While in Dallas, Texas, he was touched by Baptist teachings and received adult baptism from George W. Truett at the First Baptist Church in Dallas. Mosa was ordained, and with the support of Southern Baptist churches in Illinois returned as an indigenous missionary to the Holy Land (Baker 1961). He arrived in 1911, began his ministry in Safed and later that year moved to Nazareth where he founded the first Baptist church in the Holy Land (Watts 1936:14-15). He was at first

⁵⁹ I will discuss and map church splits/exits in more depth in Section 3.4.

⁶⁰ Another account states that Shukri was converted by Presbyterian missionaries in Palestine before travelling to the United States. The only thing that changed while he was in the United States was that he became Baptist.

harassed by some priests from the Greek Orthodox and Catholic Churches but, with support coming from churches in the United States, was able to found a church that met in rented facilities (Makdisi 2006, Mansour 2018).

Additional indigenous leaders were raised up and in the 1920s American missionaries from the Southern Baptist Convention started to arrive and Baptist work was established in several places.⁶¹ After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Baptist Mission was organized under the Baptist Convention in Israel (BCI), a legal entity including all Southern Baptist missionaries, still existing today. Furthermore, in 1965 Baptists established the ABC with the aim of representing local Baptists working in partnership with the BCI (Yaffe, 1987/9). Until the 1970s the ABC included Jewish, Palestinians and American Baptists. In the 1990s, Southern Baptists changed their policy regarding the goals of their missionary work and withdrew from direct involvement in the Palestinian Baptist churches, stopping their financial support.⁶²

3.2.2 Political, social and economic factors

The creation of Israel in 1948 came, among other reasons, as a response to the Jewish experience of anti-Semitism in Europe. A milestone leading towards the creation was the Balfour Declaration of 1917. From that point on Jewish immigration increased, using the protection of the British Mandate to prepare for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. During the 1948 Palestine war, an estimated 700,000 Palestinians fled

⁶¹ After World War I, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist convention in the United States adopted the church in Nazareth, together with a few other churches operating in Lebanon. They founded the Near East Mission Board and sent their first American missionaries in 1923. The first church building was erected in Nazareth in 1926. With more missionaries coming, Baptist work developed and new work was established in Jerusalem in 1932 and in Haifa in 1936. A church building was built in Jerusalem, but a rented apartment was used for meetings in Haifa (The Upper Room, in missionary correspondence). The Baptist mission in Palestine employed locals to help and a few missionaries came to serve for short periods of time. In 1936, a primary school was established in Nazareth, but had to stop in 1941 due to all the missionaries going back home when the United States entered the Second World War (Rowden, 2010). In 1944, missionaries began to come back and an orphanage was established in Nazareth. The churches in Nazareth, Haifa and Jerusalem were still alive. For more information on this history see Mansour (2018).

⁶² On the one hand, this put most of the local ministry under serious financial pressure, but on the other it 'forced' some, especially larger churches, to support their own work. Furthermore, this caused the ABC to become not merely a fellowship of churches but an important body responsible for supporting, encouraging and representing Baptist churches in Israel.

or were expelled, and hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages were destroyed. Those who left were not allowed to return when the war ended and became refugees in the surrounding countries; the small percentage of Palestinians (approximately 150,000) who managed to stay became Israeli citizens. This event is known in the Palestinian narrative as the *nakba*.⁶³

Ateek's (1989) evaluation of the history of the Palestinian community in Israel between 1948 and 1989 identified three different stages of response: shock, resignation, and awakening:

- 1) During the first stage 1948-1955 Palestinians were characterized as a 'people in shock' (1989:33-36).
- 2) During the second stage 1956-1967 they were characterized as a 'community of resignation' (1989:36-38).
- 3) The third stage 1968-1989 was characterized as a 'nation awakening' (1989:38-44).

Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2002) describe the first stage as the 'survival-generation,' (25) the second and third stages as the 'worn-out generation' (39). After 1990 they describe the 'stand-tall generation' (63).

⁶³ The term *nakba* also refers to the period of war itself and events affecting Palestinians from December 1947 to January 1949. See Pappé 2011 and Khalidi (Ed.) 1992. See also two different perspectives and narratives regarding the *nakba* in Munayer and Loden 2014.

Table 3.1 Generational typology of Ateek, Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker

Periods	Ateek, ' <i>Justice and only justice</i> ' (1989)	Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker, ' <i>The stand-tall generation</i> ' (2002)
1948-1955	shock stage	'survival-generation'
1956-1967	resignation stage	'worn-out generation'
1968-1989	awakening stage	'worn-out generation'
1990-2015		'stand-tall generation'

At each stage I explain the political, social and educational factors and also present the missionaries' contributions.

3.2.2.1 First stage (1948-1955): 'survival-generation'

In 1948, Palestinians in Israel were stunned when within a short period they become a minority and refugees in their own land. Two actions by the Israeli government contributed to their nightmare. First, there was the imposition of martial law aimed at controlling the movement and limiting the rights of Palestinians. The new government retained the Emergency Defence Regulations created by the British Mandate, which enabled them at will to enter, confiscate or even destroy Palestinian houses. Second, in 1950 the government introduced an 'absentee property law' under which the state was able to confiscate Palestinian land, even of those who had never been displaced from their homes (Ateek 1989:33-36).

Missionary work: relief work, involvement in church, orphanage and school

In 1948 when the State of Israel was established, most mission work was destroyed because most Palestinian Baptists became refugees. The Baptist church in Haifa ceased to exist and membership of the Nazareth Baptist Church diminished to only five members (Rowden 2010). However, mission work was kept alive by three missionary ladies who ran an orphanage, and also managed the church and relief work

after the Palestinian *nakba* when many Palestinian refugees from evacuated towns and villages found shelter in Nazareth.⁶⁴ Baptist work in West Jerusalem lost its Palestinian members and had to be rebuilt with its few Jewish members and a handful of expatriates who remained in Jerusalem after 1948.

In 1950, the Baptist mission in the United States sent missionary families to revive Baptist work in Israel. Missionaries arrived to pastor the Nazareth Baptist church, run the orphanage and reopen a Baptist school. Others were sent to Jerusalem and other places to work among the Jews. In terms of academic education, during this period there were only some Palestinian students enrolled in Israeli universities.

3.2.2.2 Second stage (1956-1967): ‘worn-out generation’

For the Palestinian community in Israel this period was characterized by an attitude of acceptance of the unresolved conflict and life as an unwanted minority that was considered foreign to the new state it inhabited. Even their identity was threatened; new identity cards were issued with the word ‘Palestinian’ deleted and replaced with ‘Arab.’⁶⁵ Some argue it was an attempt to delete their history as Palestinians and change their loyalty.⁶⁶ The state also issued cultural and educational restrictions. Palestinian children spent more time studying Jewish history than their own. However, many Palestinians were impressed by the development and progress of the new state.

The state had developed a sophisticated ‘system of control’ by which to manipulate the Arab minority and control it effectively through three components: segmentation, dependence, and co-option (Ateek 1989:38). Some scholars claim that the failures of the Israeli-Arab community to ‘organize itself’ are due to the presence of a

⁶⁴ Palestinians in Israel live mainly in small towns and villages in the North of the country. The biggest Palestinian town is the city of Nazareth (75,000 residents), which has become the political, economic and cultural centre of the Palestinians in Israel. This town survived in 1948.

⁶⁵ Golda Meir the Israeli prime minister declared, ‘It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine... and we came and threw them out and took their country... they didn’t exist.’ June 15, 1969; quoted in (Avnery 1971:262).

⁶⁶ See Ateek (1989), Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2002).

highly effective system of control which, since 1948, has operated over Israeli-Arabs (Lustick 1980). During the shock and resignation period, the Israeli-Arab workforce was largely blue-collar. At the end of the 1950s it was easier to receive a scholarship from an American school and to study abroad than to be accepted into an Israeli university.

Missionary work: planting and building new churches

Before 1965, missionaries were the main decision-makers in church affairs. After the establishment of the ABC in 1965, missionaries were influential in church life, both indirectly through funding and through the position of ABC ‘field representatives’ (responsible for church planting and management). Some missionaries were members of the executive of the ABC.⁶⁷

Socially, most of the interviewees who were aware of this period mentioned that their church was the centre of their spiritual, social, financial and educational life, due to the connection between the church, the school and the orphanage.⁶⁸ An American missionary who pastored the Nazareth Baptist Church launched a team of key young leaders called ‘The Village Team’ to plant churches in Arab towns and villages. Every Sunday afternoon ‘The Village Team’ visited villages and towns to provide Sunday school and church activities, resulting in the establishment of new Baptist churches in Akko, Haifa, Cana of Galilee, Toraan, Rama, Eilaboun and Yaffa of Nazareth (Baker 1961). Missionaries were responsible for these churches and locals helped in the ministry. Those joining the Baptist churches tended to be from poor backgrounds, often refugees, in contrast with the prominent Palestinian families who held remarkable status in traditional churches (Catholic/Orthodox).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Jack, Nov 2014.

⁶⁸ Jack, Ron, Paul, Ramiz, Amal, Suhad, Dan, Tamer, Hiyam, Emily, Nabil.

⁶⁹ Pastor-A, Apr 2014.

From an economic perspective, during and after the *nakba*, the Baptist mission provided jobs and employed many church members to work at the school and the orphanage, as well as offering scholarships to those who wished to study abroad.⁷⁰

3.2.2.3 Third stage (1968-1988): ‘worn-out generation’

The following elements helped to raise the consciousness of the Israeli-Arabs as Palestinians (Ateek 1989).

1) The Palestinian Liberation Organization, which was recognized by the Arab League in 1964, was created as a political body whose purpose was to bring together the fragmented segments of Palestinians scattered around the world. It created a framework that integrated the cultural, social, economic, political and military activities of Palestinians.

2) At the end of 1960 the presence of educated Palestinians in Israel began to be felt in the community. A new generation of Palestinian university graduates returned from Eastern Europe, having been sent under the joint sponsorship of the Communist Party in Israel (RAKAH) and the host countries. Together they formed the backbone of thinkers, organizers and conceptualizers of the Palestinian community in Israel. Because of the lack of a channel to express their views they turned to the Communist Party (the political force in the Palestinian society in Israel). The decline in the Party's power affected the Christian community, as it had served as their political voice. Gradually many left and organized themselves with some left-wing Jews into the ‘Progressive List for Peace’ which first appeared in the 1984 Israeli election.

3) After the battle of *Karameh* in 1968, where Palestinians for the first time engaged in direct battle with the Israelis and inflicted heavy losses on them, there was a rebirth of Palestinian consciousness.

⁷⁰ Nabil, Jack, and Pastor-A.

4) The ‘Land day’ of March 1976, when the Israeli authorities revealed their intention to expropriate 1.5 million dunams of Palestinian land,⁷¹ has caused an awakened consciousness among Palestinians in Israel since that day.

5) The new consciousness-raising of the Israeli-Arabs steadily increased throughout 1980 with the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon; a disaster that killed 19,000 Arabs in Lebanon, mostly Palestinian refugees, and at least 654 Israeli soldiers.

6) The *Intifada* (uprising) in the West Bank and Gaza in 1987 continued the increase of consciousness. After 20 years under occupation, Palestinians began to purposefully resist the forces of occupation.

7) Finally, the failure of the strategic initiatives of Jewish-Arab cooperation and coexistence in some political parties led to the idea becoming ‘worn-out’ and the next generation starting to look for alternatives.

During this stage, missionaries started appointing indigenous pastors to churches and providing some pastors and leaders with houses.⁷² Some pastors were appointed merely because they were available, even if they were not particularly qualified. They were sent to study theology abroad or were trained in leadership courses based on Western perspectives and culture.⁷³ These leaders were ordained as pastors by the missionaries and/or the ABC.^{74 75}

⁷¹ 1 dunam = 0.245 acre

⁷² Jack, Nov 2014; Pastor-A, Apr 2014.

⁷³ Such as Christian Service Training Centre (CSTC), an American Baptist College. The teachers were Americans.

⁷⁴ Jack, Nov 2014; Samir, Apr 2014.

⁷⁵ Besides being influenced by Western theology and American missionaries who grew up in a culture that takes statistical and objective measurement seriously, Palestinians evaluate ministry differently to Western American contemporary missiology. This can be seen in the bias with which Westerners discuss evaluative criteria, as Western American contemporary missiology focuses on measurable goals, accuracy and predictability. Church growth statisticians are concerned with numerical growth; this justifies the requirements of Western agencies that results be measurable, at least in numbers. Some Western observers noted that church growth statistics were influential, as it fed the rationale to begin more projects. This might explain why some local observers felt that missionary concerns were mainly on the numbers attending the church and the number of church plants created. Pastor Samir complained, ‘One missionary cared only for numbers, he did not consult locals in decision-making, his main goal was to show larger numbers’ (Samir, Apr 2014).

3.2.3 Church conflict between 1948 and 1990

Until the missionaries' departure in the early 1990s they planted churches, appointed local pastors, and were responsible for funding. In most cases the authority of the missionaries was not questioned by locals. The issues of conflicts and their management were as follows.

3.2.3.1 Issues of conflict

Churches were very small and led by pastors who were a 'one man show'. Most of the conflicts were about personality differences between members of the laity and pastors rather than leadership style and structure. However, some tensions between church leaders and missionaries were mentioned by interviewees.⁷⁶

3.2.3.2 Conflict management

Missionaries who owned the church properties and provided pastors' salaries were indirectly the main decision-makers; some interviewees said missionaries did not really consult locals. When there were problems with a pastor, they 'encouraged him to leave' or helped him get another job.⁷⁷ Additionally, there were a few exits from members who were not satisfied with the pastor; most of these members went back to their original churches. However, during this period no church splits were recorded and no pastors/leaders exited to found new churches.

3.3 The Environment of the Palestinian Baptist Churches after the Missionaries' Departure (1990-2016)

The findings of the field-mapping indicate that several factors shape the environment of the Palestinian Baptist Churches: identity, social, economic, cultural, theological and structural. As these factors were subjected to change, they influenced Palestinian Baptist responses to church conflict. As change might induce conflict

⁷⁶ Open interview with missionaries Paul and Ron.

⁷⁷ Samir, Apr 2014.

(Brubaker 2009), these factors in the environment need to be explored as they could potentially combine together in a powerful way to contribute to church splits/exits.

3.3.1 Identity

3.3.1.1 The ‘stand-tall generation’ (1990-2016)

Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2002) describe the period between 1990 and 2016 as the ‘stand-tall generation’. The grandparents of this generation were children in 1948, their parents were involved in the ‘Land day’ (see Section 3.2.2.3) and they, the grandchildren, (i.e. the ‘stand-tall generation’) witnessed a violent incident against Palestinian citizens of Israel in 2000 (the Israeli police killed 13 young Palestinians in October 2000) as well as the failure of the Oslo Accords.⁷⁸ In the 1990s new Palestinian voices started to demand a ‘country for all its citizens.’ Instead of asking for coexistence as their parents had, they demanded full equal rights as a condition for coexistence. This period was characterized by a new generation that had experienced a shift in its identity. Many were proud Palestinians, being aware that their residency in Israel did not make it their country.⁷⁹ They did not accept being second class citizens, and they sought to fight for their rights using different means from those of their parents. Their struggle could be seen in Israeli campus demonstrations in which many female students became more dominant. They were more educated and many of them sought to work in various human rights organization and professional civil/community organizations. The main experience of the ‘stand-tall generation’ has been the struggle against inequity in their country of residence, a struggle between generations and ideologies – positional,

⁷⁸ One positive dimension of the peace process was that Palestinians gained recognition of their right to self-determination.

⁷⁹ Despite the fact that there are some Palestinian voices who would not agree with that, the majority seek an end to the conflict.

religious and gender. Coincidentally, during recent years more Palestinian Christians have joined the Israeli military/national service.⁸⁰

Each of the generations I have described ('survival', 'worn-out' and 'stand-tall') is building on the experience and accomplishments of those who came before them. Thus I do not claim that the 'stand-tall generation' is either stronger or more qualified in this struggle.

3.3.1.2 Political/cultural identity

Palestinian Arab Christians in Israel are exposed to various cultures (Muslim-Arabic, Israeli-Jewish and that of Western-missionaries) and are required to find their place within this complex,⁸¹ and often conflicted, cultural arena, whilst at the same time facing the longstanding 'divide and conquer' policy of the state of Israel. Several models have been suggested in the study of ethnic identities of the Palestinians in Israel.⁸²

With regard to Palestinian Christian identity during this period (1990-2016), Sa'ar (2006)⁸³ examines how Palestinian Christians navigate their affiliation with nation, state and religion.⁸⁴ According to Sa'ar, Palestinian Christian's practices include both conformity and resistance. They tend to be politically conformist to avoid national issues and emphasize the cultural distinctions between themselves and Muslims. Sa'ar has interpreted this as a social reproductive orientation because it reinforces the state's

⁸⁰ This is related to the fragmentation of Palestinian identity along religious lines (Christian/Muslim), especially as witnessed in Nazareth in the 1990s. Some argue that one major motivation for young Christians to join the army is the desire to defend themselves against Muslims.

⁸¹ According to Nagel (1994), identity and culture are two of the basic building blocks of ethnicity. Ethnic cultures are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities. 'We construct culture by picking and choosing items from the shelves of the past and the present. In other words, cultures change: They are borrowed, blended, rediscovered, and reinterpreted' (162).

⁸² Rouhana (1976) sets national (Palestinian) and civic (Israeli) identities in opposition to one another arguing that the strengthening of one identity is conversely proportional to the weakening of the other identity. Others claim that the Israeli and Palestinian components in Palestinian Arab identity are independent of one another and therefore must be analysed separately. Smootha (2001) believes that a parallel process of 'Palestinization' and 'Israelization' is occurring (Munayer 2000).

⁸³ The research was conducted between 1991 and 1993.

⁸⁴ Sa'ar argues that they are marginalized within an encompassing state. Although a minority within their own nation, they constitute a majority and elite among the local Palestinian community.

policy of control over the Palestinian minority.⁸⁵ She suggests that their political conformism and Christian ethnocentrism weaken their status within the national community; however, the social reproductive orientation has empowered them to borrow power from the political centre. At the same time another attitude exists, as Palestinian Christians are increasingly participating in political criticism and national activity – both unconscious oppositional behaviour and conscious resistance.

Another study was conducted in 1998 (Horenczyk and Munayer 2007) showing that Palestinian Christians in Israel perceive themselves as a distinct ethnic group who have a positive evaluation of their cultural group. Contributing factors to their positive collective self-esteem seem to be the educational and economic level Christians have been able to achieve in spite of the difficulties of being a minority. They show a higher preference to integrate with Israeli Jewish society (i.e., to adopt aspects of its culture without giving up their traditional culture) and to be separate from Muslim Arabs (involving relatively little inter-cultural contact). Other results suggest that Palestinian Christians tend to regard Israeli Jewish society as a vehicle for Westernization,⁸⁶ yet it seems clear that they are not willing to adopt every Western value and are selective of which values they choose to adopt.

A decade later, after the second *Intifada* (2000), the second Lebanese War (2006), and the Israeli military operation of Gaza (2008), Munayer and Horenczyk (2014)

⁸⁵ *Social reproduction* refers to the processes that ensure the self-perpetuation of a social structure over time, in rough analogy to biological reproduction for a population. The idea of social reproduction has its origins in Karl Marx's analysis of capitalist society. Bourdieu (1990) associates social reproduction with his concept of *habitus* which he defines as something that 'ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the correctness of practices and their constancy over time' (54). Retrieved from www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/social-reproduction . Accessed 1 November 2017.

⁸⁶ The *Westernization* of Palestinian Arab Christians is a process that began in the 19th Century before the formation of the State of Israel and applies to the Middle East in general. The Western Church schools that were established in Palestine by different churches during the Mandate period were major vehicles for Westernization. There the students were exposed to Western teaching, languages, and study materials. Another important aspect of this relationship was that the Palestinian Arab Christians, and Arab Christians in the Middle East in general, were looking for Western powers to stand beside them as a minority in order to protect them and help them maintain their religious and civil rights (Munayer 2000).

conducted a similar study. It shows a strengthening of Christian identity and culture among Palestinian Christians in Israel, with separation emerging as the strongest attitude with regard to both Muslims and Jews. Such a process can be better understood within a broader view of cultural identities and intergroup processes in Israel.⁸⁷ It has been argued that ethno-religious identities are gaining visibility and influence in the conflicted society.⁸⁸ The delicate situation of Palestinian Christians in Israel has deteriorated; they feel increased pressure from Muslim Arabs as well as from the Israeli political establishment (Ramon 2012).⁸⁹

The above outcomes have been influenced over the last two decades by several factors. The emergence of radical Islamic parties,⁹⁰ the decline in the Communist Party's power which had served as Christians' political voice,⁹¹ their demographic decrease, and the rise of an exclusionary nationalist discourse in Israel, have increased the sense of marginalization among Christians.⁹²

The identity of Palestinian Christian in Israel has recently been even more shaken with the following dramatic changes in the 2010s.

First, during the Gaza war in the summer of 2014,⁹³ several Israeli senior politicians and public figures made statements that questioned the loyalty of Palestinian

⁸⁷ According to Smooha (2010), 'These years were a lost decade for Arab-Jewish coexistence. Instead of improvement, there was deterioration. Arab-Jewish relations worsened and Arab attitudes hardened' (27).

⁸⁸ Jewish Israeli society is also undergoing a process of fragmentation along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines.

⁸⁹ According to Munayer and Horenczyk (2014), in the majority of cross-cultural studies the first way minorities relate to majority groups is typically integration. They attribute the inconsistency in relation to Palestinian Christians to their characteristics of being highly religious, supported by a strong church and school structure, and having a long history of survival in the Middle East. Perhaps their heightened investment in Arab Nationalism would have played an important role, at least in the early days.

⁹⁰ This was the first political movement among Arabs to exclude Christians.

⁹¹ See Section 3.2.2.3. Regarding the Communist Party, Ateek (1989) has claimed that the silence of the Palestinian Church during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has caused many Christians to leave the church and become active in the Communist party.

⁹² In 2000, there was conflict in Nazareth over building a mosque next to the Church of Annunciation, known as the *Shihab el-Din* crisis. Some argue that this was a turning point in Christian-Muslim relations in Israel causing Christians to feel vulnerable, thus damaging the former Christian-Muslim solidarity.

⁹³ Operation Protective Edge.

citizens of Israel because many of them sympathized with the people of Gaza and held demonstrations against the war.

Second, the Israeli establishment has been promoting the idea of Christians volunteering for civil service and the army (Christians and Muslims have been exempted from serving in national service since 1948). In 2012, the state recruited a senior Greek Orthodox priest to advocate for this cause.

Third, a new bill was passed in 2014 allowing Christians to change their nationality in their identification cards from 'Arab' to 'Aramaic'. Even though very few people have decided to do this, this development could be seen as yet another attempt by Israel to divide its Christian and Muslim minorities.

Finally, the recent political unrest in the Middle East (after the so called 'Arab Spring' started in 2010) has resulted in radical Islamist groups gaining power. These groups⁹⁴ have resulted in the exodus of many Christian populations in Syria and Iraq who have lived in the Middle East for hundreds of years. The situation in Lebanon and Egypt has also been unstable for Christians. All this has caused Christians in Israel to feel the pressure and question their existence in the Middle East. More Christians are advocating for aligning with Jews in Israel, separating from the historical alliance with Muslims, while others are considering immigration to a country in the West where Christianity is the majority religion.

These dramatic changes have made the issue of identity an immediate problem for the fourth generation, born in the 1990s. The urgent question of serving in the national service has deepened their identity crisis even more.

⁹⁴ Such as ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) that kills Christians who refuse to convert to Islam or pay the *jizya*.

Third and fourth generation Baptists, who are struggling with these questions in their churches, are questioning their pastors about Christian Zionism.⁹⁵ This has caused degrees of tension and conflict in some churches. This kind of conflict is new as it is related to theological conviction rather than conflicts over power. Based on the findings this kind of conflict was identified in three Baptist churches.

It is likely that the identity crisis of Palestinian Baptists, and their living in a legally uncertain environment (in being a threefold minority and second class citizens), might reflect Palestinian's *insecure feelings in church life as well*.

3.3.1.3 Evangelical identity as shaped by missionary legacy

The term 'evangelical' is not widely used in the non-evangelical Christian community. Evangelicals might have been labelled as '*motajadideen*' (the renewed) by Eastern Palestinian Christians, but if asked to identify themselves they use the term 'believer'. Research conducted in 2014 shows that their identity is centred on their Christian faith, more than nationality or ethnic origins; many of them appear to build their identity primarily around evangelical doctrinal commitments.⁹⁶

Every effort to do Christian mission also involves some form of cultural and civilizational transformation. The interaction that occurred between two strong societies and traditions (Western/Eastern) was bound to produce positive and negative results. It was inevitable that in many cases religious, missionary and educational motives would be mixed with cultural, civilizational, ideological, economic, political and even military motives (Badr 2011). Evangelical missionaries brought several aspects of their culture and civilization that were very enriching (establishing schools, orphanages, churches, funding, jobs and so on). Nonetheless, some Arab evangelical scholars argue that there

⁹⁵ Christian Zionism is a belief among some Christians that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is fulfilment of a Biblical prophecy. They believe that the gathering of the Jews in Israel is a prelude for the Second Coming of Jesus, and that Christians should actively support the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel, along with the idea that the Jews ought to convert to Christianity.

⁹⁶ Ajaj, Miller and Sumpter, 2016.

is a tendency in the Western Church by some to understand itself as normative and anything which deviates from this theological or ecclesial framework as unacceptable (Munayer 2016, Badr 2011). There are several aspects of Palestinian evangelical presence in Israel that have had a negative impact, although unintended: cultural legacy, legacy of Zionism and legacy of pietism.

a) Cultural legacy

The cultural, social and political alienation that the evangelical community experiences has led some evangelicals (perhaps influenced by missionary indoctrination) to further alienate themselves from their Eastern roots in favour of Western cultural forms of expression, such as less respectfulness for Eastern liturgy, symbols, and for Virgin Mary.⁹⁷ Another example is the dress code of the pastor in and out of church; wearing a suit and tie is so typically Western American, in a context where Christian clerical clothing is important. This has alienated the evangelicals from many of their fellow Eastern Christians and non-Christians; although a few attempts at contextualising theology have been made and an increasing number of evangelical pastors are interested in wearing clerical collars.

b) Legacy of Zionism: ideological conflict reflects the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Some evangelical missions have mixed the preaching of the gospel with the transmission of certain Western political ideological presuppositions related to the interpretation of the Old and New Testament. This is especially evident in the case of the propagation of Zionist ideology in light of biblical interpretation concerning the theology of the Promised Land and the return and conversion of the Jews. This issue has caused increasing criticisms by traditional Palestinian Christians towards Palestinian evangelicals. Furthermore, major conservative evangelical denominations in the West

⁹⁷ This is a theological issue rather than cultural, though theology is influenced to some extent by culture.

openly support Zionism and the State of Israel, without any consideration for the implications that this support has; this ideology can be seen as a key contributing factor to the tremendous amount of injustice experienced amongst both Christian and non-Christian Palestinian communities in Israel/Palestine.

Christian Zionism has substantially influenced the level of financial and political support to the State of Israel, which has in turn impacted the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and caused a great tension within their identity as Palestinians. Many Palestinian evangelicals have tended to feel both misunderstood and ignored by many Western Christians (Sabella 2005). However, in research conducted in 2014 with evangelical Palestinian pastors and ministers in Israel on the issue of eschatology, many were neither for nor against Zionism and did not think the issue was relevant. This shows that Palestinian evangelicals in Israel are characterized by diversity, which also demonstrates the complexity of their reality.⁹⁸

c) Legacy of pietism: tendency to look inward as opposed to social engagement

Palestinian Evangelical churches trust Christ for personal conversion and the gift of grace to lead a ‘victorious life in Christ’ – a life possible after conversion but not before, as sin and the fallen nature must be dealt with in the new birth experience. Most churches preach against ‘carnality and worldliness’ and personal piety means obedience to Scripture, prayer, and regular fellowship with other believers. They have the tendency to be *apolitically pietistic*, a type of personal ‘flight from the world,’ with their hopes focused on the bodily return of Christ or escape from the present world.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ajaj, Miller and Sumpter 2016.

⁹⁹ Research conducted between 1999-2000 in Palestine revealed that three tendencies emerged between Palestinian Christians: (a) secular-nationalist tendency - usually had undergone a thorough mobilization and consciousness formation within the political factions (b) a religio-communal revival tendency - these individuals increasingly look inward to the religious community, seeking its revival through more stringent religious education to better counter Islamization in the wider society (c) apolitical pietistic tendency - a type of personal “flight from the world”, seeking succour away from the depredations of

Churches hold deeply pietistic values but few contextualized theological resources. Evangelicals retain a commitment to personal and corporate piety.

Some argue that this has separated Palestinian evangelicals from their community and its struggle against injustice done to the Palestinian community. This contributes to the church's tendency to look inward as opposed to outward in any form of social engagement. This might be one of the reasons why many Palestinian evangelicals focus their ministries inside the church buildings, resulting in churches becoming crowded with pastors and leaders seeking to become pastors, but with no place for them – especially as churches are small and concentrated in a small area. Obviously, this leads to conflicts around leadership. According to Brubaker (2009), when churches look outward to their community and initiate programmes conflicts at church lessen.

3.3.2 Social factors

3.3.2.1 Newly educated young generation

For Palestinian Christians in Israel, education has come to replace land as a major element of an individual's socioeconomic status. Christians who have had the benefit of a higher education and occupational profile constitute the middle class. Palestinian Baptist churches are rich in social and cultural capital. One church is associated with a school, another with an orphanage, and another is linked to a prominent Christian website. More than 50% of the attendees are highly educated young generation with careers outside the church. This generation does not come from prominent families (no ascribed power) and works hard to succeed (achieved power).

Baptist churches in Israel have grown significantly over the last 30 years, from 200 members in 1970 to 3,000 in 2015. Growth came from a younger educated generation requesting more reforms in church life, wanting to take churches from being

occupation and the ravages of political contestation in the alternative domains of church liturgies and personal piety. For these individuals, the kingdom is not of this world (Lybarger 2007:777–813).

‘mission centres’ to churches with a constitution, shaped by decisions made by members.¹⁰⁰ This has resulted in tension with the older generation pastors, many appointed by missionaries. In some churches, many members have a higher level of education than their pastor, sometimes leading to laity/pastor conflict. Serious splits were led by young laity against dominant pastors who resisted change (see Section 3.4). Many intra-congregational conflicts are related to church growth (Brubaker 2009) and the legitimacy of its religious leadership through members’ eyes.¹⁰¹ Shin and Park (1988) argue that the stability of congregations is positively related to the educational level of the head pastor.¹⁰²

3.3.2.2 Openness to the outside world

The situation following the 1967 war has opened Palestinians from Israel to fellowship with Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. Peace with Egypt in 1979 opened Palestinians in Israel to the Arab world. In 1994, Israel made peace with Jordan causing more openness. With the influence of satellite television and the Internet, the average church member is more aware of how churches should be run, challenging pastors and traditional leadership to change. It is likely that reconnecting with Christians in the larger region also helped in alleviating the sense of isolation felt by many Palestinian Christians in Israel.

3.3.3 Economic factors: funding available

In the early 1990s the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States (IMB) decided to stop supporting local Baptist churches and institutions around the world and focus on ‘unreached groups’. They

¹⁰⁰ Research indicates that conflicts are more likely to occur in socially heterogeneous congregations (Leas and Kittlaus 1973), groups with socio-economically diverse membership (Shin and Park 1988), groups with a mixture of young and old members (Herman 1984; Hoge 1976), and groups with a mixture of older and newer members (Becker 1998, 1999; Becker et al. 1993).

¹⁰¹ Becker 1998, 1999; Herman 1984; Shin and Park 1988; Wood 1981; Collins 1975. See Chapter One, Section 1.4.4.

¹⁰² See Chapter One, Section 1.4.4.

halted all financial support provided to Baptist churches in Israel. This step, even though done gradually over a period of ten years, left the churches unprepared. Suddenly, Baptist churches became independent and pastors had to secure their monthly salary. These financial challenges were one important potential factor for causing splits/exits.¹⁰³

Palestinian Baptist churches lack material capital. Only seven churches have their own church buildings built by missionaries more than 50 years ago, the rest meet in rented halls. Churches are very small and usually provide the pastor with a modest salary if any. In 2015, 80% of the churches had an annual operating budget of between 7,000-20,000 dollars. This leads to the question: when a pastor/leader exits and starts a new church, how can a small church provide his salary? Four pastors whom I interviewed do not get a salary from their churches. Some pastors have joined a para-church organization or started a new one which provides their livelihood.

NGO-ization is a phenomenon in Israeli society in general and in the Arab community in particular. It relies on social/political, local/international funding. The Baptist churches are non-profit for organizational and practical reasons. Some leaders who exited and founded new churches established non-profit philanthropist ministries, ‘start-ups’ as Rami, an ABC leader, calls them.¹⁰⁴ During the last two decades around ten para-churches were established.¹⁰⁵

Sometimes pastors who receive funding from various para-church organizations may become loyal to these groups sometimes at the expense of their own churches; donors might influence the perceptions and expectations of ministries and churches.¹⁰⁶ As an example, Christian Zionist groups that are very active among evangelicals in

¹⁰³ Open interview with Paul, a missionary, and Rami, an ABC leader.

¹⁰⁴ Rami, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ See a list in appendix 2.

¹⁰⁶ Rami, 2014.

Israel have also been trying to influence Palestinian evangelical churches, causing conflict within churches that are naturally hesitant towards such groups.

At least 80% of Palestinian Baptist churches rely on foreign funds. Half of these churches experienced a split or leader's exit, after which the leader started a new church, or a new ministry alongside the church, or joined another para-church ministry. Phil, a retired Palestinian pastor, claimed that dependence on Western funding and theology contributes to Palestinian Christian disunity. He added that adopting certain Western theology that contradicts local theology would cause divisions.¹⁰⁷

It is not clear whether there is causation between para-churches and exits. However, it is likely there is a correlation between the economic factor and exits.¹⁰⁸

3.3.4 Cultural factors

What is unique to Palestinians is the socio-cultural understanding of leadership, which some have attributed to the Arab authoritarian style of leadership.¹⁰⁹ This question of how to deal with power was the key issue faced by local churches, as I will discuss in Chapter Four.

Another cultural element is the communal component within the Palestinian Christian community. While in the West theology and church practice are more individualistic, in the Eastern traditional Church (from which almost all Palestinian Baptists were converted) the emphasis on liturgy and sacraments is based on communal identification whereby these traditions bind Christians to the global church and saints in heaven.

The loyalty of members to their organizations is another element that affects whether individuals will leave when their expectations are not met. Collins (1975) argues that members who share similar cultural backgrounds are more loyal to their

¹⁰⁷ July 2104.

¹⁰⁸ Some pastors and church leaders see para-church ministries as competitors and a source of negative influence. This perception creates a confrontational dynamics instead of cooperation.

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter One, Section 1.3.

organizations. In binding organizations (classical Judaism, classical Catholicism) extreme loyalty was demanded; voice was prohibited and exit was impossible. In Protestantism, loyalty has been a matter of individual commitment; more voice is permitted, and exit (schism) relatively easy (Smelser 1998:188). In Arab culture, loyalty and identity are intimately connected within a communal community. When missionaries came, most Palestinian Baptists were loyal to their traditional churches (Catholic/Orthodox Church). This is evident in the struggle that took place between the Orthodox Church and missionaries (Register 2000). Those who left their traditional churches were harassed by their church or family.¹¹⁰ First-generation Baptists who left traditional churches continued to feel deeply loyal to their communities and families, so leaving their traditional church was both painful and very costly for them.

Most Baptist churches have no teaching regarding loyalty and belonging to church, having instead a strong individualistic focus.¹¹¹ Some Baptists attend church for the benefits it gives them. If they did not like one church, they could easily move to another.¹¹² As such, second-generation converts have a crisis in their sense of belonging, while third-generation converts have a very weak sense of loyalty to their Baptist churches; they are more loyal to ideology. Seemingly, this is another factor that has increased church exits among the third-generation.¹¹³

3.3.5 Theological factors: Charismatic movement

In the early 1990s, a young, charismatic Arab-American pastor came to Israel to serve with the Baptist churches. In 1999 he conducted a two year leadership programme, which around 25-30 young educated men and women, joined. The

¹¹⁰ A few first-generation pastors were excluded and boycotted by their families after their conversion.

¹¹¹ Individualism in this context means: individual salvation in Jesus with a focus on a vertical relationship to God and less emphasis on the 'horizontal' relations among members of the church or an ecclesiology that sees the church as a collection of Spirit-filled individuals who do not really need each other.

¹¹² My personal observation.

¹¹³ This factor is discussed in Section 3.4 and Chapter Four.

programme included a charismatic emphasis which encouraged lay participation in leadership and placed less value on hierarchical authority. This has caused an influx of young lay leadership influenced by charismatic teachings, some of whom sought to become pastors or be involved in ministry in the next decade. However, only four young leaders were ordained as pastors between 1990 and 2010.

The findings show that many of the Baptist churches have charismatic teachings. Although 30% of the pastors are not charismatic, many of their church members are open to charismatic teaching. Additionally, many churches have been influenced by some visiting Arab, charismatic pastors who have charisma and gained their theological education in Western seminaries. Based on my personal observations, it appears many Palestinian Baptists rely for church growth and revival on well-known charismatic pastors whom they often invite to their annual church conferences.

The rise of the charismatic movement, with its emphasis on individual subjective experience, spontaneity, lay participation, and less emphasis on formal church regulation,¹¹⁴ has caused challenges and conflicts for many churches in other contexts.¹¹⁵

3.3.6 Structural factors

Split or exit is not unique to Palestinian Baptists but actually characterizes Baptist churches in general. Some even claim that the Baptist church worldwide ‘grows through splits’. It is likely that the main strategy of conflict management used in Western-Baptist churches is splits and exits. Nonetheless, splits/exits within the Palestinian Baptist churches have their own unique characteristics. Several structural elements affected the Palestinian Baptist environment: The ABC, Palestinian Baptists’

¹¹⁴ I have met some ‘lay-elders’ who believe in having great authority but who dismiss formal training and ordination.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter One, Section 1.4.4.3. Bax 1986; Francis et al. 2000; Jaichandran and Madhav 2003; Poloma 1982; Starke and Dyck 1996.

perceptions on ordination, the shortage of trained pastors, church buildings and the establishment of the Convention of Evangelical Churches in Israel.

3.3.6.1 The Association of Baptist Churches in Israel (ABC)

Before 1965, missionaries were the main decision-makers in Baptist churches in Israel. After the establishment of the ABC, missionaries continued to be influential in church life, through funding and the position of 'field representative'. After the missionaries left, the ABC tried to take their place. When the ABC tried to intervene during church conflicts, some pastors opposed the ABC claiming that churches are independent according to Baptist doctrine. Some Palestinian Baptist leaders argued that this attitude contributed to church splits/exits.¹¹⁶

The ABC consists of 18 churches.¹¹⁷ Most of these churches have relatively few members, averaging between 30-60 persons; only two churches have close to two hundreds. During the last 20 years 12 new churches were founded and two small churches have ceased to exist (one could not provide the pastor a salary).

The results show the ABC has a low level of institutionalization, with no clear guidelines about succession process, pension and church committee assignment. The primary source of struggle in many churches is over control and power between the pastor and young laity. Some leaders who have a theological education are not offered any leadership position within their church. In small churches the pastor and his family are usually the main decision-makers. In churches that have church committees there is

¹¹⁶ Rami, Sami, David.

¹¹⁷ Members in each church share the same cultural background. Most of the churches include many families and some individuals. Exceptions are one church with many youth and another church with many women in their 70s. The approximate median age of church attendees is between 40 and 50. 30% of the churches are middle-class with many professionals.

usually some rotation between committee members who support the pastor, with some of them remaining for a long time (see Section 1.4.3 on power).¹¹⁸

There is no clear leadership structure within these churches; some churches have a pastor (sometimes not ordained) with or without a church committee. Other churches have only elders or deacons or both. There are no clear criteria on how to become a pastor, elder or deacon. There is no succession process or clear understanding about the role of elder, deacon and their assignments.¹¹⁹

Another important element is pensions. If there were a good pension system for pastors this might encourage earlier retirement or leaving church after retirement, especially since there are limited career options for pastors after leaving pastorate within this context.

Regarding church constitution and decision-making at church, findings show only 70% of the Baptist churches have constitutions. Half of these churches do not use them, justifying this with the following statements: ‘We try not to work against the constitution’, ‘I don’t know if we are working according to the constitution’, ‘We don’t ignore it but we walk according to God’s guidance’, ‘We have a constitution but who works according to it?’ Three churches mentioned that they are changing their constitution, mainly after a split. Only two churches work according to their constitution.

In relation to decision-making, more than 50% of the pastors said they were the main decision-makers; most were also founders of their churches.¹²⁰ Fewer than 50% of the pastors consult the church committee or elders and meet every two/three months;

¹¹⁸ Oswald et al. (2003) argue individuals who have certain roles for many years are very powerful. Often, congregational leaders are not able to remove them from office because they possess huge amounts of informal power within the system.

¹¹⁹ The Baptist theology of ordained ministry has been rather misunderstood by pastors and the charismatic influence on members might have displaced the authority of pastors practised in the churches of Israel.

¹²⁰ The ‘founder’s syndrome’ as Kassis and Costa (2011) call it.

those are usually young pastors who were ordained by the ABC, or are those who pastor a big church.

3.3.6.2 Perceptions on ordination: Palestinian Baptist practice

Baptist churches in Israel were influenced by three evangelical movements:¹²¹

a) *Southern Baptists* founded the Baptist ministry in Israel and thus have had a powerful influence on local theology and practice. In 1953 the Nazareth Baptist Church was officially reorganized as a single-elder Congregationalist church. The churches that were planted later on had similar styles.

b) *The charismatic movement* has had its impact on Baptist life. Charismatics tend to emphasize that all believers receive spiritual gifts for active service, but also that ministers have a special anointing, that is, there is a divine source of the pastor's calling. Some say that the pastor alone is responsible for the ministry of Word and Sacrament; others say that, because of the 'priesthood of all believers', the laity can also take on these responsibilities. Furthermore, some churches just have a *single pastor* and a board of deacons under the pastor, whereas others have plural eldership, in which one elder functions as the pastor.¹²²

c) *Recent British Baptist theology* emphasizes the plural eldership style as addressed in the ABC new constitution. Between 2007 and 2013 a British pastor, played an important role in writing its new constitution. Part of this constitution involves the question of the ordination of pastors and allows for greater influence by the ABC over churches experiencing conflict. Previously, the ordination decision was made entirely by the local church with the ABC's formal blessing.¹²³ The new constitution (2007)

¹²¹ See Farraj 2014.

¹²² Beasley-Murray 1992.

¹²³ The old constitution made no reference to ordination, but there were unwritten implicitly agreed procedures.

recognized two offices: elder (*sheikh*)¹²⁴ and deacon (*shamas*).¹²⁵ Among the elders, the pastor is regarded as having a special role in teaching, presiding over the congregation and officers of the church. The new constitution represents a shift that has taken place in the relationship between the individual congregation and the ABC. Now the ABC interviews the candidate to check his suitability and thus has more authority.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, the ultimate decision still remains with the local church.¹²⁷

On the issue of singular versus plural eldership there is on-going debate, much as with other Baptists elsewhere. Some churches fear the abuse or loss of power, which leads to a reluctance to elect a single pastor or even an eldership board.

In Israel,¹²⁸ since the new constitution, the ABC has been taking an increasingly active role in the process of ordination, not only in examining candidates, but also leading ordination services with only ordained pastors invited to lay hands on the ordinand. This is an example of the Baptist concern for interdependence, with the ultimate decision resting with the church. The ABC can also recommend pastors to vacant churches, or recommend a probationary period to monitor suitability. It is not, however, involved in the process of ordaining elders, but only pastors. This leads to the pastors having a special role among the elders.¹²⁹

3.3.6.3 The shortage of trained pastors

Education of clergy for churches was virtually non-existent, as only several selected individuals were sent to study in seminaries in Western countries. Some others, during the 1970s-1990s, studied in an American extension department (CSTC) in Haifa

¹²⁴An elder in the Free Church is a lay person who serves as an administrator, he preaches and/or has pastoral roles in a local church; sometimes he is ordained to such an office. There is a difference between ordained elders and lay elders.

¹²⁵ A deacon in the Free Church is a laity administrative role not a clerical office.

¹²⁶ Before the new constitution (2007), seven pastors were ordained by missionaries, three pastors were ordained by their churches' initiative and the ABC. After the new constitution, only three pastors were ordained by the ABC (in 2009 and 2013). Eight non-ordained pastors are pastoring churches.

¹²⁷ To be an ordained ABC pastor the candidate must satisfy not only his local church but also the ABC.

¹²⁸ Internationally, Baptist associations and Unions have varying levels of influence on the local church.

¹²⁹ Farraj 2014.

of which served as a pre-university level theological education centre for people interested in ministry. These leadership courses contained uncritically imported theology based on American perspectives and culture. Some of these leaders were ordained as Baptist pastors.

A small number of pastors with basic theological (pastoral) training meant that each church relied on local lay leadership. This strengthened congregational leadership, but caused a great tension in leadership between pastor and young laity who were very often highly educated. Findings show only 1/3 of the pastors (including non-ordained pastors) are well educated (have additional degree to their theological training). Another 1/3 have diplomas from a local Bible College, 1/6 have a Master's degree in theology from Western seminaries, 1/6 are still working on their Bachelor of Divinity from Western seminaries. The foundation of the Nazareth Evangelical Seminary in 2007 that merged into Nazareth Evangelical College (NEC) in 2013 has come to fulfil the need for local theological education and well-educated leaders.

3.3.6.4 Church buildings

Based on the Baptist principle of the autonomy of the Local church, missionaries in Israel desired to register buildings in the name of local congregations, but some opposing voices claimed that this could result in the abuse of the property particularly when a church is controlled by a certain prominent family. As the price of land and property is very high, the use of church property has been a key issue in church splits that resulted in the need for a mechanism to decide church property ownership when a church is split. Serious splits have happened in congregations with church-owned buildings.¹³⁰

Until 2018, church buildings remain registered under the name of the BCI (local branch of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in the

¹³⁰ This factor is discussed in depth in Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1.

United States), yet BCI involvement is minimal. One missionary told me, ‘The mission has not turned over legal ownership of the property to the locals because of the disputes at churches.’¹³¹

3.3.6.5 The Convention of Evangelical Churches in Israel (CECI)

In 2005, representatives from five evangelical denominations and several para-church organizations in Israel formed a coalition in order to make a bid with the Israeli government to gain recognition as an ‘official religion’,¹³² a unified entity entitled to the same rights and responsibilities as Israel’s other officially recognized religions.¹³³ However, the criteria required by the Israeli government for recognition as a single ‘recognized community’¹³⁴ have confronted the federation with a number of challenges, especially given the diverse theologies represented by its five constituent members.

A further advantage of working together is that it would improve visibility and legitimacy in the broader society; traditional Christians, Muslims and Jews often express confusion at the many denominations and churches that are all called ‘evangelical’. A single organization grouping them in one body in faith and practice would help them to be recognized by the broader society.

Based on my observation and interviews, openness to other denominations was available after the convention was founded. This openness, however, encouraged mobility of pastors/leaders who as a result of conflict would easily leave for another

¹³¹ Ron, Jun 2014.

¹³² The various churches that constitute the CECI amount to 34 individual congregations: Baptist Churches 18, Assemblies of God 7, Church of the Nazarene 3, Christian Missionary Alliance 2, and Open Brethren 4. These numbers are taken from the 3rd annual report book published by the Convention (2012:71-75). One can add to this the 5 Plymouth Brethren churches not members of the convention.

¹³³ These organizational factors were a primary motivation for some evangelical church leaders to seek to change the legal status of their churches from individual *amutot* (non-profit organization) to an *edah moqeret*. Given that such a change in status would have a better chance of success with the Israeli government if the various denominations combined to form a unified front, working together was more desirable than each denomination going it alone.

¹³⁴ *Edah moqeret* in Hebrew.

denomination. Between 2010 and 2017, three Baptist pastors/leaders left the ABC and joined other denominations.

In sum the Evangelical movement in the Holy Land is relatively new, being approximately 100 years old. Since the 1990s, Palestinian Baptists in Israel have been in the process of indigenization through running their own institutions and churches and thus, many basic elements of church life and theology are still in formative stages. This also explains the low level of institutionalization in the Baptist denomination. Palestinian Baptists have also started to engage in contextualization, determining their own areas of interest and action, such as changing the ABC constitution, obtaining official recognition from the State of Israel and establishing their local seminary.

3.4 Statistics of Splits and Exits in the Baptist Churches in Israel

The results of the field-mapping show that the generational factor (mentioned in Section 3.2.2) explains the different strategies each generation use in handling church conflict. Ateek (1989), Rabinowitz and Abu Baker (2002) typologies suggest the attitude of the three generations towards political conflict is different. The ‘survival generation’ refers to those who became refugees in their own land in 1948; they gave up and accepted reality. The ‘worn-out generation’ refers to those who sought coexistence and struggled to get into leadership but failed; the ‘stand tall generation’ refers to those who demanded their full rights as a condition for coexistence. On the basis of my research, my thesis is that these generational characteristics can also be identified among the Palestinian Baptists during congregational conflict. I am aware that these are only generalizations and cannot be used to characterize everyone born in that generation.¹³⁵ The first-generation accepted reality and kept the status quo without

¹³⁵ Some second-generation members might have a ‘stand tall’ attitude, and some third-generation might have a ‘worn-out’ attitude.

resolving the church conflict; the second-generation fought for change, splitting the church when this failed; the third-generation exited, starting new churches.¹³⁶

As mentioned previously, I find two different periods of time in Palestinian Baptist life in Israel which influenced their responses to conflict.

a) Before the missionaries' departure (1911-1990): in eight decades no splits were recorded. There were exits both from unsatisfied members and a few pastors who were encouraged by missionaries to leave their position. The first-generation who belong to the 'survival' group were more evident during this period; they tended to accept reality rather than seeking change. One first-generation deacon told me, 'Leaving the church was not seen as an option during the conflict, even after the pastor fired us [the deacons] we kept attending the church hoping to convince him to change his attitude.'¹³⁷

b) After the missionaries' departure (1990-2016): at least 32 church conflicts ended by three different strategies of conflict management. (1) Church split into two, (2) church leader exited with his family and founded a new church and, (3) church leader exited with his family and joined another ministry/church.

Between 1990 and 2005 the common strategy for handling church conflict was *splitting*. Between 2006 and 2016 the common strategy for handling church conflict was

¹³⁶ In order to evaluate this result I interviewed two Jordanian pastors: one a Palestinian pastor who lived in Jordan for many years and is familiar with the three case studies; the second a Jordanian pastor living in Israel pastoring a Palestinian church. According to them, Baptist churches in Jordan, which include many Palestinians, have very few splits, for three reasons. First, Jordanians have deep respect for their King; in the same manner Jordanian Baptists (young and old generations) have respect for people in authority such as pastors; it is likely that this is a reflection of their national Jordanian identity in their church practice. Second, Jordanian society is more unified than the deeply divided Israeli-Palestinian society. Third, the Jordanian state does not allow people to randomly found a church; each church should be registered legally. Additionally, I interviewed two Lebanese evangelical leaders, and according to them Lebanese Baptist churches face frequent splits and they have three conventions. Their society is also deeply divided like the Israeli-Palestinian society.

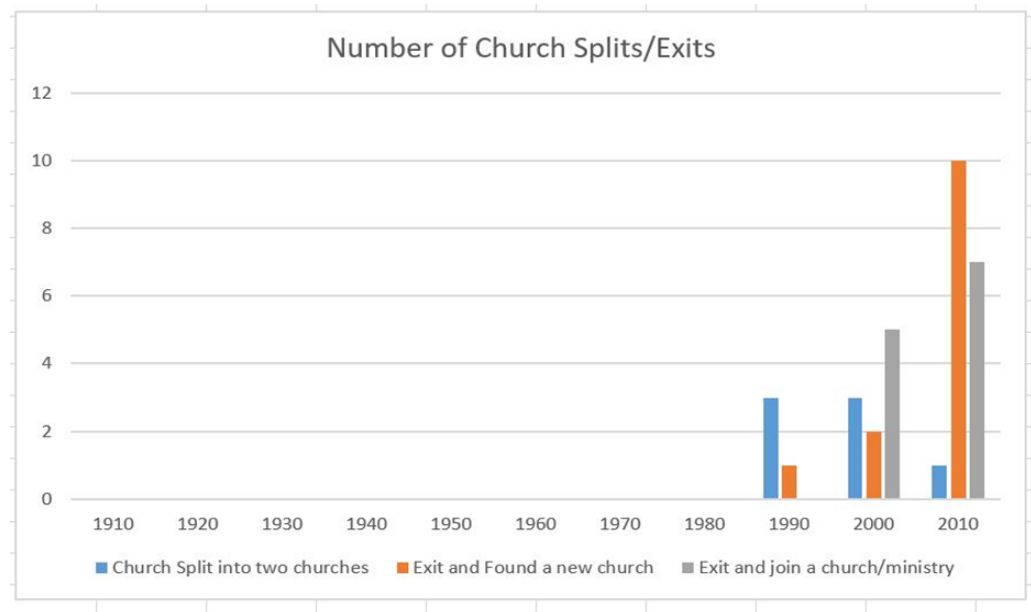
Seemingly, the excessive deference of Jordan's younger generation Baptists towards pastors (possibly because of their monarchical form of government) is similar to that of first-generation Palestinian Baptists in Israel who also defer so much to pastors but for different reasons (sacramental theology of the mother traditional churches of the converts). However, young generation Palestinian Baptists in Israel, who live in different political conditions, handle differently intra-church conflicts. We can conclude that the political situation affects the attitude of each generation towards church conflict. However, I am aware that this argument needs further research; though space limits further discussion.

¹³⁷ Jack, Apr 2014.

exiting – founding a new church or joining a new ministry. It seems that in the last decade, conflict was more often resolved by exiting rather than splitting. This is similar to the strategy used in the Baptist churches in the West.

These results are portrayed in the following chart (the numbers in the chart are by decade).

Table 3.2 Splits/exits in the Baptist churches in Israel



It is important to understand the nature (conditions) of the relationship between the factors (political, social, structural, theological, cultural and economic) mentioned above and the strategies (processes) that have been used to handle this condition that pertain to the phenomenon of church splits (consequence) over the last two decades. Giddens (1984) discusses the importance of studying the processes by which actors, in specific contexts, reproduce or change social structures through their interactions. This helps generate a better understanding of conflict in local Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel.

I briefly present the findings of this research regarding splits/exits, conditions, processes and consequences separately for each decade.

3.4.1 Splits and exits between 1990 and 2005

During this decade six splits and one exit took place.

- 1) A split - a youth leader with several families left and started a new church.
- 2) A split - a youth leader left his church with several families and started a new church.¹³⁸
- 3) An exit - a young pastor, who was in conflict with the former pastor who refused to pass on power, was encouraged to leave the church to lead another one.
- 4) A split - young leaders left church with many families and started a new church.
- 5) A split - young leaders left with some families and started a new church.
- 6) Two splits - a pastor from a non-Baptist denomination joined two rural Baptist churches. In one church he became the pastor; after a short time the church split. In the other church he tried to take over as pastor; when he did not succeed the church split as well.

During this period the splits were public and acrimonious, irreversible, foreseen and had widespread impact.

Conditions related to splits during this decade can be summarized as follow: (a) the leadership that split was an educated new generation (those belonging to the ‘worn-out generation’) seeking for change and wanting to be part of church leadership, (b) most of the pastors of these churches were first-generation Baptists (those belonging to the ‘survival generation’) and were ordained as pastors during the 1960s, (c) most of the pastors had basic theological education, and felt threatened by the younger educated generation, (d) most of the pastors were the main spiritual authority and were often ‘in charge of everything’; they hardly share or pass on power to the younger generation, (e) the splits took place in churches that owned church buildings and institutions

¹³⁸ He was also recruited by the ABC to pastor a small church.

(economic/cultural/social capital), (f) the ABC was weak; it is voluntary and did not have a clear structure to handle church splits, also some ABC leaders were involved in these splits, (h) during this period pastors did not have the mobility to join another denomination because the convention (CECI) which facilitated such movement was only established in 2005.

Processes and consequences during this decade show that younger leaders who belonged to the ‘worn-out generation’ were more evident in this decade. They sought change, but failed to get into leadership as pastors hardly shared or passed on power. Young leaders left with half of the church after a dispute. The consequences were splits.¹³⁹

3.4.2 Splits and exits between 2006 and 2016

During this decade 24 exits and one split took place. It is clear that there were more exits in this period than in the period 1990-2005, but less splits.

- 1) Eight young leaders exited their churches and founded new ones.
- 2) Eight leaders exited their churches and joined another church’s leadership.
- 3) Two leaders exited their churches and joined another ministry.
- 4) Four young leaders, in conflict with their pastor, were encouraged by the ABC to leave and lead other small churches.
- 5) Two young female leaders exited their churches and started their own ministry.
- 6) A split - a pastor left his church with half of the members and established a new church.

Regarding conditions related to this decade, I find that this decade is characterized by the emergence of a new style of churches which I call *personalized churches*, where

¹³⁹ In one church the ‘worn-out generation’ split the church several years into the conflict. In their opinion this was the only way to deal with the conflict. One of them explained, ‘The business meetings were aggressive and full of accusations. They hurt us deeply and accused us of trying to fire the pastor. However, we decided to leave the church only after the pastor changed the constitution and dismissed the deacons from office’ (Sami, Feb 2014).

each church was recognized by the pastor's name. People attended the church because of the pastor's charisma. This left younger people in the church with no hope of taking part in leading the church (unless they were part of his family),¹⁴⁰ leading them to silently leave the church to start their own new churches. This kind of conflict and outcome was identified in more than 50% of the churches. It is reasonable to conclude that pastors who had established a church themselves could cause other leaders to leave – the 'founder's syndrome' as Kassis and Costa (2012) call it – unlike the situation when a pastor was not the founder of the church in which case it was easier to make him leave.

Furthermore, the findings show that churches that went through a split experienced splitting again. Additionally, churches that split from the mother church would be more likely to experience a further split. One pastor whose church split twice, first from the mother church and second from the new church he founded, said, 'if some Baptist churches were recognized by the ABC after splitting, then it is legitimate for other churches to split too.'¹⁴¹ Unresolved conflict in the first decade (1990-2005) gave legitimacy to contemporary churches to split, as this became an accepted norm.

Processes and consequences were different in this decade. The 'stand-tall generation' was evident in this period; they were less traditional and more loyal to ecclesial ideology; they discovered a new sense of pride in themselves, they thought and acted differently. If the pastor was not willing to share power/pass on power, they exited and founded their own church. They did not even struggle for change within the existing church.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ In rural areas, churches are small and have family leadership. Some churches started as home churches and the pastor is in control. The pastor's family somehow control the church and do not share power outside the family realm.

¹⁴¹ Pastor-C, 2014.

¹⁴² During the conflict of one of the churches, the youth were having their own youth meetings outside the church building in a school auditorium. One leader explained, 'We did not feel welcomed at church, with all the conflict going on we decided to focus on our youth ministry outside the church' (open interview with youth leader).

During this period the common strategy for handling church conflict was exits. Most of these exits happened when the pastor attempted to ensure that an ambitious young leader understood that he was not welcomed as a decision-maker. Generally, the official statement for leaving the church would be that he was ‘guided by the Lord to start a new ministry’, and left peacefully, even though many knew that he left unhappily. Unambitious leaders would leave and join another church or denomination hoping to be welcomed by another leadership.

3.5 Conclusion

The missionaries’ departure along with other changes in the social, economic, cultural, theological, structural and generational factors influenced Palestinian Baptist responses to church conflict. It is likely that a combination of these factors contributed to church conflicts that led to splits/exits among Palestinian Baptists.

The findings show that splits within these churches arose from multiple characteristics, which are unique to a church that does not act like the traditional churches in its community. Their identity crisis and living in a legally uncertain environment (as a threefold minority and second class citizens) which mirrors their insecure feelings in church life, the scattered field of very small churches, the flat structure and the absence of a Patriarch in a patriarchal community, the lack of economic capital, the low level of institutionalization, the pastors’ struggle over livelihood and power that is constantly being threatened by lay leaders, the influx of educated young leaders with commitment to individual rights and their ‘rebellion’ against patriarchy, all combined to encourage splits/exits.

Furthermore, the power that has kept Palestinian Baptist churches together has weakened. The new generation is more individualistic and churches focus on the vertical dimension and less on the communal. At the same time, churches are

personalized, they have no assets, poor accountability to the ABC, and splits/exits have become an option.

The results also show that the generational factor explains the different strategies used in handling church conflict during the two decades after missionary departure. While in the first decade (1990-2005), the main strategy was splitting, in the second decade (2006-2016) the main strategy was exiting. It is likely that in the Palestinian Baptist churches there are three different generational attitudes: 'survival', 'worn-out' and 'stand-tall'. Each attitude used a different strategy to handle church conflict. The first-generation with its 'survival' attitude tried to maintain the status quo, even if that left the conflict unresolved, and thus until the early 1990s no splits/exits were recorded. In the first decade after the missionaries' departure the second-generation with its 'worn-out' attitude split the church after they failed to become part of the leadership. In the second decade after the missionaries' departure, the third-generation with its 'stand-tall' attitude exited their churches to start new one when their pastor did not share power. It seems the different generations that have been identified in the Palestinian society in Israel as a whole can also be found in Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel.

Second and third-generation Baptists, who are more open to the outside world than the previous generation, have integrated secular-Western values, affecting the way they dealt with church conflict. They have adopted a common Western-Baptist conflict management practice, namely splits and exits, which is not recognized as a conflict management practice within traditional churches in their community.

Finally, since the 1990s Palestinian Baptists in Israel have been in the process of indigenization, running their own churches and organizations, while also engaging in contextualization, shaping their own theology. Most Baptists have identified some aspects of their imported theology which they like, such as church autonomy, single-pastor church, ecclesiastical polity, pietism, individualism and the focus on the vertical

dimension. However, they have also identified certain things to leave behind, such as the cessationist teaching they received from some American Baptists. They prefer charismatic theology. Regarding Zionist theology, Palestinian Baptists have diverse opinions; there is a strong debate around this issue that causes tension between them. This process of contextualization is ongoing, as Baptists struggle to obtain official recognition as a religious body from the State of Israel. Additionally, the foundation of Nazareth Evangelical College is an example of local Baptists having identified a need for local theological education.

After exploring the different potential factors that contributed to conflict in the Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel, in the next chapter I will examine the primary factors that led to splits/exits in three case-studies.

Chapter Four

4. The Nature and Causes of Church Conflict in Three Case-Studies of Palestinian Baptist Churches in Israel

4.1 Introduction

Having described the context, mapped the field, and explained the environment and the potential factors that contributed to conflict in the Palestinian Baptist churches, I will now examine the nature of conflict and the main factors that caused splits in three case-studies.

This chapter reveals that Palestinian Baptists are navigating between their affiliations to different communities with competing worldviews and identities: (1) Western-secular rationality acquired through their involvement in Israeli institutions, (2) Palestinian cultural deference to patriarchal authority, and (3) dual religious commitment to Episcopalian and Congregationalist traditions.¹

I begin with a brief description of the churches, providing pertinent background information needed to understand the dynamics of occurrences before and during the conflict. Then I analyse the nature and causes of conflict explaining the primary and secondary factors that led to church splits/exits.

4.2 Historical Background of the Three Churches and their Conflicts

4.2.1 Case study-A

4.2.1.1 Background

Church-A is located in a town in Israel. It is surrounded by larger traditional Christian churches in terms of both membership and property owned. These churches have buildings and a hierarchical form of government, which is very different from

¹ Many Palestinian Baptists whom I interviewed used English and Hebrew words as part of a fluent conversation in Arabic, and some of the more educated even switched back and forth between Arabic and English/Hebrew. This might indicate how Palestinian Baptists in Israel are affected by three different cultures.

church-A and its relative lack of congregational property. It is to be expected that this environment would influence the way the church perceives itself.

Church-A was founded a few decades before 1948. After the 1948 war it was greatly weakened but the congregation was revived by the arrival of American Southern Baptist missionaries, with Pastor Mike pastoring church-A for nine years until he resigned and informed the church that it was time for an indigenous pastor. According to the church constitution, a new pastor had to be recommended by the church and his name brought to all members for voting; however, the personal preference of Pastor Mike was to play an important role in determining whose name would be brought for voting.

Pastor-A was elected pastor and ordained after he returned from a year's study abroad. There was community disagreement regarding Pastor-A's ordination. After he was ordained two large families left the church. Pastor-A enjoyed a team of helpers, including deacons and some American missionaries, who helped lead the church while other leaders were busy with church plants and activities. A few became pastors in new Baptist church plants and some held leadership roles in an educational institution established by American Southern Baptist missionaries to serve the local population.

During the late 1980s and into the early 1990s church-A had an influx of young people. Evangelistic gatherings in the church, programmes in the educational institution, and Baptist summer camps attracted this group.² These young people came from medium socioeconomic families and were cared for by young Baptist missionaries living in the town. This newer younger group did not have strong ties with the pastor, which led to some leaving the church.

² During the 1970s and 1980s the church saw growth, mainly as a result of people coming to church to hear these charismatic speakers preach, which led many people to join the church.

Table 4.1 Members of church-A

	First-generation born in 1930s-1940s	Second-generation born in 1950s- 1960s	Third-generation born in 1970s-1980s	Missionaries
Pastor	1			
Deacons: 4	3	1		
Church committee: 7	3	3		1
Church members: 100	30%	30%	30%	2 families

4.2.1.2 Conflicts, splits/exits in church-A

a) A youth exit: a group in their early twenties left church

This group felt they did not belong in the church, even though they had attended it for years. They felt they were not pastored properly by Pastor-A and left the church. Kareem, who attended church-A for 15 years, said, ‘One Sunday, Pastor-A greeted me and asked me about my name; I felt humiliated and decided not to come back to church-A.’³ Nora, a church-A member, invited Pastor-A to speak at an ecumenical student conference. He was very excited to see many young Christians so he invited them to come to his church, not realising that many of them had attended for some years.⁴ Some of this group left the church, and others looked for other Evangelical churches to join.

b) A split: a ministry leader and some families left church-A and established a new church

Jonathan was an influential young leader in church-A. According to the church’s constitution, each ministry leader must be re-elected after a certain period of time. It was time for Jonathan to finish his term, and he strongly felt he should continue. Pastor-

³ Open interview, Kareem, 2014.

⁴ Nora, Mar 2014.

A insisted Jonathan should be replaced. The deacons also tried to convince Jonathan to stay and work alongside the new ministry leader.⁵ Jonathan believed Pastor-A was threatened by his influential ministry at church, he asserted, ‘I was shocked to hear that some people from the pastor’s side said that I was leading a conspiracy to replace Pastor-A!’⁶ Backed by one of the missionaries, Jonathan decided to leave the church and begin a home group. One year later, Jonathan founded a new Baptist church.

c) A split: young members and deacons left church after a conflict with Pastor-A

When Pastor-A reached pension age, the church committee decided to extend his time as there was no replacement. Two years later, Pastor-A and the deacons invited Pastor George to be assistant pastor for six months and then replace Pastor-A.⁷ Pastor-A’s wife claimed that George was invited without Pastor-A being informed. After six months, surprisingly, Pastor-A informed the deacons he was not ready to resign and wished to continue. He suggested George could work under his authority but George refused. This resulted in a dispute and many heated meetings. In one meeting Pastor-A overrode the constitution, dismissed the deacons, and finally the church split and church-A2 was founded. The power dynamics between Pastor-A, the deacons and the younger generation are discussed in Section 4.3.

The founding members were some of the young people from the 1980s revival and the deacons. The mission’s area-director allowed church-A2 to begin using a school auditorium a few metres away from church-A. Later George was invited to pastor church-A2 on a part time basis. Church-A2 attracted new members and quickly grew to 100 members. In subsequent years church-A2 was attractive but later on this church, too, experienced a few exits. Church-A2 went through four different exits of leaders

⁵ Jack, Apr 2014; Tamer, Mar 2014; Jonathan, Apr 2014.

⁶ Jonathan, Apr 2014.

⁷ Church protocol 23 Feb, 1995.

who were not satisfied, two of them became pastors of new churches, and the other two joined another church leadership team.

Third-party interventions in this conflict were mainly informal individual initiatives by respected figures in the evangelical community. These interventions took place during and after the split and were not successful. Another important intervention was done by the BCI and the ABC who initiated a retreat between disputants and were able to draft a preliminary agreement. This initiative also failed later on, as I will explain in Chapter Five.

d) Five exits: Leaders left church-A and founded a new church or ministry

Church-A also grew with two dynamic young pastors helping Pastor-A, namely Mark and Majd. Pastor-A continued to recruit young pastors to work alongside him, but according to them they decided to leave when they discovered that he was not willing to share power.

1. Majd joined the church upon Pastor-A's request and became assistant pastor. He left after few years.⁸
2. Another young leader ambitious to become a pastor left the church and started a new one.
3. Adam, a deacon, left and joined Church-A2.
4. Victor joined Church-A hoping he would be ordained as a pastor.⁹ Pastor-A agreed, but had him sign an agreement that this ordination did not mean that he would replace Pastor-A at any future given time. Victor left and founded a new church.

⁸ Majd was previously the pastor of another Baptist church.

⁹ Victor was previously the leader of another Baptist church.

5. Samir joined church-A and became assistant pastor.¹⁰ After few years, he decided to leave and joined another church.

According to interviews with the above leaders,¹¹ seemingly Pastor-A had a perpetual pattern of behaviour to protect his position. He would enlist a young assistant pastor to help him. Then, when church members became excited about the new assistant, Pastor-A ‘encouraged’ him to leave using various means, such as telling the assistant that he was no longer welcome,¹² seeking to control the assistant’s behaviour,¹³ and refusing to let him be part of the church decision-making team.

In 2017 Pastor-A is still the pastor of church-A. Church-A has an average attendance of 20 members every Sunday and some guest speakers come to visit and preach. I have attended several services. The building is large and can contain 300 attendees, but only 20 come regularly and most are in their seventies. There are only three families. Members sit separately as if there is no connection between them. In August 2015 I attended a service at church-A. Pastor-A preached about salvation. His wife played the piano and another woman sang from her place. Nizar, an old member, led the worship from the pulpit without singing himself; the songs were also about salvation. At some point a few members left before the end of the service after they fulfilled their roles (worship and collecting the offering). Immediately after the service everybody walked towards the door and left without fellowship time. I did not feel welcomed to stay as no one greeted me except Pastor-A and his wife who knew I was coming, but even their direction was towards leaving the church. I joined another service where Pastor-A spoke about judgment. A group of tourists had joined that service. Surprisingly that same day an elder in church-A2 told me that they were

¹⁰ Samir was a veteran pastor who was previously a pastor of another Baptist church.

¹¹ Samir, Mark, Majd, Adam, George, Jonathan, Victor.

¹² Pastor-B, Apr 2014.

¹³ Majd, Jun 2014, George, Mar 2014.

expecting a group to come to their church, but apparently they had mistakenly gone to church-A since it is located on the main street and has a church sign whereas church-A2 meets in a hall and is not identifiable as a church from the outside.¹⁴ This misunderstanding has happened several times.

4.2.2 Case study-B

4.2.2.1 Background

Church-B, established before 1948 by American Southern Baptists, is located in a town in Israel. The church halted operations twice: first, before World War II, when the Lebanese pastor, went back to his home country, and many members of the church were scattered due to the conflict; and second in 1972.¹⁵ In 1980s, an American veteran Baptist missionary revived the church, starting with a few members, including two local ordained pastors. At the time, a few young people joined the church and it did well for a few years until the missionary left to take a position overseas. Pastor-B, a promising young Palestinian leader, came back after he finished his Masters in Theology from a western country. With missionaries' support,¹⁶ he became pastor of Church-B. Pastor-B, charismatic with a strong personality, was successful in rebuilding the church, attracting families and many middle-class professionals, and at certain times had over 70 members.

¹⁴ Field note, Aug 2015; open interview with Rami.

¹⁵ Up until this period American Baptist missionaries had been working with Jews and Arabs together, trying to develop Arab-Jewish churches. The Baptist Church was re-opened in 1965 and had three pastors: a Jew, a Palestinian, and an American missionary. This church was not functional, because of theological differences between Jews and Palestinians, mainly after the six-day war. This then led to the closure of the church in 1972.

¹⁶ Missionaries were indirectly the main decision-makers during this period as they owned the church buildings and funded part of the pastors' salaries.

Table 4.2 Members of church-B

	First-generation born in 1930s-1940s	Second-generation born in 1950s-1960s	Third-generation Born in 1970s-1980s	Missionaries
Pastor		1		
Deacons				
Church committee		7		
Church members: 70	10%	80%	10%	1

4.2.2.2 Conflicts, splits/exits in church-B

a) An exit: a leader left church-B

Yasmin was a ministry leader at church-B. She claimed that the pastor did not share power. Although according to some interviewees her ministry at church was successful, she left and joined another church.¹⁷

b) An exit: a leader left church-B

Nadia was a ministry leader at church-B for many years. Pastor-B had been dissatisfied with her style of leadership over the last few years and was asked to leave her church ministry. Nadia left church.¹⁸ However, some interviewees stated that Nadia was indirectly criticizing Pastor-B.¹⁹ When the church committee questioned Pastor-B regarding his conflicts with Yasmin and Nadia he became upset and conflict escalated.

c) A Split: five church leaders left church after a conflict with Pastor-B

As a result of Yasmin and Nadia's exits, the church committee requested for church-B to be led by a council alongside Pastor-B and to have a constitution. Pastor-B could not handle this request well and viewed this as a conspiracy to fire him; his

¹⁷ Yasmin, Sep 2016, Elias, Rana, Aug 2015.

¹⁸ Elias, Nadia, Rana, and Pastor-B, Aug 2015.

¹⁹ Lina and Rana, Aug 2015.

condition was, ‘I, the pastor, lead the meetings and I, the pastor, have the primary individual responsibility and privilege to lead the church.’²⁰ The church committee worked in creating a constitution without Pastor-B being involved. This led to heated business meetings between the committee members and the Pastor. When they called for a general meeting ignoring Pastor-B, Pastor-B dismissed the church committee.

After a few months of turmoil, the church split. Around 60% of its members (mainly professionals) left and established church-B2. The dynamics between Pastor-B and the church leaders are discussed in Section 4.3.

The attempts of the ABC to reconcile the parties were in vain; Pastor-B did not encourage any third-party to intervene.²¹ The other group, led by Elias, decided to withdraw all their requests to use the church building and established a new church.²²

In August 2015, I attended a service at church-B. The building can hold 100 people; but there were about 30 people in attendance, many of them family and relatives of the pastor. In this service his two daughters led the worship with two other young women, and his wife translated; the worship theme was ‘God rebuilds broken relationships.’ His sermon about David’s repentance was short; in the past he preached with more enthusiasm and for a much longer time.²³

Church-B2 meets in a school auditorium. Initially it grew and doubled its attendance. It is led by a committee and has no pastor. A few years later Nadia, who joined church-B2 and became a committee member, felt at some point that she was not given enough power and decided to begin a new ministry. She left with her family. In August 2015, I attended a service at church-B2; the attendees were the same group that split the church ten years ago, except they were ten years older and without their

²⁰ Pastor-B’s letter to ABC, 9 Dec 2005.

²¹ Which would have been the traditional thing to do.

²² Open interview with Rami, official of ABC; a letter church-B2 sent to the ABC, 15 Dec 2005; Pastor-B’s letter to the ABC, 23 April 2007.

²³ Field note, Aug 2015.

children. At this service there were two guests, a pastor (who was invited to preach), his family and another family. Church membership was only 11. The church has no new generation (children/youth), and it is run by the same church committee from a decade ago. They have no meetings except the weekly main service. Immediately after the service everybody left with no fellowship time.²⁴

4.2.3 Case study-C

4.2.3.1 Background

Church-C, established after 1948 by American Southern Baptists is located in a town in Israel. A decade later, an indigene was appointed pastor of church-C.²⁵ In the early 1980s, church-C decided to build a care institution on its premises which later became an integral part of the church.²⁶

A young man from this town became a Baptist and was eager to serve. He travelled to a western country to study theology. He returned after few years and led a ministry at church-C. Meanwhile the pastor became busier developing the care institution, which was beginning to show signs of incompatibility with the church mission. Many young church members became excited about the young leader, which created tensions between him and the pastor. The ABC intervened and decided to ordain the church leader (hence, Pastor-C) and appointed him to pastor a Baptist church in another town.²⁷ Many of the youth and families left church-C and joined him, he also led a home group in the original town.

The old pastor tried to revive church-C in the town, but he was too busy with the care institution. From then until his death only a few people attended church-C which had shrunk to near non-existence.

²⁴ Field note, Aug 2015.

²⁵ Register 2000, Mansour 2018.

²⁶ Missionaries' report.

²⁷ The ABC can ordain pastors according to its constitution. See Appendix 4, 'Ordination' §2.6 in the constitution.

4.2.3.2 Conflicts, splits/exits in church-C2

a) *The creation of church-C2*

Pastor-C decided to resign from the church he was pastoring and moved back to his town. He established Church-C2 to meet the need there for a Baptist ministry. The church rented a facility and was successful in attracting many young people and families and quickly grew to 60 members. It became a member of the ABC. Later, the ABC decided to halt the membership of church-C in the ABC as the church basically ceased to exist. Prior to his death, the pastor of church-C was asked by the ABC to allow church-C2 to use the church building, but all requests were in vain.

Table 4.3 Members of church-C2

	First-generation born in 1930s-1940s	Second-generation born in 1950s-1960s	Third-generation born in 1970s-1980s	Missionaries
Pastor		1		
Deacons				
Church committee: 4			4	
Church members: 50-60	10%	20%	70%	

b) *The conflict in church-C2*

Church-C2 with many young educated members began an evangelistic ministry to reach the Arab world. The ministry became successful and was run as a church ministry, led by Pastor-C, and managed by Bishara, a young church leader.

The success of the evangelistic ministry was phenomenal, nonetheless, a few years later, a dispute erupted between Pastor-C and Bishara concerning the management of the evangelistic ministry and who was in charge. Pastor-C explained, ‘This ministry became the vision of our church, I started to work hard on issues of fundraising for this project and I involved young members in it. It became the “baby” of the church and

here was the mistake!²⁸ However, Bishara claimed that he started this project as a church ministry, and when Pastor-C became involved the project became successful. Bishara added, ‘When we did strategic planning Pastor-C wanted to become the manager of this project.’²⁹ Pastor-C told me that his suggestion was to have two managers, one to manage the ministry and one for fundraising.

Interviewees claimed this was the source of conflict in church-C2. The church was divided into two parties: (1) Pastor-C, his extended family, friends and new church members, (2) Bishara, his family and some church leaders. This conflict grew and people spoke unsympathetically about each other. A third-party intervention failed to resolve the dispute. Pastor-C decided to leave the evangelistic ministry to Bishara as an independent project unrelated to church-C2.³⁰ Although this project left the church, its problems remained and conflict between the pastor and Bishara escalated.³¹ Consequently, Pastor-C became angry and Bishara was asked to leave the church.³²

Six years before the conflict, a charismatic Arab Canadian pastor (hence, the Canadian Pastor) became a close friend of Pastor-C and church-C2. He visited church-C2 several times, influencing it with charismatic teaching. During the conflict he mentored members and tried to help Pastor-C. Based on the interviews it seems his ideology influenced the way church members handled this conflict, as I will explain in the next chapters.

c) A few church leaders exited from church-C2

During the conflict at church-C2 three church leaders left. One leader, Albert, admitted, ‘I could not submit spiritually to Pastor-C any more. My wife and I prayed

²⁸ Pastor-C, Jul 2015.

²⁹ Bishara, Aug 2015.

³⁰ Third-party report, Dec 2009; Bishara, Aug 2015.

³¹ Bishara, Albert, and Shirin, Aug 2015.

³² Pastor-C, Jul 2015.

and we felt we should leave; if I couldn't submit spiritually to my pastor then I would risk myself and the church.'³³

A year later, Pastor-C decided to resign from church-C2. He appointed a leader from a different church to pastor alongside him for six months before he would leave to pastor church-D.³⁴ This action caused more disagreements in the church, resulting in a serious dispute during one Sunday meeting, where members confronted and argued with Pastor-C. Shortly after this Pastor-C decided to leave church-C2.³⁵

d) Pastor-C left church-C2 and the ABC intervened

Pastor-C asked the ABC to take over the ministry in church-C2. The ABC met with Pastor-C and the leaders exited from church-C2. The ABC recommended that they return and support Pastor-C.³⁶ Pastor-C insisted on leaving and the Ministry Committee of the ABC (hence, the ABC-Committee) became responsible for pastoring the church in the transition period. It tried to bring about reconciliation between Pastor-C and Bishara. The ABC-Committee met with them and they apologized to one another. Bishara, on the request of the ABC-Committee, apologized in front of the church. Pastor-C, who was not present in that meeting, became angry at not being included in this process as he was the pastor and felt he was the one who was wronged.³⁷

Pastor-C agreed to focus on pastoring church-D, but refused to drop his membership in church-C2 for his family's sake.³⁸ The ABC insisted Pastor-C drop his membership and requested that his family stay at church-C2. When Pastor-C left church his family and friends, who were not happy that he was leaving, left with him. The ABC

³³ Albert, Aug 2015.

³⁴ Where he has been pastoring for the last several years.

³⁵ Pastor-C, Jul 2015; Albert, Shirin, Aug 2015.

³⁶ Letter from the ABC-Committee 18 Jun 2013.

³⁷ Letter 18 Dec 2013.

³⁸ In the beginning the ABC-Committee agreed that he kept his membership but then changed its attitude (Pastor-C, July 2015; letter 27 Dec 2013).

worked to bring back the people who left church-C2 and Bishara returned after being absent for over three years.³⁹

e) Pastor-C established church-C3

Pastor-C decided to begin a 'home group' for people who left with him, and later established church-C3. When the ABC informed Pastor-C that this was unacceptable, he decided to resign from the ABC. At the same time, the ABC appointed Boulus, a young man with a Bachelor of Divinity, as the interim pastor; he pastored church-C2 until the reintegration took place.⁴⁰

f) Reconciliation

One year later Pastor-C started some efforts to reconcile and reintegrate with church-C2. He contacted the ABC-Committee which was positive to lead the reintegration.

The findings reveal two important stages in the reconciliation process. First, the reconciliation-retreat conference (titled: 'I am about to do a new thing'). Pastor-C, with church-C3, visited a retreat church-C2 was holding; Pastor-C went to the pulpit and tearfully apologized to church-C2. Worship continued for hours and different groups joined to pray together for healing and forgiveness. All interviewees told me that during that meeting an unexpected and very powerful reconciliation took place. This was followed by the reintegration of the two churches a few months later. Second, the Canadian Pastor's conference (titled: 'The complete love') which took place a year after the reintegration. Some interviewees said during the conference another barrier to real reconciliation fell down.⁴¹

³⁹ ABC records, Pastor-C, Bishara, 12, Aug 2015.

⁴⁰ ABC-Committee report; Boulus, Aug 2015; David and George, Aug 2015.

⁴¹ The two stages will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Boulus, the interim pastor, was appointed to pastor another church. He left church-C2 and Pastor-C returned to church-C2 as a member but refused to become the official pastor. He functioned as the acting pastor of church-C2, and his presence in the church made it difficult for the ABC and church-C2 to bring a new pastor.⁴² Later, Pastor-C insisted on pastoring church-C2 for two years, during which he would train a leader from the church to pastor the church after him.⁴³

The three case-studies presented the phenomenon where pastors, in a Congregationalist polity, were the main authority with power to dismiss church deacons /church committee or leaders from office. What was the source of their powerful authority? Why did pastors cling to power and destroy any form of competition to their position? Why were deacons/leaders unable to use their authority as church leaders to replace the pastor or take part in leadership? Why did dissatisfied members compromise and leave church? To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the nature and causes of conflict in Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel.

After presenting the background of churches A, B and C in the three cases, for case-A I will focus on the main split that led to the creation of church-A2. For case-B, I will focus on the split that led to the creation of church-B2 and for case-C, I will focus on the split that led to the creation of church-C3.

The three cases have many common characteristics: a similar context, all are in the same country, members are Palestinian Baptists converted from traditional churches, the churches were planted by the same mission, and they are members of the ABC. Nonetheless, they differ in: location, age of conflict,⁴⁴ generation of pastors/members,⁴⁵ and material capital.⁴⁶ It is evident that the theological and socio-cultural factors are the

⁴² Shirin, Albert, and Boulus, Aug 2015.

⁴³ ABC-Committee report, 8 Oct 2016.

⁴⁴ Old and contemporary.

⁴⁵ First, second, third generation Baptist.

⁴⁶ Church building, school.

primary factors contributing to the conflicts in the three cases. Secondary factors are church building, women's informal power and economic issues.

4.3 Primary Factors Contributing to the Conflicts

The recurrent main feature of the conflicts in the cases is the struggle between the pastor and the younger laity who sought power to influence and to shape the church future. In explaining the causes of the conflicts from the perspectives of both the pastor and the young laity, we can see the combination of the following factors operating from either side. From the pastor's side, the *theological* factor (from non-evangelical traditional Palestinian churches) and the *cultural* factor (patriarchal and hierarchical) combined powerfully as the key fundamental factors (of principle) to strengthen his desire to maintain his dominant position in the power structure of the church. The structural imbalance in power between the pastor and laity is therefore a manifestation of the above two factors and is not a fundamental factor in itself. From the young laity's side, the *theological* factor (Baptist ecclesiology) and the *socio-cultural* factor (their education) combined powerfully as the fundamental factors to strengthen their desire to share power with the pastor. The laity's dislike of structural imbalance is merely a manifestation of the more fundamental factors and is not a fundamental factor in itself, as seen in the further elaboration below.

Both pastors and laity can misuse power once they have it; if they do not have it, they may struggle to get it. It is worth noting that the new churches resulting from a split (church-A2 and church-B2) were led by a committee of lay people for a long time (10-12 years). In both churches, some leaders exit because they were not included in the leadership team. This pinpoints a central nature of church conflicts, which is the use, misuse or abuse, of power.

Seen in this way, the pastors and young laity do not share the same *theology and culture*, and the resulting clash between them reflects a deep generational clash in worldviews that encompasses theology, cultural values, and social relations.

4.3.1 Theological factor: tension between Episcopalian/sacramental versus Congregationalist/functionalist

The findings indicate that the clash between the theologies of the pastors and the young laity is mainly around Episcopalian/sacramental versus Congregationalist/functionalist views of the clergy and the church.⁴⁷ In theory the churches are Congregationalist; in practice they act as ‘Episcopalian’, as I will elaborate below. In the three cases, Palestinian Baptists who converted from traditional churches did not fully internalize and practise a Congregationalist polity for three main reasons: first, the lack of knowledge regarding how Congregationalist polity works; second, the pastors’ high view of ordination; third, the deep respect members have for clergy.

According to Volf (2002), ‘People make Christian beliefs their own and understand them in particular ways partly because of the practices to which they have been introduced; in which their souls and bodies have been trained in the source of their lives’ (256). He also adds that beliefs relate to sacraments. Core Christian beliefs are by definition normatively inscribed in sacraments but not in practices, and thus sacraments enact normative patterns for practices. The fact that the Palestinian Baptists’ former church background is Episcopalian/sacramental, while their current churches are Congregationalist/functionalist, sheds light on the tension and the contradictory way commitments occur as seen in the behaviours of pastors and laity, as I will explain.

⁴⁷ Sacrament is a Christian ritual regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace instituted by Christ for our sanctification such as baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, ordination, and matrimony among the Roman Catholic and many Orthodox Churches and baptism and the Eucharist among Protestants.

4.3.1.1 Tension in the way Baptists view ecclesiastical polity

There is a difference between the way Baptists view the significance of the Congregationalist form of government and the hierarchical view held by the traditional church denominations where almost all Palestinian Baptist converts were formerly members. According to Congregationalist polity, authority is ultimately held through membership of the organization based upon a theology of ‘the priesthood of all believers’. For the traditional churches only bishops have the exclusive right to ordain priests and deacons, and the hierarchy is sacramental as I elaborate below (however, there are different episcopal systems and some have considerable ‘democracy’ as in the Anglican Church). In this theology the priesthood is a lifelong sacrament, while in the Baptist churches it is functional. This will help to explain some of the contradictions in behaviour.⁴⁸

Volf (1998b) presents some distinctions between Free Church ecclesiology and that of Episcopalian churches.⁴⁹ First, the Free Church has a democratic character that is generally unknown in episcopal ordered churches, ‘a church organization in which “power” is held by the entire congregation represents an indispensable condition of ecclesiality’ (133). Second, in the Free Church Christ’s presence is unmediated and direct, both to individual believers and local churches. In Episcopalian churches it is mediated sacramentally and dependent on the concrete relation of any given local church to all other churches. The third distinction concerns ‘the subjective dimension of the conditions of ecclesiality’ (134). In the Episcopalian model, the church is constituted through the performance of objective activities; the Free Church tradition also recognizes subjective conditions like genuine faith and obedience to God’s commandments (135).

⁴⁸ For example, a pastor continues to be addressed as such for ever, regardless of his actual current job. This actually contradicts most Baptist theology, which maintains that ‘pastor’ is a *functional* category and not an *ontological* one.

⁴⁹ The term Free Church refers to churches sharing Congregationalist polity.

In the Episcopalian model Christ's own subject is active in the church and so the presence and actions of Christ can be discerned in the acts of the church and its agents such as bishops, priests, and deacons. The relationship of the individual bishop and his diocese to the church is hierarchical. The individual is asked to surrender to the church and its authorities (not directly to Christ); this is an aspect of the trust implicit in the act of faith. The Catholic model considers a bishop as representing the one Christ as the Head of the Church. Unlike the Orthodox, ordination in the Catholic Church does not involve an ontological change; to be ordained is to be ordered to a particular *ordo*. Hierarchy is a result of differing ordos and the tasks assigned to each. This is not the case in Free Church polity, where Volf (1998b) makes the case that while ordained clergy may be appropriate, perhaps even important or normative, they are not necessary for a church to be a church. According to Volf a free church is not a human creation but a community gathered together by the Spirit, possessing the ministries necessary to fulfil the tasks given to it by Christ. Formal ministers serve in positions of leadership, but their authority rests in their contractual relationship with the congregation as a whole. Each local free church is viewed as autonomous with no ecclesiastical authority in the form of a person or organization presiding over it.^{50 51}

There are two primary organizational structures seen within the Congregationalist polity, single-pastor churches and plural-eldership congregations. In a single-pastor form of government, one individual runs the church with the support of a team of elders or a board who are lower in authority. In a plural-eldership congregation, a board of elders must lead a church together.

⁵⁰ Although some of these congregations choose to associate themselves with a denominational association.

⁵¹ In terms of the structures of power, perhaps Palestinian Baptist churches are closer to Orthodox Patriarchs, rather than Catholic ones, who must submit to a higher authority.

Most of the Palestinian Baptist churches (except church-A2 and church-B2)⁵² are single-pastor form of government.⁵³ The offices are separated into three categories: clergy positions, church committee/board (including the pastor, treasurer, elders and/or deacons), and lay positions centring around various church functions that are still considered official (head of women's ministries, Sunday school teacher and others).^{54 55} This form contrasts with the episcopal form of government, which is the one followed by traditional Palestinian churches and holds to a threefold hierarchy in its leadership structure: bishops, presbyters (or priests), and deacons. Bishops have the right to consecrate other bishops and ordain priests and deacons. There is provision to insure a succession of bishops to rule over those underneath them. Given Palestinian Baptists' original backgrounds and their current theological commitments, there appears to be a tension in the way members of churches A, B and C2 relate to ecclesiastical polity.

4.3.1.2 Tension in the way Baptists view clergy's ordination and authority

Most Palestinian Baptists came from traditional churches and therefore brought with them a view of clergy as the primary leaders with ultimate spiritual authority and decision-making power. Similarly, many Baptist pastors understand their position this way and also expect to remain in their positions until death. In the case-studies it is likely pastors had internalized that tradition and applied it, probably seeing themselves as specially anointed to a lifelong sacrament. As a result the pastors did not fully understand or accept Congregationalist polity, which gives authority to church members to lead the church together. The following examples demonstrate how this created considerable clash between pastors and laity.

⁵² As of 2015.

⁵³ This approach has its roots in the Southern Baptist form of church government which tends to have single-pastor churches.

⁵⁴ Because some churches use a variety of boards as a part of their decision-making process, there can obviously be an overlap in terms of the categorizations of board positions as opposed to lay positions.

⁵⁵ All of these can overlap in various ways or take other forms if the culture dictates.

In case-A, after two years of discussions the deacons and Pastor-A agreed with the suggestion that Pastor George was to replace Pastor-A. However, during the annual meeting with all members in attendance, Pastor-A surprisingly, instead of informing the church about his retirement and appointing Pastor George, made the following official statement: ‘After praying I decided to remain the pastor as long as I can serve God.’⁵⁶ Pastor-A’s wife asserted, ‘The constitution says nothing about retirement and the age of the pastor... as long as the pastor can serve God and if there is nothing against his morality he will stay the pastor of this church until death.’⁵⁷ Many members from Pastor-A’s party referred to him as the ‘anointed’ from God and felt this should not be questioned.

In case-B, when the committee tried to change the form of church leadership from single-pastor to plural-eldership, Pastor-B viewed this as a conspiracy to ‘fire’ him from the church. He insisted, ‘The pastor have the primary individual responsibility and privilege to lead the church.’⁵⁸ He asserted, ‘I will leave when God tells me to leave. If God does not tell me to leave, then I will not move from this church.’⁵⁹

This issue was not relevant to case-C for several reasons. First, Pastor-C was feeling frustrated with church-C2 and planned several times to leave church-C2. Second, Pastor-C was always involved in other ‘start up’ ministries such as the website, TV and radio. Shirin, a church leader, confirmed, ‘Pastor-C used to say that he cannot see himself solely as a pastor; he sees himself involved in many other ministries.’⁶⁰ Third, he does not rely on church-C2 for his living. Finally, he was pastoring church-D in a village nearby, so losing his position as the pastor in church-C2 would not affect him.

⁵⁶ George, Sami, Jack and Dan, 2014.

⁵⁷ Suhad, Apr 2014.

⁵⁸ His letter to ABC, 9 Dec 2005.

⁵⁹ Pastor-B, Aug 2015.

⁶⁰ Shirin, 18 Sep 2016.

The model of Bercovitch et al. (2009) defines the issues at stake in conflicts in terms of conflicting evaluations, rewards and content.⁶¹ In terms of this model, it is likely that for the three pastors the issue of conflict is a matter of belief and identity (theology) rather than interest.⁶² Conflicts over beliefs and values are much less amenable to a compromise solution than conflicts of interests. Pastors believe they are ordained to a lifelong sacrament; in terms of identity Pastor-A is deeply related to the church he has pastored for many years. He and the building are recognized as capital symbols, even for the broader Palestinian community and international evangelicals. For him, the position, the building and he himself all symbolize Baptists in the Holy Land,⁶³ and leaving his position would have meant sacrificing a central part of his identity. George, who was supposed to replace Pastor-A, noted, ‘Pastor-A told me that he cannot leave the church, because this church is his life, and he is deeply attached to it.’⁶⁴

Pastor-B was offered a visiting scholar position in a western institution, but preferred to remain pastor of the church he rebuilt. Pastor-C planned three times to leave church-C2 but was deeply attached to it; even after he finally left he made repeated efforts to return. We can argue that the pastors became deeply connected to the churches they built/rebuilt as pastoring a church becomes a matter of identity, honour and authority. It is noteworthy that Palestinian Baptist pastors continue to wear clerical collars and are called pastors even when they no longer pastor a church.

⁶¹Bercovitch et al. (2009) define the issues at stake in conflicts in terms of: (a) Conflicting evaluations of the nature of the issue; i.e. does the conflict concern issues of interest or issues of values? (b) Rewards associated with the various issues, i.e. is it a win/win situation or a zero-sum conflict? (c) Content- is the issue about survival, scarcity, resources, status, prestige, etc.?

⁶² Issues of values characterize conflict situations where the parties disagree even on what they want. Such differences in the parties' definition, or evaluation, of the issues in conflict, have a significant effect on the process of conflict management.

⁶³ Bryan, Jun 2014; Nizar, Jun 2014; Samir, Apr 2014; Mark, Aug 2014.

⁶⁴ George, Mar 2014.

In sum, the pastors' high theology of ordination, according to which one remains a pastor forever after ordination, escalated the conflict finally leading to splits.⁶⁵ In this regard we can conclude that pastors could not fully practise a Congregationalist polity.

4.3.1.3 Tension in the way congregants defer to clergy

Another form of tension identified in the cases indicates that the members did not fully internalize and practise a Congregationalist form of government, because of the excessive deference given to the clergy. While in the traditional churches clergy are respected even if they are not qualified, in the Congregationalist polity in general pastors may feel threatened by the ability of the members to vote them out of office.

Most of the Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel have small memberships, the pastor is easily accepted as the primary leader, spiritual authority and decision-maker. In theory the churches are Congregationalist in polity, but in practice the lead pastor is often 'in charge of everything'. The pastor may have a worship leader and elders to help him, whom he may consult when he considers it necessary. Even in churches where there is a church committee, as the head of the committee is the pastor, members would not vote against him because they respect him as a spiritual leader. One church leader told me, 'In the church committee, although each one of us individually does not agree with the pastor's suggestion, all of us as a group agreed with the pastor's suggestion because he is the pastor.'⁶⁶ In case-C, Albert, a leader of church-C2, pointed out that it would not be practical after the reintegration to have Pastor-C back on the church committee as an equal, because members would continue to respect his opinion as being the spiritual authority.⁶⁷ This is typical behaviour of many Palestinian Baptists.

My findings indicate that in most churches, business meetings take place once or twice a year, mainly for announcements, often after decisions have been made. The

⁶⁵ Until the day I interviewed the pastors, they seemed not to understand why the splits occurred (Pastor-A, Pastor-B, Aug 2015, Suhad, Apr 2014).

⁶⁶ Bilal, Nov 2014.

⁶⁷ Albert, Oct 2016.

church committee does not check the pastor, because its ‘main role’ is to give legitimacy (amen) to pastoral decisions. Church members accept this style for several reasons. First, it is familiar to them from their former traditional churches where members are not involved in decision-making. Second, there are no teachings in churches about the Congregationalist polity where authority is ultimately held by the membership. Third, churches are not used to consulting the constitution. This explains why many members are passive and tend to vote according to the pastor’s suggestion, the younger generation who split/exited were exceptions, nonetheless, as demonstrated in the following examples.

In case-A, during the conflict that led to the split and the creation of church-A2, church-A committee included Pastor-A, deacons, lay people and a missionary (who left two years before the split).⁶⁸ This committee used to meet every month for church affairs. Twice a year there would be a business meeting for all members. Although it seems that this church had a Congregationalist polity working according to the protocol, the interviews with the deacons provide a different picture. Pastor-A, who was in control, enjoyed the backing of the deacons. Even when the church committee made a decision, the next day Pastor-A could change or cancel it. His behaviour became a habit and the deacons compromised for over 30 years, seldom confronting him. Even after they were dismissed from office, the deacons continued to attend the church hoping that Pastor-A would change his attitude. Although both the deacons and Pastor-A were from the first-generation, they deferred to him as the spiritual authority. Another example is Pastor-A’s response letter to the younger generation’s petition letter. Pastor-A’s letter was signed by 41 people, many of whom were not active members at church-A but were asked to sign as an *act of loyalty* to Pastor-A. However, problems started when

⁶⁸ Missionaries appointed Pastor-A and they stayed involved in church leadership until the early 1990s. They were on church committees and are the owners of church/school buildings.

ambitious young leaders wanted to gain power, through becoming part in church leadership, in order to bring for a change. When they failed they left church, compromising their right to bring in a new young pastor and to use the church building.

Similarly in case-B, for around ten years members were content to have a pastor whom they love and trust and who also was the main decision-maker,⁶⁹ only having a few lay positions such as a leader of women's ministry, a youth leader, and a treasurer. However, problems started when two leaders left church after a conflict with Pastor-B.⁷⁰ Not happy about this, some church leaders approached Pastor-B to bring them back. Pastor-B, who was not happy with their approach, did not cooperate and instead dismissed the church committee from office. In their opinion, split was the only way to deal with the conflict. Elias, a church leader, explained, 'We cannot work together, Pastor-B's philosophy in managing the church is different from ours, we want the church to be managed by a council or elders and not individually by a pastor.'⁷¹ As in case-A they left church, compromising their rights to introduce a constitution and use the church building after the split.

In case-C, Pastor-C (like Pastor-A and Pastor-B) was also the sole decision-maker; he enjoyed having professional and gifted members who loved him. Nonetheless, when a disagreement took place he would immediately dismiss the person from office in a gentle way. We can see the deep respect held towards clergy in the way that the church compromised for Pastor-C when he made a decision concerning his successor without consulting the members, despite the fact that he was leaving the church and this decision should have been left to the members. Bishara told me, 'Pastor-C used to say "even if I do mistakes you have to obey me and God will reveal the

⁶⁹ Pastor-B was second-generation like most church members.

⁷⁰ Elias's letter, 26 Nov 2005; Rana, Aug 2015.

⁷¹ Elias's letter to a pastor (friend of the church), 17 Dec 2005.

truth”.⁷² In the above three cases the opposition groups justified their claim for power in terms of the Baptist theology of the ‘priesthood of all believers.’

In sum, it can be concluded that churches-A, B and C did not fully practise a Congregationalist polity in three respects: first, the lack of knowledge and experience pastors and many members have regarding how Congregationalist polity works (4.3.1.1), second, the pastors’ high view of ordination as lifelong sacrament (4.3.1.2), third, the respect members have for a clergy limits them from practising their authority at church (4.3.1.3). The educated younger laity was the exception as it requested that churches should be managed according to the constitution.

4.3.2 Socio-cultural factor: tension between traditional/patriarchal versus modernity/democratic ethos

The findings indicate that there is a clash between the pastors’ culture (traditional-patriarchal) and the younger generation’s culture (modern-democratic). The connection between people’s values, behaviour and historical situation is articulated in Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*.⁷³ Bourdieu (1977) asserts people are predisposed through their *habitus* to produce and reproduce objective meaning. I argue that the pastors’ *habitus* orients them to act according to their traditional-patriarchal culture and hierarchical theology. The younger generation’s *habitus* orients them to act within the limits of their culture by embracing some values of secular-Israeli society and Baptist theology while still retaining some values from their culture. Stated differently, their *habitus* orients them to play an active part in social reproduction.

4.3.2.1 Tension between tradition and modernity

Based on the interviews, it seems the first-generation associates authority with position and age, characterized by a tendency to compromise, accept reality, and save

⁷² Bishara, Aug 2015.

⁷³ See Chapter Two, Section 2.2.1

face; the younger generation associates authority with education and knowledge.⁷⁴ Many members of church-A, and most in churches-B and C, are younger generation. They are more open to the outside world, having studied in Israeli universities and internalized the Western-secular cultural values represented therein. As a result, they have incorporated into their culture new values that set them apart from the older one; they have taken separate paths within the same mother culture by adopting a modernized version of the same culture. Seemingly, this has caused tension in how they view pastoral authority. They respect clergy as authority figures based on their traditional cultural values, while at the same time critiquing them for two reasons based on their modern cultural values. First the younger generation are more educated. Second Palestinian Baptist churches are non-profit corporations with a secular corporate form and organizational structure, allowing church laity to gain power over their pastors.⁷⁵ I present some examples of how education and modernity influences the young generation's response to church conflicts.

a) They insisted on change

Young generation members in churches A and B tried different ways to achieve change. When they failed they split their churches, starting their own and leading them in their desired style. Since its inception, Church-A2 was led by a committee of elders for 20 years, and two pastors led for a few years each. Church-B2 has been led since its beginning by a committee with no pastor.

b) They used legalistic means to communicate with the pastor

⁷⁴ Conflicts are more likely to occur in socially heterogeneous congregations such as a mixture of young and old members (Leas and Kittlaus 1973, Herman 1984; Hoge 1976). Also, the stability of congregations is positively related with the educational level of the pastor (Shin and Park 1988).

⁷⁵ See Chapter Three.

In case-A, younger generation drafted a petition letter to Pastor-A asking for immediate action to again discuss securing a new pastor.⁷⁶ The letter hinted that not taking steps in this direction would cause further problems and even a split. 19 young members signed this letter and sent it via delivery service to Pastor-A's house. In case-B, church members (mainly professionals) required Pastor-B to introduce a constitution; they confronted him in one meeting and sent him invitations to join committee meetings. When Pastor-B did not cooperate, they called for a general meeting without consulting him. In case-C, Pastor-C claimed some church members complained against him to the ABC. These actions dramatically escalated the conflict.

c) They appealed for their right to use the church building

In case-A, the opposition stopped attending church-A and requested permission to hold a service in the church building at a separate time,⁷⁷ but Pastor-A refused to allow them use of the building. This letter escalated tension and resentment between the two groups. The deacons convinced the younger generation not to use legal means against Pastor-A. In case-B, the opposition began meeting on the church's first floor. Pastor-B immediately changed the lock, contacted the mission and got their support that, as the pastor, he was the only one with the right to use the church building. The ABC convinced the opposition not to use legal means against Pastor-B.

The younger generation's behaviour did not necessarily indicate theological integrity and faithfulness to the Bible as main driving factors for their actions. They engaged in power politics, sometimes using manipulation to move into positions of influence, and drew on strategies – some similar to ones used by the pastors. It is

⁷⁶ The letter emphasized that the church had not taken any steps towards doing this and that it had not brought the topic to the general church members to discuss, although it was supposed to be the whole church's decision (letter 15 Aug 1996).

⁷⁷ In their letter they explained that these meetings would be led by the deacons and aimed to protect the members from leaving the church. Additionally they would join the church services again after the leadership resolved the conflict in the church. They urged Pastor-A to work together with them for peace, and warned if this did not happen they would have to take inevitable steps.

noteworthy that when Pastor-B and Pastor-C established churches B and C2, they were viewed by the members as the loving spiritual fathers; Pastor-B wrote, ‘I baptised them and nurtured them with the best that God had given me.’⁷⁸ He felt betrayed. Anita a member at church-B2, said, ‘When we left church we were young, we were stubborn and insisted on change. Today we are older; we see things differently and are ready for compromises.’⁷⁹

To summarize, the tension between young members’ respect for and rejection of the pastor can be seen in their use of confrontational letters and asking pastors to leave (rejection), and yet their willingness to compromise and themselves leave the church without using legal means to enforce sharing of the building (respect). Nonetheless, this action (split) was taken only after years into the conflict when they had failed to convince the pastor to share power and bring about change. The younger generation’s *habitus* oriented them to act within the limits of their culture by embracing some values of modern culture, such as those of secular-Israeli society, and values of Baptist theology while simultaneously keeping a certain degree of respect according to their traditional culture.

4.3.2.2 Tension between patriarchal ethos and democratic ethos

The Congregationalist form of government poses a challenge to Middle Eastern culture where democracy, rule of law, and individual rights, according to the common Western understanding, are not so well practised. This, I argue, explains why the pastors and church members do not use, misuse or struggle with practising their authority in decision-making at church.⁸⁰ Although voting in Congregationalist polity is an expression of democracy, namely the will of Christ speaking through the will of the

⁷⁸ Pastor-B’s letter to ABC, 9 Dec 2005.

⁷⁹ Open interview with Anita, Aug 2015.

⁸⁰ According to Brubaker (2009), a healthy structure both confers power and limits its exercise and that bylaws exist in part to protect the church and congregants from the abuse of power by individual members.

members, in the three case-studies the process, action, interaction and results failed to achieve this goal. It is noteworthy that the relationship between secular-democracy and the Congregationalist polity are two distinct yet overlapping influences upon the thought and behaviour of the younger generation.

I identify three cultural perceptions that contributed to defeating the requirements of the constitution: leadership style, loyalty to authority figure and avoidance of confrontation.

a) Palestinian leadership style in the church

The traditional Palestinian authoritarian style of leadership is another factor that affects the authoritarianism of Baptist leaders.⁸¹ For example, when Pastor-A initiated a business meeting although there was no quorum,⁸² he decided to vote on changing the quorum for this specific meeting. This special business meeting changed the status of deacon in the constitution from being a position for life to a position for a limited term voted on every three years. He decided to dismiss the current deacons and elect family and new people, loyal to him, to a new system in the form of a church committee. Upon Pastor-A's request, people who had not attended the church for a long time came to this meeting and voted in support of his resolutions.

Pastor-A, in most cases, was the sole decision-maker; questioning his authority was seen as 'unfaithfulness to the church'. When the younger generation insisted on change, Pastor-A and his family interpreted this as a betrayal and rejection. This led to hard feelings such as disappointment, offence, rejection and anger. Pastor-A's wife said in tears, 'What causes the deepest sorrow for us during this conflict is the lack of

⁸¹ See Chapter One, Section 1.3.1.

⁸² Pastor-A refused to postpone this meeting at the request of one of the deacons for organizational reasons.

appreciation for Pastor-A, who has served the church in faithfulness for many years, disrespect to a clergyman is something very unacceptable.’⁸³

This attitude affected the way Pastor-A and his family interacted with the young generation’s request to bring in a young pastor, since the request was labelled as a ‘conspiracy against the pastor’. However, Pastor-A’s attitude was perceived by many church members as authoritarian. As Rima put it, ‘I felt that we were prohibited to come close to this authority [Pastor-A]... he was like a Patriarch and everybody had to obey him, – I don’t think we still have such thing even in this town!’⁸⁴ Mary noted, ‘The Patriarch stays in authority until death! The only way out is that people leave.’⁸⁵ Even the deacons finally wrote, ‘Since we were not allowed to express our opinion freely at church we decided to write you [Pastor-A] a letter.’⁸⁶

This style of individual leadership was also seen in case-B. Although Pastor-B agreed unwillingly to have a church committee, he did not cooperate. Elias, a committee member, told me, ‘I resigned from the council of the church because the pastor did not want to meet with us, despite me visiting him twice and asking him to work with us, the third time four committee members visited him but his answer was NO.’⁸⁷ When the committee insisted on calling for a general meeting, Pastor-B initiated another meeting. His relatives and long-time non-attendees came to this meeting and voted in support of the pastor. In this meeting the committee was dismissed and declared no longer part of the church. Today church-B has no committee; church business meetings take place only when needed.⁸⁸

⁸³ Suhad, Apr 2014.

⁸⁴ Rima, Mar 2014.

⁸⁵ Mary, Apr 2014.

⁸⁶ Letter 14 Apr, 1996.

⁸⁷ Elias letter, 26 Nov 2005.

⁸⁸ Pastor-B, Dec 2014.

Pastor-B, in most cases, was the main decision-maker. He felt that questioning his spiritual authority and decision-making amount to distrust and disrespect to the pastor.

In his words:

They have no respect for a pastor...they forgot all the blessings God bestowed on them through me. My humble conditions were to affirm their *trust and respect* for me as a pastor; the pastor leads the meetings and has the primary individual responsibility.⁸⁹

This attitude affected the way Pastor-B interacted with the laity's request to introduce a constitution and to take part in decision-making, for he labelled it a 'conspiracy to fire the pastor'. Pastor-B told me, 'Till this day I don't know why they did this conspiracy, they wanted to fire the pastor but God fired them from the church.'⁹⁰ Nonetheless, Pastor-B's attitude was perceived by many of the church members as authoritarian.

In case-C, Pastor-C appointed members to positions in the church committee. He would give them freedom to work, but if tension or disagreement arose he would immediately dismiss them.⁹¹ Albert, a youth leader, told me that during the conflict Pastor-C sent him a note informing him he was dismissed.⁹²

The findings show common patterns of pastoral behaviour during church conflict: rebuking of members from the pulpit indirectly and through preaching, dismissing leaders/committee from office, and claiming to follow God's directions ('God told me to') to indicate that they have the spiritual authority at church. Furthermore, interviewees complained that most of the pastors did not recognize leaders to lead and preach. Many times when they were away they would arrange for an external guest to preach; in church retreats they would bring in guests to lead the worship and to preach.

More importantly, in these cases the process and the results of voting failed to practise the Congregationalist polity. Most pastors acted in an authoritarian way; some

⁸⁹ Pastor-B's letter to ABC, 9 Dec 2005.

⁹⁰ Pastor-B, Aug 2015.

⁹¹ Shirin, a church leader, explained, 'When there is disagreement, Pastor-C cannot differentiate between personal relationship and ministry' (Sep 2016).

⁹² Albert, Aug 2015.

overrode the constitution, others fired church leaders and elected family and friends to various church positions.

b) Loyalty

Hirschman (1970) talks about how members' loyalty to a group affects the ease with which members may leave when dissatisfied.⁹³ This in turn affects people's willingness to engage in behaviour leading to conflict (such as the younger generation in the case-studies voicing their dissatisfaction), or people's unwillingness to voice complaints, stemming from their desire to repress conflict before it threatens membership or the survival of the group (such as the older generation) (Becker 1999).

In terms of loyalty, the findings indicate there is a contradiction between older generations who are loyal to family and tradition, and younger generations who follow Baptist ideology, which is inherently democratic and therefore anti-traditional. Four types of attitudes were identified in the case-studies.

First, loyalty to tradition. This applies to some first-generation members in church-A who would not leave the church or pastor under any circumstances. They remained in church-A following the conflict and left only after they were fired. The deacons' attitude was also influenced by pastoral loyalty more than concerns for the health of the church. When Pastor-A turned 65, they suggested keeping him as pastor until a 'suitable' replacement was found.⁹⁴ All deacons except an American missionary agreed.⁹⁵ This is an example of an encounter between an American missionary's worldview (influenced by American culture and Baptist practice) and Palestinian

⁹³ Scholars such as Simmel (1955; 1971), Coser (1956), Kriesberg (1973), and Hirschman (1970), look at conflict as something that flows out of certain patterns of group life and culture. They focus on questions such as boundaries, loyalty, and commitment. How do people interact with one another? How do they think and talk about the group's identity and purpose?

⁹⁴ Samir, April 2014.

⁹⁵ This decision empowered the pastor to decide what was 'suitable' and what was not. At the time of writing this thesis (2018), the pastor has still not agreed on a suitable replacement.

practices. In churches B and C there were only a few first-generation women observers during the conflict and they also had a similar attitude to stay.

Second, loyalty to family. In the three cases the pastors' respective families and relatives were involved to keep the pastors in position.

Third, loyalty to both tradition and ideology. This was evident in churches-A and B, mainly with second-generation ('worn-out') members who respected authority figures and age (tradition), up to the point that the pastor ignored and then rejected them. When they failed to achieve power using the constitution (ideology), they split the church.

Forth, loyalty to ideology. Third-generation members ('stand-tall') do not share this same respect for authority. They are more committed to Congregationalist ecclesiology principles than the first and second generations. They justified their demands in terms of the Baptist theology of the 'priesthood of all believers' and took matters into their own hands. For example, in case-A, during the conflict they held their youth meetings outside the church building in a school hall. In case-C, where most members were third-generation, they *questioned* both the attitudes of Pastor-C and the ABC-Committee during conflict management and were loyal to their ideology during the dispute. Their ideology conducted them *not to split* but to *exit* without starting a new church (three leaders exited during the conflict). Additionally they left silently and *did not fight* Pastor-C, although they confronted him. This attitude differed from the third-generation in case-A in two aspects: first, leaders of church-C2 did not leave with their entire family (Bishara left with his wife, but his mother and daughter continued to attend church-C2), and second they did not start a new church.

Two reasons influenced church-C2's attitude. (1) Throughout the conflict, and even before the escalation, many members were mentored by the Canadian pastor.⁹⁶ Some interviewees told me they updated him with every step during the conflict and tried to follow his instructions. He instructed them to stay submissive to Pastor-C as long as they were in church-C2. If they could not, it would be better to leave peacefully (and not start a new church) since opposition would cause division.⁹⁷ (2) The ABC intervention during the conflict influenced Pastor-C's behaviour. It is my thesis that the Canadian pastor's ideology and ABC intervention were important factors leading to reintegration in case-C.⁹⁸ This ideology has *space for the pastor as authority figure*; however it differs from the first-generation's deference to clergy. In case-B, the third-generation was still too young to take action.

c) Avoidance of confrontation or confrontation as the last attempt⁹⁹

In case-A the deacons compromised for years. Although they were very supportive of people who wanted change, they tried to act neutrally and keep good relationships with Pastor-A. George claimed, 'The deacons preferred to leave church instead of confronting the pastor; they didn't take responsibility as church leaders to resolve the conflict biblically.'¹⁰⁰

After the deacons were dismissed by Pastor-A, they sent him a letter expressing their resentment concerning the last meeting, for it involved violation of the constitution. They said they did not confront him during the meeting as they did not want to cause more tension and poor witness. This is a trait of Arabic culture, namely

⁹⁶ An old friend of church-C2, see Section 4.2.3.

⁹⁷ Albert, Oct 2016.

⁹⁸ As I will explain in the next chapters.

⁹⁹ Culturally, since open conflict is to be avoided, confrontation, when necessary, is done through an intermediary. This is where a third neutral party is used to communicate that which cannot be said in a face-to-face context. This intermediary allows unpleasant things to be said without being direct and causing confrontation, thus maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships while still communicating the unpleasant.

¹⁰⁰ Mar 2014.

not confronting people in public. The deacons and most of the younger generation gave up and left the church. They felt they were driven to leave by Pastor-A's attitude. They did not want to seek help in secular courts, where this kind of behaviour would not be a good witness for their community. However, some interviewees believed starting a church on the doorstep of the mother church was even worse.¹⁰¹

This attitude differs in case-B, where most of the church was second-generation and confronted Pastor-B directly as their *last attempt* to deal with him. Two months before the split, the committee confronted Pastor-B directly in a meeting and tried to convince him to introduce a constitution and reconcile the leaders who exited. During the first meeting, Pastor-B came prepared to lecture on how the church should be led. One of the committee members asked him to stop, since this meeting was for him to listen to what the church wanted to say. Two of the committee spelled out what they had against Pastor-B, who left angry. The committee met four times without Pastor-B to work on these issues – he was invited but did not appear. Pastor-B issued conditions that they should trust him, *he* leads the meetings and *he* builds the constitution. A few days before the split, they announced a general meeting in a church service, ignoring Pastor-B's presence and without asking his permission.¹⁰²

In case-C, the third-generation viewed Pastor-C as their spiritual father; they loved and respected him. However, the conflict sounded like a family quarrel. He also rebuked them from the pulpit.¹⁰³ Some leaders confronted Pastor-C privately about his attitude, and he occasionally listened. They did not insult him but asked him to leave.

¹⁰¹ Majd, Mar 2014 and Mark, Aug 2014.

¹⁰² Elias, Agu 2015; letter 26 Nov 2005; Rana, Aug 2015 and Pastor-B, Aug 2015.

¹⁰³ Albert, a church leader, said, 'Pastor-C told me "When the church stops following me I will leave the church"... Pastor-C was not the reason for the problems but the members... the issue of gossip is everyone's responsibility not only Pastor-C's... eventually Pastor-C took responsibility with the help of the ABC and the church, the members did not take responsibility yet.' (Aug, 2015).

The above analysis of the *theological* and *cultural* factors explains why pastors could not handle well the younger generation's request to share power, viewing it as a conspiracy against them and therefore causing them to cling to power and demolish any form of competition for their positions. It also explains how pastors in a Congregationalist polity were able to fire deacons and a church committee and thereby cause the younger educated generation to leave the church.

Pastors cling to power because of a *combination* of theological and socio-cultural factors. Theologically, pastors are influenced by Episcopalian churches in believing that they are called by God to a lifetime position; that it is God's will for the church to be led absolutely by one monarchical shepherd anointed by God; that laity are to say 'amen' and members are to be submissive; and that questioning authority is viewed as sinful. Socio-culturally, they believe religious communities in general must be hierarchically structured to function effectively. Both point to the same direction of claiming for *power*.

The findings also reveal that the younger generation do not share the same theology and culture as their pastors. The younger generation who rebelled against their pastors were influenced culturally by Western-secular ideas of individual rights and democracy (having adapted these ideas to their traditional culture). Theologically influenced by the Baptist theology, they justified their demands to share power in terms of 'the priesthood of all believers.' However, they showed respect for clergymen when they decided to surrender to their pastors by leaving the church as mentioned earlier. Again both point to the same direction of claiming for *power*.

In sum, the clash between the pastors and younger laity can be seen as a clash in *theology and culture* between their view of and claim for *power*.

4.4 Secondary Factors Contributing to the Conflicts

The church building, women's informal power and economic issues are very important factors which contributed to the splits in the cases. Nonetheless, out of principle the pastors would not consider these aspects to be a factor in order to maintain their stance. However they may serve as consequential factors, but this is difficult to gauge as it concerns motivation. Therefore I decided to classify these factors not as fundamental, but as secondary factors.

4.4.1 Church building

There is a difference in the way that Baptists view the significance of their church building compared to the view of traditional church denominations, from which almost all Palestinian Baptists originally converted. For the traditional churches land and buildings are highly significant, both as symbols of power and also as representations of the theological commitments of these churches.¹⁰⁴ In Baptist ecclesiology, however, the building itself has very little theological significance. What matters are the 'living stones' of the church – the congregants themselves – with the building largely being understood in functional terms. Given their original backgrounds and current theological commitments, and based on the data, there appears to be a tension in the way Palestinian Baptists relate to church buildings.

On the one hand, Baptists are committed to the functional view of a church building.¹⁰⁵ Yosef, a young leader who exited from his church, implemented this alternative, starting three home groups. He claimed, 'The church should grow this way as it did in the early church; churches are becoming more traditional and

¹⁰⁴ For example, Orthodox believe that heaven itself is made present within the building and that is a reason why the building must be beautiful - in order to represent that reality symbolically.

¹⁰⁵ One American missionary told me, 'we need "church growth eyes", in the early church there were multiple house churches... buildings can limit the growth of the church' (Ron, July 2014).

hierarchical.¹⁰⁶ This commitment to a functional view of a church building can also be seen in the fact that many churches meet in rented halls, with decoration largely being limited to a cross on the wall.¹⁰⁷

On the other hand, the issue of controlling space in a socially hostile and legally uncertain environment,¹⁰⁸ as well as the symbolic meaning of the church building, played a significant role in the development of the conflict that led to splits in each of the three case-studies. This can be demonstrated by the following observations.

In case-A, the church building is large and conspicuously located near a number of traditional church buildings. Although the entire pre-split congregation contributed to the reconstruction of this building, Pastor-A maintained control of it and refused to let others hold meetings within the building, even changing the locks.¹⁰⁹ This was the final straw causing them to leave.¹¹⁰ As Ron, a missionary, put it:

I believe the building eventually caused the final split in leadership, when the opposing group was not allowed to use the new building for meetings. Somehow there was a difference over who controlled the new building, when it became apparent Pastor-A did.¹¹¹

Nonetheless, Waleed, a leader from Pastor-A's party, had a different viewpoint. He thought it was unreasonable to give the opposing group the right to use the building, since cooperation would be hard and might escalate the conflict.¹¹²

Seemingly, the reason Pastor-A refused to share control of the building was because of its prestige significance in the aforementioned context. It was a status

¹⁰⁶ Yosef, Apr 2014. Seemingly, many Palestinian Baptists only feel a need for a place to worship. They may not view the building as symbolic and economic capital relevant to their vision of institutionalising their Baptist denomination.

¹⁰⁷ Only seven Baptist churches have their own church building (these buildings were built by missionaries 50 years ago; all of them are halls except church-A), 11 churches meet at rented halls.

¹⁰⁸ As discussed in chapters One and Three.

¹⁰⁹ Church-A's building is significant for locals because most weddings and funerals for all Baptists and other Evangelicals take place there, with the permission of Pastor-A.

¹¹⁰ Both theoreticians and practitioners have argued that major building projects produce conflict. From a theoretical perspective, the significant change in physical structure that accompanies most building projects should be enough to engender conflict. Becker (1999) found that family congregations are more likely to fight over church buildings.

¹¹¹ Ron, Jul 2014.

¹¹² Waleed, Jun 2014.

symbol that granted him honour and respect in the broader community. According to a third-party:

I think Pastor-A has not responded to the reconciliation attempts to unite the church, in order to 'protect' the building. He is also angry that the church that split meet next door in the same site... his condition for reconciliation is that their church moves to another venue.¹¹³

Here we see that Pastor-A did not even want the new church to meet near the building, possibly because it implied shame, rejection and a public testimony to their inability to reconcile. Importantly, however, the new church consciously chose a nearby location; where they meet is only a few metres from church-A. When I asked some elders of church-A2 why they still meet in the same location after 20 years and do not rent a different place, their response was, 'We did not find a suitable place yet.'¹¹⁴ This issue continues to cause tension between the churches, as when preachers/groups are invited to church-A2 they often mistakenly attend church-A only realising their mistake during the service.

In case-B, we see similar behaviour in relation to church-B's building. During the conflict, the church committee announced a general meeting for the whole church, including Pastor-B, to vote on three issues: (a) adoption of the new constitution, (b) a change of an individual pastoral to a pastor and council-led church, (c) bringing back the leaders who exited. Pastor-B, who was not happy with their approach, arranged another meeting inviting loyal church members, his family and friends.¹¹⁵ In this meeting a letter was drafted confirming that they were the 'church members' and Pastor-B was their pastor.¹¹⁶ Therefore, they asked the ABC and the Mission (BCI-owner of the church building) to consider this a formal statement authorising them to

¹¹³ Bryan, Mar 2014.

¹¹⁴ Sami, George, Dan, 2014.

¹¹⁵ Elias, Rana; Michel, Aug 2015.

¹¹⁶ Robert, who attended this meeting, told me that Pastor-B signed his name without even asking his permission. But since he is his relative he did not reject this action as he recognized he was in trouble. (Open interview- Robert, 2013).

use the building and not allow the opposing group use of it.¹¹⁷ When the opposing group tried to use the first floor for their meetings, the lock was changed.¹¹⁸ Pastor-B's identity was connected with the building; for him, if the opposing group had the right to use the building it would be a rejection of himself. For him to have absolute use of the building amounted to recognition of him as the legitimate pastor.

As for case-C, although the church had no building and met in a rental place, a 'church building' contributed indirectly to the conflict. First, Pastor-C twice planned to leave church-C2 because of the conflict. However, on one occasion he changed his mind and decided to remain as the pastor when the former pastor who controlled the Baptist church building in the town became very ill. The other time was when a missionary told him that the issue of the building would be resolved soon in court. Second, Pastor-C tried to initiate reconciliation with the former pastor. He tried to convince him to become one church again and renovate the neglected church building.¹¹⁹ The old pastor, who had refused to allow church-C2 to use the building, refused any attempt at reconciliation. Some referred to his desire to hold onto his position because of the building, even after his church ceased to exist. It is likely that Pastor-C's attitude to remain pastor because of the building increased the tension in church-C2. Pastor-C held on because of the building the former pastor controlled. He hoped in the near future church-C2 could use it. This issue shows how the building is an important factor in church conflict.

4.4.2 Women's informal power

Middle Eastern women, including Palestinians in Israel, are influenced by patriarchy in different spheres of life: the family, nation, religious community and the state. However, they do have informal power. Sa'ar (2006) argues that resourceful

¹¹⁷ Letter, 26 Nov 2005.

¹¹⁸ Pastor-B, Aug 2015. He mentioned the same idea in another email sent to ABC in Dec 7, 2005.

¹¹⁹ Pastor-C, Jul 2015.

Palestinian women in Israel, who are commonly referred to as *qawiyyi* (strong; she also offers the term ‘feminine strength’),¹²⁰ are preoccupied with modernity, cultural morality, and collective identity; they are heroic, informal, individualistic and not radical. They are not feminists, but are strong in dealing with two feminine positions: the traditional and the modern-normative; while balancing between conflicting powers, they are ambitious to oppose cultural norms without losing cultural consensus. This is usually made possible when they have a supportive husband, father or family.

The Palestinian Baptist Church in Israel continues the legacy of many Baptist churches in the world, and the Middle Eastern Church in particular, in being patriarchal.¹²¹ Although in the Congregationalist system women have the right to vote, at most, women may have small roles at church – such as children, women or charity ministries.¹²² Lately, however, some evangelical churches have allowed women to have positions such as membership on church committees.¹²³

I argue that women were a further factor (alongside theology, culture, church building and economic) in shaping the way church conflict played out. I found two scripts of femininity: *wives of pastors* represent one script and *activist* female members represent another. This can be seen in the following examples.

In relation to *pastors’ wives*, in case-A most interviewees felt that Pastor-A’s wife had a significant influence on decisions involving her husband. For example, the unofficial record says that she believed that Pastor-A should remain in his position and should not leave the pastorate of church-A. Interviewees said that while Pastor-A’s wife

¹²⁰ There is literature that examines different viewpoints of the lives of Palestinian women in Israel, including the duality of subordination and empowerment (Ginat 1982; Kanaaneh 2002; Herzog 2004).

¹²¹ There are also Baptist churches and Protestant denominations in the West, such as Anglicans, Methodists, and Lutherans that now accept female ordination, although within these streams there are individual movements which continue to reject female ordination.

¹²² In the ABC, between 65% and 75% of church attendees are women. 75% of the people who are active at church are also women.

¹²³ In the beginning of 2017 in Lebanon two Lebanese women were ordained as pastors in the Presbyterian Church.

was away abroad Pastor-A and the deacons proposed making George his replacement, but when his wife returned from her trip Pastor-A seemed to change his mind, claiming that the Lord revealed to him he would remain the Pastor as long as he can serve God. Pastor-A's wife felt that, the deacons tried to manipulate Pastor-A and brought George without consulting him. She believed that she received confirmation for her theory through visions and dreams, and she therefore held a level of power as someone who claimed a high spirituality. In Sa'ar's terms we can refer to her 'feminine strength', which was supported by her husband and son. In case-C, the wife of Pastor-C provided a different type of influence, as after the split she gathered a group of women, praying and fasting for the reconciliation that eventually took place a year later.

Activist, opinionated and professional females were identified in each of the three cases. In case-A, three young educated women with presence and influence had stopped attending the church six months before their husbands (church leaders) decided to leave. Rima explained, 'It became impossible to attend church-A because of the ongoing conflict; on Sundays we leave the church sad and frustrated. I told my husband I would stop attending the church for now.'¹²⁴ We can argue here that the women's attitude influenced that of their husbands, as well as had a direct influence on the community. They had agency since they were also clearly communicating to other couples. Along with other factors, this attitude probably affected their husbands' decision to leave.

Another example of 'feminine strength' was displayed when some women from the group that left church-A complained they would not have a Christmas service as they did not belong to any church. These women convinced their husbands to initiate a Christmas service. This service initiated the idea of founding a new church. One year later, church-A2 was founded. Similarly, in case-B, this type of female power was also identified during the conflict and after the split when leaders' wives put pressure on

¹²⁴ Rima, Mar 2014.
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their husbands to initiate reconciliation with Pastor-B after their children left the church. In case-C, Shirin, a young influential leader, was involved in many church activities. Five years earlier she had also been a church attendee and observer during a church split and was therefore determined that church-C2 would not also experience a split, having seen the sorrow and pain the split caused both sides. Shirin was the unofficial mediator between church members and Pastor-C; when she herself struggled with Pastor-C's attitude she sought guidance from the Canadian pastor who mentored many church members during the conflict. We can argue that Shirin's attitude (along with other factors) influenced church members' decision not to engage in church split. These were examples of 'feminine strength' (*qawiyyi*).

Another type of female power was identified in the cases, namely the 'powerful' woman. Sa'ar (2006) classifies this kind of strength as having obtained 'masculine power'. The 'powerful' woman differs from the strong woman (*qawiyyi*), in that her energies are invested mostly in the public domain (career/social life) and she resists any attempts to either break her power or devalue her femininity (2006:404).

Nadia is a talented well educated woman with a very strong personality. She served inside and outside the church. Many interviewees said she was the pastor's right hand woman, very helpful and protective of the pastor. A few interviewees claimed the problem was that Nadia started to see a gap between her spirituality and her pastor, she left church after a conflict with him. Immediately after Nadia left, some church leaders decided to stand beside her; intensive meetings took place to convince the pastor to bring her back. The pastor, who felt that they should support him, was not happy with these endeavours and he did not cooperate. A month later the split took place and a new church, church-B2, was established. The council of this church included Nadia.

A few years later, Nadia left the church and decided to begin her own new ministry. Nadia is the on-site leader of this ministry and, as preaching is forbidden for

women in Evangelical Palestinian Churches, she preaches in conferences for women within the same ministry. This ministry is not well accepted among pastors as it is accused of not coordinating its work with them. Nonetheless, it attracts many members to its meetings.¹²⁵ Nadia told me the Convention of the Evangelical churches in Israel boycotts her ministry, ‘They have a problem with a woman leading a ministry by herself, but they have no problem with women cleaning tables.’¹²⁶ At the time of our interview, she continues to lead her successful ministry preaching to women. We can conclude that Nadia is a ‘powerful’ woman who confronted pastors publicly in a patriarchal community and continued to achieve her goal despite the obstacles.

In sum, women’s informal influence extended throughout the conflict and the process in the cases, even though they did not hold formal leadership positions. There was a significant shift in women’s position, style, and influence in the passage between the three cases; this is also closely tied to generation and education.

4.4.3 Economic factors

Since I discussed the economic factor in Chapter Three (Section 3.3.3). I briefly present this factor here. Pastor-A, and some first-generation church members who had become internally-displaced refugees in their home country during the *nakba*, viewed church-A as the main source of material security during the 1948 war. Missionaries provided them with jobs and salary. In light of this, Pastor-A’s control is probably grounded in his position. For Pastor-B and Pastor-C, although second-generation, the issue of conflict was also a matter of material security and controlling the church building.¹²⁷ Pastor-C did not have the threat of losing everything since he was pastoring another church; nevertheless, the church building was crucial for him.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Nadia, Aug 2015; open interview with Rami and David.

¹²⁶ Nadia, Aug 2015.

¹²⁷ Pastor-B, Elias, Rana, Aug 2015.

¹²⁸ As mentioned in Section 4.4.1.

For the young laity, the issue was not one of material security; they had their own careers outside the church and were enthusiastic to create change using their professional skills. Their goal was to gain power in order to influence and to shape the church future.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that the clash between the pastors and laity, which led to church splits, had its root in the way each side construes its identity, *theologically and culturally*, in light of the will of God. Stated differently, the clash was between each side's strong combination of its *theology and culture* working against the other side.

Theologically, churches A, B and C were seen to face several challenges: first, the pastors' high view of ordination understood as a lifelong calling and a sacrament, and that it is God's will for the church to be lead absolutely by them; second, the excessive deference many congregants have for clergy, which limits them from practising the authority they have by their membership; and third, the lack of knowledge and experience pastors and many members have regarding how Congregationalist polity works. *Culturally*, due to Arab culture with its strong emphasis on individual male leadership, and with the unconditional support of their blood relatives, pastors acted in an authoritarian manner. While overriding the constitution, pastors fired deacons, committees, and church members, electing their families and friends to various positions to control the church. Since the pastor's authoritarian manner, derived *theologically*, is also encouraged in the culture, his authoritarian stance is entrenched *theologically and culturally*, but it is not clear which element dominates.

The pastors' *theological-cultural* identity created conflict with that of the younger generation's *theology and culture*. They rebelled against their pastors and were influenced by several factors. *Socio-culturally*, the younger generation was influenced by Western-secular ideas of individual rights and democracy. They adapted these ideas

to their traditional culture when they required pastors to operate according to the constitution, persisted to demand their rights, called for a general meeting, requested a separate service in the church building, and finally split the church. *Theologically*, they justified their demands in terms of the Baptist theology of the ‘priesthood of all believers’. Since their claim for power, derived theologically, is also encouraged by their modern cultural components, their claim is also entrenched *theologically and culturally*, but it is again not clear which element dominates.

Besides the primary factors of theology and culture, I identified three important secondary factors which contributed to the splits in the cases: church building, women’s informal power and economic factors. The symbolic meaning of church buildings (power and its theological commitments) and its location grant the pastors honour and respect in the broader community. The informal power of women extended throughout the conflict and process in the three cases. The economic factors also influenced the way conflict was handled.

I also showed that the polity of Palestinian Baptist churches embodies democracy in more than one aspect: no central authority, secular organizational structure as a non-profit corporation, female participation in committees, and other values of Baptist theology such as the priesthood of believers. Meanwhile, the local culture involves a centralized hierarchical-patriarchal authority structure and most churches are inclined this way.¹²⁹ Thus, this is a central tension bound to have implications for the nature of conflicts and their management practices which is the subject of the next chapter.

¹²⁹ This makes Palestinian Baptist churches more similar to civil society organizations than other religious ones such as the Palestinian traditional churches.

Chapter Five

5. Conflict Management Practices in Three Cases of Palestinian Baptist Churches

5.1 Introduction

After exploring the fundamental factors that caused splits in the three case-studies – that is, the combination of theology and culture on the pastors’ side working against the combination of theology and culture on the younger generation’s side – in this chapter I argue that these same main factors of *theology and culture* contributed to the ways the conflicts were dealt with from the perspectives of the pastors and the younger generation. Again because of the clash of those factors from each side, and the newness of Palestinian Baptist churches, the conflicts were not resolved effectively.

This chapter reveals that in resolving church conflicts, Palestinian Baptists engage in four different approaches, each with a distinct tradition, perception and method of conflict resolution. Two approaches are cultural: (1) Israeli alternative-legalistic approach and (2) Palestinian traditional *sulha* approach; and two approaches are theological: (1) Traditional Palestinian church approach and (2) Western-Baptist approach. The pastors’ *theological-cultural* approach is a combination of hierarchical theology known from traditional Palestinian churches and *sulha* (‘hierarchical-patriarchal’). The younger generation’s *theological-cultural* approach is a combination of Western-Baptist and alternative-legalist (‘Congregationalist-democratic’).

More importantly, I argue there is a shift in the practices of conflict management that disputants and third-parties used in the three cases.¹ It is the shift between the older generations who desire to maintain the status quo versus a younger generation's will for change. It is a shift from traditional-patriarchal to modern culture, involving everything from different rationalities, to styles and management of conflict.

¹ The three cases are described in Chapter Four.

I begin by explaining the approaches used in the Palestinian society in Israel, highlighting the contradictions, and then I move to explore the local Palestinian Baptists' conflict management practices as demonstrated in the three case-studies.

5.2 Cultural Models: Tension between *Sulha* and Alternative-legal Approaches

There are three major approaches to conflict resolution in the Palestinian society in Israeli: the Arab Palestinian traditional *sulha* model, litigation, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). *Sulha* in Arabic means 'reconciliation'. This approach is used throughout the Palestinian community in Israel, and is perceived by community leaders as a ritualized process of conflict resolution to manage a wide range of conflicts (Irani and Funk 1998). Sometimes *sulha* is used in the absence of state jurisdiction, at other times it is combined with state judicial procedures.

This modern adaptation of *sulha* reflects its on-going societal importance and flexibility. Brown (1997) emphasizes the unique relationship between modern state justice mechanisms and *sulha*, noting that ultimately it is the court that offers the final verdict. *Sulha* offers a culturally relevant mechanism for long-term reconciliation in ways that address the need for honour (Shihade 2005).

5.2.1 The Middle Eastern tradition of *Sulha*

Sulha makes use of a unique mix of local variants of mediation and arbitration techniques to help transform inter- and intra-communal conflicts from revenge to forgiveness (Jabbour 1993).² *Sulha* does not recognize the Western-based differentiation between mediation and arbitration, but rather makes use of both approaches when needed (Pely 2011c).³ Furthermore *sulha* does not replace an individual's responsibility,

² On the 'mediation side,' *Sulha* strives to reconcile differences between the disputants' clans; on the 'arbitration side,' the decision of the *jaha* is final and binding.

³ According to Pely, what initially appears to be a similarity of functions between similarly named elements of Western ADR and those in *sulha*, is similarity in name alone. For example, similarly named tools, such as venting, neutrality, and confidentiality, are actually used differently in the two practices, *sulha* and Western ADR (Pely 2011c:428).

which is subject to trial by the state legal system. Jabbour⁴ (1993) emphasizes that the communal approach to conflict is based on the view that hurting an individual means hurting the entire community. Said et al. (2001) write that, *sulha* ‘stresses the close link between the psychological and political dimensions of communal life through its recognition that injuries between individuals and groups will fester and expand if not acknowledged, repaired, forgiven and transcended’ (182). Irani and Funk (2001) state that *sulha* as ritualized behaviour produces the space for retrieving dignity when lost. As an interpersonal strategy, *sulha* allows for micro-level relationship repair with the capability for macro-level impact (Gellman and Vuinovich 2008). *Sulha* does not address the source of conflict but does re-adjust communities for peaceful coexistence and *keeping the status quo*. Such views of social order are represented and retold repeatedly in the minds of *sulha* participants (Lang 2002).

5.2.1.1 The stages of the *sulha* process

a) Jaha: forming the *sulha* committee (third-party) – the *jaha* includes only elderly men and based on *patriarchal habitus*. The *jaha* draws its power from its members’ positions in the community and from a disputant’s authorization (Pely 2008b). The *jaha* includes an ‘unbiased insider with on-going connections to the major disputants as well as a strong sense of the common good and standing within the community’ (Irani and Funk 1998:61). They are not neutral outsiders, since they are familiar with the history, norms, and customs of the community (Abu-Nimer 1996a). They can also create political capital through the process (Lang 2002), which is important for building prestige and moral authority. They are selected for their honesty (Smith 1989:388), experience, intelligence, status, leadership in the community, and age

⁴ Jabbour is a long-time dispute resolution practitioner within the Palestinian community of the North of Israel.

– as older community members are highly respected in Arabic society (Gellman and Vuinovich 2008).

Women are not allowed to serve in the *jaha*, and the *sulha* does not contain any formal mechanism designed to provide for the concerns of women. However, Pely (2011a) examines the role of women within *sulha* and finds that women's informal influence extends throughout the process, from the pre-*sulha* stage of venting to the *sulha* agreement.⁵

The role of the *jaha* is to urge the offended family, on behalf of the offender, to seek reconciliation through *sulha* instead of revenge. Jabbour states that a unique characteristic of the *jaha* is its ability to act as 'anger or shock absorbers', with great tolerance and patience, when listening to family members of disputants who are often filled with sadness and bitterness. Jabbour explains the importance of *venting* in *sulha*, asserting, 'Grief work must be enabled by the *jaha* to make way for peace' (1993:46-47).

b) *Taffwid*: initiating the *jaha* – to act officially, representatives of the offender's family contact a member of the local *jaha* and provide the *jaha* with a *taffwid* – that is, an irreversible written authorization to act on their behalf to contact the victim's family and conduct the *sulha*. The *taffwid* contains the commitment of the offender's family to obey whatever verdict the *jaha* reaches (Pely 2008b). By giving written authorization, the psychological, emotional, and communal burden of the conflict is shifted from the parties to the *jaha*.

c) *Hodna*: ceasefire agreement – the *sulha* process begins after the *taffwid* is given. The *jaha*'s first goal is to convince both families of offended and offender to accept a temporary ceasefire and promise not to take revenge or confront the other side (Jabbour 1993:34).

⁵ For more details about women's informal power in the case-studies see Chapter Four, Section 4.4.2.

d) *Atwa*: payment of good faith – the *sulha* process demands a symbolic payment from the offender's family to the offended's, as determined by the *jaha*. The *atwa* is in addition to any payment made by the offender's family to secure its agreement to obey the *jaha*'s final decision. When the victim's family receive the *atwa*, the *hodna* goes into effect (Jabbour 1993:35).

e) The *jaha*'s investigation – investigation generally takes place via private discussions with representatives of the disputants and witnesses. The *jaha* must not expose information given by witnesses as it could damage the reputation of the *jaha* and the community's trust in them as credible mediators (Pely 2008b).

f) The *sulha* ceremony – the verdict is determined and participation in post-ceremony activities is required to ensure the durability of the agreement. If the offender has already taken responsibility, the *jaha*'s only determinations are the amount of compensation to be paid and conditions for reconciliation.⁶ If the dispute did not arise out of violence, the *jaha* does not assign guilt. A mediated agreement, agreeable to each side, is crafted and memorialized in writing;⁷ it is then read at a public ceremony and signed by representatives from each side. Afterwards the *jaha* and notable community members sign the agreement as well. A rejection of the verdict is considered a severe infraction of the process, an insult to the *jaha* and a loss of face for all involved (Jabbour 1993, Pely 2008b, Gellman and Vuinovich 2008). The final ceremony is centred on forgiveness, peace and compromise for the greater good of society. *Sulha* ceremonies involve three symbolic acts: (1) *Musafaha*, a handshake between the disputants validates the peace for all those present and absent;⁸ (2) *Musamaha*, a declaration of forgiveness by the victim's father; and (3) *Mumalaha*, a ceremonial meal that ends the *sulha* process (Smith 1989).

⁶ The compensation is called *diya* in a murder case, meaning 'blood money', and *taawid* in a non-murder case.

⁷ At this point, there are no further negotiations or appeals allowed in relation to its contents.

⁸ The larger community are taking the role of observer, rather than active witness to the resolution.

5.2.1.2 Key assumptions in *sulha*

Honour and forgiveness are the main basis of the socio-cultural assumptions employed within *sulha* (Jabbour 1993:56). When the *sulha* agreement is ready, disputants' families and the wider community are invited to the final *sulha* ceremony outdoors in the village centre, as the restoration of honour requires public viewing (Lang 2002:58). The final *sulha* ceremony is usually punctuated by a 'heavy silence' (Jabbour 1993:55) and is a scene of temporary humility by both parties - the offender's family humbly accepts the wrongdoings and offers compensation on behalf of their family member, and the bereaved family respectfully forgives the offender's family as an act of humility. The sharing of a meal indicates the reversal of the tragedy and the restoration of peace (Irani and Funk 1998:65).

In *sulha*, venting is equally important to resolving problems. This venting ritual aims to start the process of channelling the emotions of the victim's family; it is given large cultural support in order to help position them into the communally preferred option of conciliation and forgiveness (Jabbour 1993). Lang (2002) describes the venting process and the underlying social rationale as 'reverse *musayara*' (reverse social etiquette and ingratiation). This refers to the practice whereby the *jaha* treat the victim's family, from the beginning to the end of the *sulha* process, with the great respect normally given to high status persons. Lang explains this process as a performative reversal of the standard patron-client relationship common in Arab society. She adds, 'In relationships of patronage (*wasta*), the client's request for a favour is flattering for the patron, and each *wasta* favour can be seen as a transaction wherein *sharaf* [honour] flows from the client to the patron' (2002:55). In the venting process the *jaha* symbolically turn this relationship on its head (reverse *musayara*) by pleading with an ordinary family to grant them a favour, namely to forgive rather than to revenge. This reverse positioning is exceptionally flattering for the offended,

humiliated family. The family is temporarily placed in a position of ‘patronage’ over the most respected men in the community. Such a process calms the feelings of humiliation further and in a sense contributes to honour restoration.

Gellman and Vuinovich (2008) argue that *sulha* provides a culturally appropriate means for restoring values and that cultural symbols and rituals such as *sulha* are necessary for societal construction of peaceful coexistence. According to Smith (1989), in Palestine *sulha* is a method of communicating both the need to ‘resolve a conflict’ as well as creating a future-oriented socio-political relationship in which different communities can live together in harmony. Even if done with resentment, the final sharing of a meal is the ritualized performance of sharing vital nutrients that counts. Lang comments that, ‘Sincerity is irrelevant because by participating in the *sulha* the actors enmesh themselves in a web of social relations that will constrain them to observe the peace’ (2002:64).

The connection between the internal cohesiveness of the Arab family and *sulha* is crucial. As Jabbour argues, ‘The collective responsibility of the extended family (*hamula*) in Arab culture toward all its members is one of the main factors that makes *sulha* work’ (1993:69). It is important to recognize that in the same manner that the family may be the key to resolving conflicts, they could also cause the eruption or quick expansion of conflicts.⁹

Sulha is the only culturally authorized means to provide an alternative to the vengeance path. In *sulha*, honour plays a major functional, ritualistic and emotional role. Interveners and disputants use honour tools during each of *sulha*’s stages so that the option to forgive gradually replaces the drive to avenge. If, eventually, honour is increased and forgiveness replaces revenge, there will be an agreement. The use of

⁹ See Chapter One, Section 1.3.1.

honour tools continues after the agreement, with honourable figures noticeably used in actions designed to guarantee the endurance of the agreement (Pely 2010).

Sulha has become less practiced in the Palestinian society in Israeli for several reasons: first, *jaha* intervenes only after the conflict has exploded; second, *jaha* lacks the resources and professional background to fully understand the causes of disputes, and instead treats the symptoms; third, the same values that underpin the *sulha* (honour and forgiveness) can also 'prevent or obstruct the process of reaching a just resolution; instead it may contribute to the preservation of an asymmetrical power relationship that exists between the parties' (Abu-Nimer 1996b:32, 1996a).

5.2.2 Alternative-legal approach

There are two other ways to solve conflicts in Israel: litigation and ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution). ADR is a generic term referring to various means of settling disputes outside the courtroom, such as conciliation, facilitation, negotiation, neutral evaluation, mediation, and arbitration.¹⁰ ADR methods are informal and attached to official judicial mechanisms. The methods, tools and skills used are similar to negotiation. I will not discuss litigation since this was not used in the case-studies.

Fisher and Ury (1981) have developed the method called 'principled negotiation', or the problem-solving approach. This method is based on five principles: (a) separate people from the problem, (b) focus on interests, not positions, (c) invent options for mutual gain, (d) insist on using objective criteria, and (e) know your BATNA (Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement). This approach assumes people to be calculating and cost-benefit oriented. It has several characteristics that make its use problematic in conflicts involving Middle Eastern culture. First, it is designed primarily to satisfy individual needs. This is in contrast to Middle Eastern tradition which conceptualizes

¹⁰ Some Western ADR practices, such as arbitration and mediation, have developed into separate approaches. Disputants who choose (or are instructed) to seek a solution outside the courtroom can use one of these separate methods (Abu-Nimer 1996; Barrett and Barrett 2004).

people as selves-in-relationship (Walker 1999). Second, problem-solving suggests that participants ‘separate the person from the problem.’ This is in contrast to Middle Eastern conflict processing in which individuals are integral parts of the conflict and its solution. Fisher and Ury's approach has also been criticised for its claims of cultural universality (Avruch and Black 1990). Third, emotions (or venting) are acknowledged and respected in the process, but it is not universally accepted as a legitimate and/or constructive tool of conflict resolution within some strands of Western ADR (Grillo 1990).¹¹ Nevertheless, their approach seems to be one of getting the emotions out of the way so a settlement can be reached (Avruch 1998:78). Middle Eastern approaches sees emotional expression (or venting) as equally important or more important than resolving specific problems.

Galtung (1990) argues that the basic needs approaches of resolving conflict such as Burton's (1987) (recognition, security and identity) are culturally biased in assuming that non-negotiable human needs are universally applicable to all cultures.¹² Galtung stresses that people of differing cultures meet those needs in different ways. Burton's basic human needs approach is individualistic rather than communally based in that it defines human needs of the individual, not human needs of societies. For example, human needs for honour are fundamental in many communal cultures.

¹¹ In Western-style ADR, venting (where it is accepted as a legitimate tool of mediation) serves a dual purpose: it allows the parties to vent their anger and frustration, and it allows each party to become exposed to the realization that the other party also feels similar anger and frustration. Sometimes, venting is even seen as a therapeutic process (Silbey and Merry 1986). Both purposes coalesce into one single super-purpose – helping the parties become emotionally “unstuck” as a prerequisite to starting a move toward a possible solution (Matz 1996).

¹² Burton (1997) argues that human needs for recognition, security, and identity are essential to being fully human and cannot be bargained away. Therefore, in Burton's analysis, negotiating over basic human needs is not effective in decreasing conflict and may even exacerbate conflict. This is in contrast to Fisher and Ury's (1997) approach, which argues that basic human needs are security, economic well-being, belonging, recognition and control over one's life and should be taken into consideration in negotiations.

5.2.3 Comparison between *sulha* and alternative-legal approaches

I briefly compare *sulha* and alternative-legal approaches in terms of their assumptions, worldviews, third-party interventions, and processes.

5.2.3.1 Assumptions underlying both models

The *sulha* assumption is that conflict is a negative interaction and the focus is on the damage conflict can bring. Conflict resolution aims to maintain status quo, restoring social order and a disrupted balance of power, rather than to change power relationships. The group, not individuals, is the central locus of action, and future relationships are very critical elements. Norms such as ‘honour,’ ‘saving face,’ ‘dignity,’ ‘social status,’ and ‘religious beliefs’ are social codes utilized to evaluate an individual's status and operate as a pressuring tool to reach a mutual agreement.¹³

The alternative-legal assumptions are that conflict is not necessarily a negative interaction.; interest-based negotiation and a cooperative approach can be relied on to achieve a task, with laws accepted as a framework for intervention in a dispute (Bellah et al. 1985). People who are not directly connected to a conflict have minimal involvement (individualism). Behaviour is calculated according to rational measures and norms such as ‘behaving according to professional codes’ (Abu-Nimer 1996a).

5.2.3.2 The worldviews underlying both models

The *sulha* characteristics reflect a worldview distinctly different from that underlying the alternative-legal model frequently imposed on Palestinian communities.¹⁴ In the alternative-legal system humans are autonomous individuals.

¹³ Abu-Nimer 1996, Merry 1989, Nader 1978, Witty 1980, Irani and Funk 1998, Jabbour 1993, Gellman and Vuinovich 2008, Lang 2002, Shihade 2005.

¹⁴ The Palestinian community became a minority after it was a majority with the establishment of Israel. Israeli laws are considered strange by this community because of their tension with their worldview. The *sulha* worldview and techniques grew naturally from the community, bottom up, while the Israeli worldview, which is frequently imposed on Palestinian communities, is top down. Thus, seeking help in the Israeli courts is considered as going against the social codes of this community, and hurts their

Techniques are emphasized; intellectual experiences are used; and an analytical method is employed, with time perceived as linear. In the *sulha* system humans are communal, interconnected beings. Processes are emphasized; emotional expression is encouraged; and a holistic method is employed, with time considered in relation to interconnections between the conflict, participants and society.¹⁵

5.2.3.3 Third-party intervention in both models

In *sulha*, the *jaha* may suggest an intervention, but they officially act only after authorization from a family representative. In the alternative-legal system, the disputants' primary expectations are directed towards the legal system. In *sulha*, the third-party has authority in the process and both disputants have to respond to the values and norms of the society (dignity, religious, and patriarchal identity), which is different from the alternative-legal model where the process is based on joint decision-making.

In the alternative-legal approach interveners lack the connectedness to the disputants that is a natural characteristic of the interveners in *sulha*, who are involved in the day-to-day life of the disputants. This connectedness often enables pressure to be placed upon disputants to resolve the conflict, but in the alternative-legal model such pressure might come from the courts. In *sulha* interveners are involved emotionally in the dispute, often because they have actual kin relationships with the disputants. In the alternative-legal approach interveners are expected to be committed to the process itself.

5.2.3.4 The process in both models

The alternative-legal method utilizes a voluntary process of private mediation, in which a neutral third-party helps the parties negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement. The process usually involves a mix of joint and private meetings with the parties. The parties determine the outcome and can cancel it at any given moment.

honour. Such intervention would commemorate the conflict between the disputant and disrupted balance of social order.

¹⁵ Galtung 1990, Fisher and Ury 1981, 1997, Avruch 1998, Bush and Folger 1994.

The *sulha* process differs in that once the disputants agree to participate they are obligated to agree with the *sulha* verdict. *Sulha* rarely uses joint caucuses (meetings); it frequently uses private caucus, seemingly because of the anger disputants feel towards each other. Furthermore, the *jaha* can freely use coercion when required to push the process forward (Pely 2008b). The *sulha* process also differs from mediation (and arbitration) in that, although it cannot be used without the parties' agreement, there could be strong pressure from the community or the *jaha* to participate in it.¹⁶

During the investigatory stage, the *jaha* also use some mediation-like techniques. For example, they discuss prior precedent, reframe aggressive statements, and allow disputants to express their emotions. In *sulha*, venting of grief/anger is heard only by the *jaha*, and disputants meet only at the *sulha* ceremony. In the alternative-legal approach, the mediator often holds a joint session to facilitate expression of emotions (Pely 2008b).

In *sulha*, the investigation, deliberations, and verdict stages are more like arbitration, with touches of mediation. For instance, although the *jaha* decide the facts and the verdict (arbitration),¹⁷ the *jaha* negotiate the verdict with the disputants so that it will be acceptable to both. As with mediation, the *jaha*'s goal is to create a narrative that both sides agree with (Pely 2011c). In the alternative-legal approach, communications with the mediator during private caucuses are strictly confidential. The main reason for *sulha* confidentiality is the desire to increase harmony between the disputants.¹⁸ The *sulha* agreement is not confidential and can be submitted to a court.¹⁹

¹⁶ One stage of the *sulha* process that is similar to mediation is the process of bargaining the *hodna* (ceasefire).

¹⁷ It should be mentioned that the instruments of coercion in the *sulha* process are the written and verbal commitments (*taffwid*) that the disputants give the *jaha*, obliging them to abide by the *jaha*'s verdict.

¹⁸ Since revealing positive things the parties said about each other could promote resolution, *jaha* members are permitted to testify about such things if they are not incriminating.

¹⁹ The *sulha* agreement can be submitted to a court even though the agreement could contain incriminating information. Additionally the settlements are declared in a public forum (Pely 2011c, Gellman and Vuinovich 2008).

Neutrality is essential to both alternative-legal and *sulha* processes. A tool that can promote neutrality is the right of the parties to veto members of the *jaha*.²⁰

5.3 Christian Approach: Tension between Traditional Palestinian Churches and Western-Baptist Approaches

The tension between Episcopal/Sacramental versus Congregationalist/Functionalist polity was discussed in depth in Chapter Four. In this section I briefly describe the two approaches.

5.3.1 Traditional Palestinian Church approach

According to Israeli law, the traditional Palestinian Churches have juridical autonomy in the area of personal status and family law.²¹ However, when church conflict arises it is dealt with by a decision taken by the bishop or a specific committee appointed for that matter. In some cases, conflict remains unresolved for years.

5.3.2 Western-Baptist approach

Theoretically, as churches are independent, conflict should be dealt with according to each individual church constitution. This could involve bringing the dispute to church meetings where members could vote on its resolution, or the constitution could demand the appointment of a mediator or arbitrator. When churches have no constitution, or if the constitution does not include instructions on how conflict should be managed, then the most powerful figure is able to impose his own solution and the unsatisfied party may leave church.²²

²⁰ Pely 2011c; Gellman and Vuinovich 2008.

²¹ See Chapter one, Footnote 4.

²² For more details about the tension between pastors and laity over power see Chapter Four, Section 4.3.2.

5.4 Local Palestinian Baptists' Conflict Management Practices in the Three Case-Studies

I have found that the conflict management processes in the three cases consist of the above four different approaches with contrary commitments.²³ Two of them belong to either *sulha* or alternative-legalistic *cultural* models, the rest derive from local *theological* practices found in the traditional Palestinian churches and in Western-Baptist practices.²⁴ The pastors' cultural-theological approach is a combination of *sulha* and hierarchical theology known from traditional Palestinian churches. The younger generation's cultural-theological approach is a combination of alternative-legalist and Western-Baptist.

Palestinian Baptists in Israeli mix these practices as they deal with church conflict. Nonetheless, no party consciously adopted any one of the four approaches for conflict management. It merely happened that *some elements* of these various approaches can be found in the way the pastors and laity dealt with conflicts and it is likely that they had been influenced by these approaches, albeit unknowingly or sometimes knowingly.

I argue that these practices have been unproductive because of the traditional power of the pastor in a patriarchal-traditional community, the movement towards more democratic principles within society, and the newness of the Palestinian Baptist churches that have not yet institutionalized their church conflict management practices.

In the following analysis I characterize the attitudes of congregants, pastors and third-parties with respect to each approach. My ascription of one of these approaches to each interviewee does not mean that they exhaustively practice everything the approach would recommend. It is to say that this particular approach was more characteristic of

²³ In general, people are complex and live with contrary commitments. Arguably, nobody lives strictly according to one worldview.

²⁴ It is noteworthy to distinguish between approaches and practices. Approaches are the sources, and practices are the actual outworking of different elements from different approaches.

this particular person. The four different approaches are: *sulha*, alternative-legalistic, hierarchical and Western-Baptist approaches.

I offer the term *sulha* approach to talk about a compromising and non-confrontational approach in which the elements of *sulha* are obvious. Conflict management that is more legally oriented – one involving confrontation, formality and a perception of entitlement – I call alternative-legalistic approach. I suggest the term hierarchical approach to explain the pastors' way of dealing with conflict within their churches. Finally, I offer the term Western-Baptist approach to explain Western missionary and Western-minded Palestinian pastors' approaches.

I begin by providing from the case-studies examples of the *sulha* approach, and then I move to the alternative-legalistic approach where I dwell on underlying need for balance between patriarchy and modernity. After that the hierarchical approach. Finally, I expand the descriptions to include the Western-Baptist approach. The discussion is dedicated to the ways in which the alternative-legalistic and Western-Baptist approaches echo ongoing collective efforts to balance opposing forces and differing worldviews that operate on this community.²⁵ Bridging the gap between practical knowledge and formal knowledge reveals a range of creative negotiations that make the local articulations of Palestinian Baptist conflict management more complex than they may seem.²⁶

5.4.1 *Sulha* approach

Sulha elements seemed right to many participants, especially the older, more traditional congregants. Some elements of *sulha* were used or combined with other approaches during conflicts and after splits by both disputant and third-parties. I identify

²⁵ Rabinowitz, 2001.

²⁶ Palestinian Baptist in Israel are shaped by different cultural forces; their approaches to texts are a result of habituation as well; what we might call 'biblical habituation' is partly a function of the religious tradition that formed them but it is also a result of many other places that produce them (Fulkerson 2007:160) as mentioned above.

several *sulha* social codes in the cases which were pressuring tools in conflict management.

5.4.1.1 *Sulha* social codes identified in the case-studies

a) Future relationships and restored social order

To promote future relations with Pastor-A and restore social order in case-A, deacons continued in church-A even after the split. Although the deacons emphasized, in their letter to Pastor-A, that all members run church affairs and pastors are not church owners, they admitted their compromise was driven by beliefs that relationships are more important than ministry and change and restoring the church's social order was a priority. Courtesy and saving face of the clergy were issues at stake.²⁷

Additionally, most third-parties discontinued interventions. They did not want to confront Pastor-A and aimed to keep good future relationships with him, although they disagreed with his attitude. Their suggested resolutions therefore included keeping Pastor-A but adding an associate pastor.

Furthermore, when church-A2 applied for ABC membership, the ABC was divided in its loyalties between either Pastor-A or the deacons (who later joined church-A2). Mark, an influential leader, succeeded in convincing Pastor-A not to vote against church-A2's membership in the ABC.²⁸ Mark asserted this conflict influenced the whole denomination and could easily have caused a split in the ABC itself. In this case the focus was on social stability in the ABC and honour in the eyes of the broader community.²⁹ In case-B, church-B2, upon the ABC's request, agreed to give up the right to use the church building in order to maintain a good future relationship with the ABC.

²⁷ Letter to Pastor-A, 14 Apr 1996.

²⁸ Mark, Aug 2014. It is claimed the decision was made when it was agreed that church-A2 would seek a different location. Church-A2's leaders claimed that they promised to move only when they found a suitable place, but they never found one.

²⁹ Future relations were important for both church-A and church-A2. Seven years after the split they came together in joint services, as an initiative of former missionaries.

b) *Focus on damage, not change, and the codes of shame, honour, saving face, and good witness*

Most members from both churches in case-A recognized the split as a stigma and a poor witness within the community.³⁰ Sentences such as, ‘You become like the other traditional churches that have lots of conflicts,’³¹ ‘You Baptists, although you are very small in number you nevertheless split.’³² When I asked about their prayers during the conflict, participants said besides praying for Pastor-A, they prayed they would continue to be a good witness and not be shamed in their community. Mark argued this conflict was not dealt with properly since the focus was on ‘our reputation in community’ and not really on solving the problem.³³

Additionally, even within the evangelical community this split caused a poor reputation for church-A2. Some pastors stated they would not accept an invitation to preach at church-A2 until it moved away from the doorstep of church-A. As Majd explained:

It is a bad witness because it is a ministry on the doorstep; the geographic place of worship is critical to determine blessing. If a church splits and worships on the doorstep of the mother church, this is unacceptable culturally, biblically and logically. We heard comments even from Muslims about that.³⁴

In *sulha*, split or divorce was not an option. Majd blamed the mission for the split since they immediately provided church-A2 with a place for its meetings. He believed that they indirectly encouraged the split as ‘they did not realize the sensitivity of founding a church on the doorstep after a split within Palestinian culture, where saving face is so important.’ According to him, they should force reconciliation and not allow splits (*sulha* attitude).

³⁰ Seemingly, the phrase ‘not to be a poor witness’ repeated by many interviewees seems to mean not to be an obstacle to other faiths and also protecting one’s reputation in the face of others.

³¹ Dan, Mar 2014.

³² Jonathan, Apr 2014.

³³ Mark, Aug 2014.

³⁴ Majd, Mar 2014.

Although the split happened more than 20 years ago, its associated shame continues due to the location of church-A2. Every Sunday members of both churches remember the split as they meet at the same time, physically side by side. Often this requires explaining to visitors why there are two Baptist churches in the same venue.

Another example of shame and saving face was when the deacons, along with most of the younger generation, gave up and left the church, since they did not want to keep fighting at every meeting or to seek help in a secular court – in their culture this would be unacceptable and would be a poor witness bringing shame on them.³⁵

The younger generation's attitude, mixed with their feeling of entitlement, creates a different rationality of honour and shame; they put emphasis on confrontation and finally split the church.³⁶ In case-B, we saw a clear shift in attitude with the younger generation focusing more on their rights to have their own church than on shame and saving face.³⁷ There are two reasons for this shift: first, case-A set a precedent for splits in cases B and C, second, during case-B many of ABC's leaders were younger generation.

In case-C, third-parties focused on the damage conflict would bring to the community. They tried to 'force' Pastor-C and Bishara to continue to work together on the evangelistic ministry despite the conflict. David, a third-party stated:

we forced them to stay together, we told them it is unacceptable to divorce; your decision would influence the broader community, you are ministers and this would hurt the church... we focused on the damage that their decision would bring, we also focused on the benefit the reconciliation would bring.³⁸

³⁵ Another example of saving face was when the dismissed deacons sent Pastor-A a letter expressing resentment concerning the last heated church meeting instead of confronting him during the meeting to prevent more tension and poor witness.

³⁶ This is an example of using the alternative-legalistic approach.

³⁷ See Chapter One. This supports Barakat's (1993) argument that what characterizes Arab cultural identity in this transitional period is the ongoing struggle between opposing values.

³⁸ David, Aug 2015.

Another third-party tried to bring about reconciliation between Pastor-C and Bishara.³⁹ The third-party met with them and they apologized to one another. Bishara told me the third-party ‘forced’ him to apologize at church although he was not convinced he should. Saving face is implicit in these two examples.

c) Compromise:

Compromise was another dominant element in the cases, as deacons were able to convince the second-generation not to use the legal system to force Pastor-A to share the church building. As Jack, a deacon, explained:

The church’s constitution doesn’t provide a way of dealing with conflict... we tried hard to find the right biblical way and thought that it was best to leave the church... I don’t know if this was biblical except we *compromised* and left so we wouldn’t be poor witnesses... during the conflict we prayed our witness would remain good in the eyes of our city.⁴⁰

Rima, a member at church-A2, argued, ‘the deacons and many others were dissatisfied, but they accepted this reality because they got used to being silent at church since this is the way “it should be”’.⁴¹

In case-B the ABC attitude was to convince church-B2 to compromise and give up the building for Pastor-B’s sake, to prevent escalation of the conflict. In case-C third-parties put pressure on Bishara to make more compromises for Pastor-C’s sake, hoping this would solve the conflict.

d) Religious beliefs such as submissiveness to clergy

Most interviewees had mixed feelings, believing that splits were wrong but unable to see an alternative route out of situations where they felt powerless. Splits therefore seemed the only solution but some respondents reported that they lived with a sense of shame after the split. Third-parties in case-A accused members who left church of not being submissive enough to their pastor. The ABC President during and after the

³⁹ A delegation from the ABC (before the formal intervention of the ABC-Committee).

⁴⁰ Jack, Mar 2014.

⁴¹ Rima, Mar 2014.

conflict said, ‘Do not harm the “anointed” [Pastor-A] from God.’⁴² Rima thought it was very painful when third-parties were judgmental towards them, as she explained, ‘It was painful for us too to leave but we had no choice... many others told us you had to stay and bear everything, and there should be a solution... eventually, none of them could do anything to solve the conflict.’⁴³ She added that some members from Pastor-A’s party would accuse them of being ‘against the “anointed” of God’, since God had appointed him as pastor and everybody should be submissive and loyal. Some old women were afraid to leave church-A to join church-A2 as they might lose the privilege of being buried respectfully, ‘as if Pastor-A had the authority to remove this privilege from them,’ Rima wondered.⁴⁴ Some members felt Pastor-A’s preaching was judgmental, and were hesitant to take communion at church.

Deference to clergy was evident in case-A when first-generation deacons did not confront Pastor-A for years. Majd, a pastor who exited from church-A, said, ‘The deacons were tolerant with Pastor-A even on “unbiblical issues”, eventually they themselves were harmed by their attitude.’⁴⁵ In cases B and C younger generations were loyal to their pastors; when pastors did not share power they confronted them.

The following quote summarizes the *sulha* approach, delineating social codes (of future relations, saving face, compromise, submissiveness to clergy) which directed the attitude and actions of disputants and third-parties:

The church waited a long time without real confrontation because of special relationships, courtesy, saving the face of the pastor and not hurting his feelings... compromise for many years is the reason for today’s hardship... the members’ Arab-Christian perspective hindered them from confrontation and frankness... as Arabs we were not frank and as Christians we respect clergy and age.⁴⁶

⁴² Where does this idea of the ‘anointed’ come from? I am aware that the word ‘anointed’ can be used in different senses. In the Bible anointing was related to accountability and service. This might be related to David and Saul who were anointed as kings and Jesus who was anointed as servant. Seemingly, Palestinian Baptist local culture developed a theology over the perception of the word ‘anointed’ to give more privilege to leaders in hierarchical (untouchable) positions rather than a theology of service. This theology might have its roots in Charismatic theology.

⁴³ Rima, Mar 2014.

⁴⁴ Rima, Mar 2014.

⁴⁵ Majd, Mar 2014.

⁴⁶ Jack’s letter to Pastor-A, 14 Apr 1996.

5.4.1.2 The reason for the *sulha* approach failure

There are several external and internal reasons *sulha* seems to have failed to solve these conflicts.

a) External reasons (related to broader community)

First, the traditional nature of the *sulha* can be a weakness because disputes today differ from the past. For example, the *jaha* is unable to address the sources of conflicts, since its goal is to preserve the status quo. In the case-studies the younger generation was interested in change and dissatisfied with keeping the status quo. The result was frequently that when the underlying roots of the conflict were unresolved, the conflict continued.

Second, the *sulha* model has become less effective and less practiced in the Palestinian society in Israel because the massive loss of lands to the State hastened the decline of patriarchal control and contributed to critical changes in family relations.⁴⁷ Another important reason is younger generation exposure to Israeli-secular rationality, ideas of secular justice and individualism. They have developed a sense of rights to lead and shape the church. Accordingly, their understanding and deference to elders has weakened.⁴⁸

Third, the susceptibility of the process to becoming dominated by socially powerful participants often leads to unsustainable resolutions and to a contradiction of the value of justice and individual rights. This was indeed true in the case-studies with the unbalanced power between pastors and congregants. *Sulha's* ability to mend

⁴⁷ See Chapter One, Section 1.3.1 and Chapter Three, Section 3.2.2.

⁴⁸ While Arab societies are undergoing rapid changes throughout the world, the *sulha* and its place in these societies may also be undergoing some change.

relationships is strong, but is weak when challenging the patriarchal structure because of its patriarchal *habitus*.⁴⁹

Fourth, due to lack of resources and compensation⁵⁰ it is hard to find volunteers to enter into the *jaha*. This results in a greater tendency to appeal to the Israeli legal system. One of the main complaints of interveners and disputants in the cases was the inability to find volunteers able to allocate considerable time to dispute resolution.

Fifth, since *jaha* intervenes only after the conflict has become violent, the situation becomes more complicated and the goal of reconciliation harder to achieve.⁵¹

Finally, church splits are a new challenge the Palestinian Baptist community faces and *sulha* would need to *adapt to the changes* the community is experiencing. This requires new techniques and professionals.⁵² Based on the data, disputants complained third-parties lacked professional knowledge to deal with church conflicts.

b) Internal reasons (related to case-studies)

One main reason for *sulha*'s failure in the case-studies is that its stages were not fully applied by third-parties and it was not practised explicitly.

First, third-parties had no *authority* since they were not authorized by the disputants as in *sulha*, and thus did not have the power of *jaha*. In case-A, third-parties involved informal individual initiatives by respected evangelical community figures:

⁴⁹ See Section 5.2.1. One of the weaknesses of the *sulha* is that intervention is based on a hierarchical system of mediators and procedures. *Sulha* can benefit from adopting the alternative-legalistic collaborative approach of decision making which is essential for reaching a lasting agreement. Nonetheless, the imbalance in power between the disputants has not yet been solved in Western conflict resolution approaches either. Avruch, Black, and Scimecca (1991) argue that Western models of conflict resolution lack the tools to address the power disparity that usually exists among the parties. Nevertheless, Abu-Nimer (1996a) notes that there are approaches that suggest solutions for such limitations such as Burton's analytical problem process (1990) and a group of scholars who propose empowerment as a cure for asymmetric power relationships.

⁵⁰ *Jaha* members are traditionally unpaid.

⁵¹ Amal, a deacon's wife told me, 'The conflict should be dealt with immediately, it is easier to solve when it is small, so people will not get used to it and accept it' (Mar 2014). Jack asserted, 'When the solution becomes a split (divorce) this means that the conflict has already been there for long time' (Jack, Mar 2014).

⁵² In general, there is a lack of documentation in the many meetings held during *sulha* processes. This lack hinders the *sulha* from improving a body of precedence for promoting the conflict resolution process (Tarabeih, Shmueli and Khamaisi 2009).

two elderly ABC pastor representatives, two elderly respected figures from the wider evangelical community, and two second-generation pastors from church-A who tried to initiate talks with church-A2.⁵³ Two missionary pastors from each church initiated a joint prayer meeting. Other third-parties, joint friends, initiated joint worship services. Two other additional attempts at reconciliation by church-A2's leadership were rejected by Pastor-A.⁵⁴

In case-B, after the split, an ABC-delegation met with the disputants separately, but the disputants insisted that there was no way to reconcile. Another attempt from the ABC failed since Pastor-B was very upset by its stance. Despite strong pressure from the Baptist community to participate in reconciliation attempts (similar to the kind of social pressure operating in *sulha*), Pastor-A and Pastor-B, who felt betrayed and rejected by their church members, were uncooperative.

Second, the element of *neutrality* is essential to the success of a *sulha*, because the *jaha* actually imposes a settlement, making it crucial that all sides of the dispute feel that the *jaha* is completely neutral in its approach.⁵⁵ However, in the cases many of the interveners (who also lack the *jaha* power since they were not formed and authorized accordingly) could not continue as they were afraid of losing friendship with the pastors.

Third, in *sulha* interveners meet separately with disputants to convince them to choose reconciliation; private meetings are important because of the anger each side feels. Joint meetings take place at the end, during the *sulha* ceremony. In case-A third-parties initiated a joint meeting with disputants hoping to resolve the problem in one session. Phil, a senior pastor, and Peter, an evangelical leader, met with the parties. Phil told me, 'When we arrived at the meeting we did not know what the problem was and

⁵³ When Pastor-A knew about this initiative he became angry.

⁵⁴ Rami and John, 2014.

⁵⁵ Pely, 2011C:437.

we asked the parties to explain... we were hoping by the end to build bridges between them, to drink coffee and shake hands... but we did not get to this point.’⁵⁶ Peter added, ‘We were not prepared, we went spontaneously, and we said to ourselves “they are believers”, we would share with them what the Bible teaches us about solving problems and they would agree... but they did not want to apply it.’⁵⁷ Because of the interveners’ attitude (skipping the private meetings), no venting took place, no truce agreement,⁵⁸ no honour restoration, no investigation – and therefore no agreement was achieved, as would have been the case in *sulha*.

Fourth, another third-party started the process with a *verdict* to solve the problem, skipping all *sulha* steps. Two elderly respected pastors, ABC-representatives, were asked to try to solve the conflict in a biblical way. On their agenda were three issues: (1) cancel the last vote in the business meeting, (2) the pastoral candidate, and (3) the need to stop using the pulpit to pass negative messages.⁵⁹ This attempt also failed.

Fifth, some third-parties started the process with a *sulha ceremony*, skipping the prior *sulha* stages. Seven years after the split this process was started with joint church services at church-A, which can be seen as parallel to a *sulha* ceremony. Many interviewees focus on *externality*; for them the purpose of joint services was to publicly restore social order and good witness. Amal, a deacon’s wife,⁶⁰ viewed joint services as kind of reconciliation ‘since we showed willingness to be together.’⁶¹ She added, ‘Only the building can unite us again: each church would have its own services in the building and the building unites the body of Christ since we will be together and everybody can

⁵⁶ July 2104.

⁵⁷ May 2014. This attitude was close to the ADR model where the mediator often holds an early joint session for the expression of emotions.

⁵⁸Truce agreement means the promise not to take revenge and not to confront the other side.

⁵⁹ABC records.

⁶⁰ She is a member in church-A2.

⁶¹ Amal, Mar 2014.

see we are together.’⁶² In this attitude (*externality*), we can see appearance is important; the whole community should be able to observe the ‘peace’ by ‘being together’ in a joint service. For Amal *external forgiveness* can lead to reconciliation (*sulha* attitude).⁶³ This kind of reconciliation I would call ‘diplomatic reconciliation’. ‘Diplomatic reconciliation’ focuses on the external aspect of reconciliation and might overlook the need for genuine forgiveness and justice and aimed at keeping the social order despite unresolved conflicts.

We also see a different viewpoint, a focus on *internality*, from some younger members. For example, Rima did not attend the joint services at church-A, since she felt it was not sincere and that church-A members were not welcoming, and they never agreed to join services at her church (church-A2). Rima perceived *internal forgiveness* as a condition to real reconciliation.⁶⁴ It is noteworthy that Pastor-A rejected church-A2’s invitation to join their services because of the church’s location.⁶⁵ He wrote, ‘Having your church located a few metres from ours after the split... causes resentment to many people... in addition to ongoing friction and competition to attract members,’ he ended his letter by praying for them to find another place soon.⁶⁶

Starting the process with a *sulha* ceremony, even after skipping the prior *sulha* stages, was also seen in case-C. Albert, a church leader, told me, ‘Before the split when

⁶²Amal, Mar 2014. According to church-A2, since Pastor-A had not yet attended their church service this would mean that there is still a problem. These joint meetings in fact would provide them with legitimacy in the broader community as they were perceived as the one who did wrong.

⁶³ External forgiveness is an external process aimed at restoring social order and is realized in the broader community. This will be discussed in-depth in Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.

⁶⁴ Internal forgiveness is an internal process of overcoming negative attitudes and emotions (revenge, resentment, avoidance or anger) towards the offender. This will be discussed in-depth in Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.

⁶⁵ Letter, 4 May 2006.

⁶⁶ Letter, 20 May 2006. as of 2018, the situation in case-A is a ceasefire (analogous to a *hodna*); the conflict is still unresolved; in the first years after the split most people did not interact, people still talk about their hurt and hard feelings. Slowly and mostly after joint services, people began to greet one another. Pastor-A also agreed to allow the use of the church building for funerals and weddings of church-A2 members. However, some misunderstandings still arise because of church-A2’s location. This is a ceasefire until a new spark takes place such as discussing the church building again. However, as Bryan, a missionary, put it, ‘there was no willingness to pay the cost... to meet and become completely honest with each other’ (Mar 2014).

we had tension at church, we would arrange a trip and have a barbeque all together but we did not discuss the problem... we tended to minimize the problem and ignore it.’⁶⁷ It seems ‘sincerity’ is less relevant to this attitude because by participating in joint services or sharing a meal the congregants are enmeshing themselves in a web of social relations that will ‘force’ them to keep the peace (Lang 2002).

Sixth, one of the main roles of the third-party in *sulha* is to *restore honour publicly* because of the shame and rejection felt by all disputants. Shame and rejection were the main complaints shared by both pastors and the younger generation as a result of the splits. Phil, a third-party, complained they failed because disputants took things too personally and both made harsh accusations, he told me, ‘Pastor-A’s party was focusing on his long history of sacrifice and service in the church as if the other party did not acknowledge that.’⁶⁸ In *sulha*, interveners and disputants use honour tools during each stage to enable the parties to gradually go through transformation from anger (revenge) to willingness to contribute to communal healing (reconciliation). In these cases, third-parties did try to restore dignity by offering honourable solutions (such as keeping Pastor-A as emeritus pastor) but did not use honour in each stage, as it ought to happen in *sulha*. It seems that the pastors’ requests to be recognized by the ABC as ‘the Pastor’ and eventually to control the church buildings was one method they used in attempt to restore part of their lost honour.

Furthermore, in *sulha*, venting or emotional expression is equally important to resolving problems. Interveners may act as voluntary targets for the family of the victim sense of anger and frustration. Ignoring venting played a critical role in the case-studies; third-parties did not realize their critical role as ‘anger or shock absorbers’ and that grief work must be enabled by them.⁶⁹ They perceived venting as an obstacle in achieving

⁶⁷ Albert, Aug 2015.

⁶⁸ July 2104.

⁶⁹ Jabbour 1993, 1996:46-47.

reconciliation. Phil (third-party) said, 'We spent three hours hearing the same complaints again from both sides with no progress.' Peter a third-party, gave up because of the harsh emotions expressed; he concluded a split was inevitable. Most third-parties mentioned the issue of strong emotions controlling the process as a reason for failure. Jack, a deacon, asserted Pastor-A's feeling of rejection after the split hindered any reconciliation.⁷⁰ Mary, a member at church-A2, argued, 'Since we live in intertwined community tension escalates during conflict'.⁷¹ According to her, the parties were not able to reconcile after so many insults and injuries. She added, 'They burned bridges behind them. There were very hard accusations from both groups.'⁷²

Finally, time is a critical element in *sulha* and the amount required is measured in relation to the interconnections between the conflict, participants and society; this dimension is critical in order to publicly restore dignity. However, in the case-studies third-parties did not dedicate enough time and that was problematic. According to most interveners, they met with the disputants only once; the process usually ended at the first joint meeting as the emotional reaction was very strong and the meeting exploded.

In sum, *sulha* approach includes different social codes of future relationships, compromise, deference to clergy, honour and saving face. It focuses on being a good witness and maintaining unity, with divorce not an option. Disputants and third-parties did not comprehensively apply the stages of *sulha*, and did not fully address emotions and honour. They focused on *externality* (appearance) rather than *internality*, and the preservation of an imbalanced power relationship rather than change. *Sulha* attitude led to pacification, or 'diplomatic reconciliation',⁷³ rather than reconciliation. Its implicit theology of reconciliation lacks *internal forgiveness* and justice.⁷⁴ Apparently,

⁷⁰ Jack, Apr 2014.

⁷¹ Mary, Apr 2014.

⁷² Mary, Apr 2014.

⁷³ I will discuss 'diplomatic reconciliation' in Chapter Seven.

⁷⁴ I will discuss that in more detail in the next chapters.

Palestinian Baptists felt trapped: they faced a new reality of church conflict where their traditional model failed (either because it was not fully implemented or it became ineffective), they had no central authority such as the traditional churches to force a solution, and no external coercion was possible.

5.4.2 Alternative-legalistic approach

This approach was mainly used by the younger generation. I use the term alternative-legalistic approach to denote the method of using only part of the techniques of alternative-legalistic conflict resolution to bring about change such as confrontation and a legalistic framework as I elaborate below. The younger generation in the cases mixed this approach with *sulha* when they showed deference to clergy, compromised their rights and did not seek help in secular courts.

I focus on the interplay between the creativity with which the younger generation, with its commitment to individual rights, challenged patriarchal and traditional limitations to expand their life opportunities on the one hand, and inclined to identify with the values of their own culture on the other. To a degree, my observations have been informed by an implicit expectation that they should serve as agents of change.

5.4.2.1 Alternative-legalistic techniques identified in case-studies

a) Confrontational technique

When the younger generation confronted the pastors this was an act of rebellion over the patriarchal system. The young laity admitted the conflict happened because of their enthusiasm for change and for a new vision that would include them in church life. For pastors, however, change was not an option and conflict escalated. I find three different types of confrontations in the case-studies.

First, the younger generation, using the constitution, confronted their pastor and refused to submit to him. They repeatedly requested that the pastor operate according to the constitution, they persisted in their right to bring in a younger pastor, they sent a

petition letter which escalated the conflict, they appealed to the BCI and requested a separate service in the church building. After they failed to change, they split the church. Rima, a member of church-A2, said, ‘When we started to question Pastor-A we did not get any response and we started to feel rejected and felt the division in the air.’⁷⁵ Rima, who also rebelled against compromise and saving face of a clergyman in a patriarchal community, said:

God does not teach us to overlook wrong and to compromise... when we mentioned that this was perceived as very rude and crossing the line, especially as a woman... I felt as if it was our patriarchal society was flowing into the church, in the very place where it shouldn’t be accepted.⁷⁶

The younger generation challenged patriarchal and traditional limitations in order to be able to respond to God’s calling upon their lives through the church. They tried to act legally and respectfully and they agreed to bring in a young pastor to work alongside Pastor-A. In order to reach an agreement they used rational measures with creative options, focusing on interests and mutual gain, but they also focused on relational measures and tried to retain a good relationship with Pastor-A and the rest of the church. After the split they welcomed third-party intervention; they were open to compromise by giving Pastor-A the opportunity to become pastor emeritus and continue his salary, and left without using legal means to force him to share the building.

Nonetheless at times the younger generation insulted Pastor-A, acting disrespectfully towards a clergyman. For example, some of them criticised the pastor and his preaching ability. Another example was sending the petition letter via a delivery service to Pastor-A’s house. For Pastor-A, individuals are integral parts of a conflict and its solution; resolving the problem meant replacing the deacons, rejecting the ‘rebellious-group’, and electing his family and friends to different positions.

⁷⁵ Mar 2014.

⁷⁶ Mar 2014.

In case-B the opposing party also confronted Pastor-B and were ready to start their new church immediately. Three weeks after the split, church-B2 was formed. Elias, a church leader, in his letter to one of the interveners, stressed that he saw no problem with them starting their own church, just as church-A2 did nine years earlier. The split in case-A was seen as a precedent for insisting on change.⁷⁷

I identify a second type of confrontation in case-B, when the ABC confronted Pastor-B directly.⁷⁸ Pastor-B, who felt rejected and betrayed, refused to be reconciled or to accept church-B2 into ABC membership, for him acceptance of the ‘rebellious-group’ would amount to disregarding his 30 years of service and warning that it would encourage divisions. He explained that being submissive to one another is a ‘Christ-like’ quality, whereas rebellion is not.⁷⁹

Pastor-B’s attitude was confronted by two young leaders who were part of a ‘rebellious-group’ in their churches. Aaron, an ABC-representative, responded in another letter, confronting Pastor-B directly. He wrote, ‘The submissiveness God expects from us is different from what is found in the Papal church’. He added that, biblically not every disagreement between members and a pastor counts as rebellious and demonic, referring to the famous dispute between the Apostle Paul and Barnabas. He stressed that, since the ABC could not help achieve reconciliation because of distrust between the parties, each wanting to serve God differently, *divorce* was inevitable, referring to Abraham and Lot and emphasizing a belief in ‘pluralism in unity’. However, the ABC recommended keeping positive relationships and being open to merging later. He ended saying the ABC was aware of the warfare and that both parties

⁷⁷ Letter to the ABC, 17 Dec 2005 and open interview with David. In cases A and B, the ABC gave legitimacy to the churches that split by accepting their membership; some argued that this attitude of the ABC indirectly encouraged members who opposed the pastor to leave church (Majd, Pastor-B and Pastor-C). Some even saw the split in case-A as a precedent that gave a green light to future church splits. Pastor-C and Elias explicitly said that they did not see a problem in starting a new church after a split referring to other cases at ABC.

⁷⁸ Some younger generation leaders were recruited in the ABC ten years after the split in case-A.

⁷⁹ His letter to the ABC, 23 Apr 2007.

had been wounded;⁸⁰ but the ABC had confronted Pastor-B in a direct way, bringing it back to confrontation.⁸¹

One year later the ABC was struggling with whether to accept church-B2 into membership, because of different opinions within ABC. Rami, an ABC young leader, told me the ABC was divided; most pastors were against church-B2 becoming a member, claiming that accepting church-B2 would encourage future splits. Lay leaders were supportive.⁸² Sami, a member of the ‘rebellious-group’ in case-A, sent a letter to the ABC, expressing his resentment concerning this attitude. He insisted since Baptists in Israel are a small community, it was important to keep these churches under the umbrella of the ABC for their protection, and if pastors would have shared power with church members they would not have split. He added this kind of attitude would turn the ABC into a ‘pastors club’ that would help them to keep their status.⁸³ Rami also decided to confront Pastor-B respectfully, in a seven hour face-to-face meeting, after which he concluded that Pastor-B was so hurt by the ABC stance.⁸⁴

A third type of confrontation, accompanied by submissiveness to the pastor, was identified in case-C. This was not a traditional ‘Papal submissiveness’ without questioning. Members of church-C2 decided not to split the church. Nonetheless, their submissiveness was accompanied with questioning Pastor-C. This young generation (third-generation) was more committed to principles of Congregationalist ecclesiology. It was also directed by the Canadian pastor who encouraged them to stay submissive and cooperate with the ABC-Committee during the conflict.

⁸⁰ Letter, 27 Apr 2007.

⁸¹ It is noteworthy that the splits solved parts of the conflicts at church. Although split is not the optimal resolution but reintegration is, we still live in a fallen world where optimal solutions are hard to achieve and pain will be healed completely in the world to come.

⁸² Open interview with Rami, Oct 2016.

⁸³ Letter, 27 May 2008.

⁸⁴ Rami, May 2007.

These three different types of confrontations caused a shift in the ABC approach to conflict management, from traditional reasoning to a modern approach. In 2007, as a result of the splits in cases A and B, the ABC constitution was changed to allow for greater influence and power for the ABC over pastors and churches going through conflict.⁸⁵ Another change was to make the acceptance of a new church resulting from a split conditional upon its receiving a blessing from the church it split from.

b) Legalistic framework technique

The findings indicate that the younger generation consciously operated within a legalistic framework: behaving in accordance with professional codes, using letters to negotiate directly with their pastors, demanding to work in accordance with the constitution, and appealing to the BCI. Using these techniques with pastors caused huge resistance and escalated conflicts, as both models (hierarchical and alternative-legalistic) have contradictory values (patriarchal versus democratic). I present some examples from the case-studies.

In case-A a group of frustrated young men drafted a petition letter to Pastor-A, calling on him to take immediate action to discuss introducing a new pastor, as this should be the decision of the whole church, and hinting that not taking these steps would cause a split. This letter was signed by 19 church members.⁸⁶ Pastor-A's letter in response, drafted jointly with Waleed, a young member, was signed by 41 people, many of whom were not active members in the church but were asked to sign. Pastor-A's letter expressed his hurt at the disrespectful manner of sending the petition letter using a delivery service, and stated that insisting on addressing the issue of a future pastor would lead to chaos and confusion in the church.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See appendix 4, 'The Ministry Committee' §9 in the constitution. Also see Chapter Three.

⁸⁶ Nabil, Sami and Ramiz.

⁸⁷ Pastor-A's letter suggested several issues: (1) the Holy Spirit raises up spiritual leaders according to the Lord's timing, (2) a more urgent subject was the need to activate the church, as the spiritual leaders

In case-B a group of frustrated members, led by seven professional men and women, tried to change Pastor-B's philosophy of individual church leadership to a pastor and council-led church. Two years before the church split, and after many requests to have a church committee, pastor-B agreed, but then ignored it. Elias said, in explaining the importance of formality when dealing with the pastor, 'We need *formality* so the pastor wouldn't say that he didn't know about the meetings of the committee.'⁸⁸ When the committee insisted on having a constitution, they started to work on drafting one. The committee met several times without the pastor being present. When they then handed the proposed constitution to him, the pastor who was hurt by their attitude did not accept it. They tried to call for a general meeting ignoring the pastor, but he called a meeting without them; the committee was dismissed, and the church lock was changed.⁸⁹

5.4.2.2 The reason for the alternative-legalistic approach failure

Confrontation and the use of legalistic framework technique were familiar and common for the younger generation. Nonetheless, this approach was not acceptable for the pastors and the older generation, such as Jack, a deacon, who did not fully agree with their techniques. He said, 'The optimal thing would be that the opposing group would grow so they can change the pastor... the church members have the authority... there was only one attempt but it failed.'⁹⁰

Waleed, from Pastor-A's party, spoke about the deacons' responsibility, saying, 'The deacons should have stayed at church, served and won Pastor-A's trust again; they are the pillars of the church... it was their responsibility to solve the conflict without

(hinting at the deacons) were not participating in their spiritual roles, and (3) the need for new leaders who could work in harmony with Pastor-A instead of opposing him.

⁸⁸ Elias, Aug 2015.

⁸⁹ Elias, Aug 2015.

⁹⁰ Jack, Apr 2014.

leaving.’⁹¹ Pastor Majd, who exited from church-A, suggested, ‘If splits were inescapable, the group should leave silently, meet in a different place without taking members...’⁹² Paul, a missionary, agreed with Majd and added, ‘There would not have been the hurt and pain for those involved or the poor testimony in the community.’^{93 94}

Interestingly, the younger generation viewed confrontation and the use of legalistic techniques as kind and normal. They did not see their actions as intimidating to their pastors. Sami explained the petition letter as follows, ‘We sent Pastor-A a very kind letter asking him to bring a pastor for the youth, just as Paul trained Timothy.’⁹⁵ Dan, a deacon, explained the idea was to convene a general assembly for the whole church to discuss the issue of bringing another pastor when Pastor-A did not cooperate. However, Pastor-A and Pastor-B viewed some of these techniques (sending letters, writing petition letters, calls for a general meeting, and appeals to BCI to use the building) as disrespectful and felt deeply rejected and insulted. Pastor-A and Pastor-B told me that even at the time of their interviews they still did not understand the reason for the splits.

These examples are evidence that the use of the alternative-legalistic approach by the younger generation burned bridges with their pastors. Church-A2 fought Pastor-A by splitting, staying in the same venue and talking unsympathetically about him. Church-B2 fought Pastor-B by splitting and speaking unsympathetically about him. Nonetheless in case-C, although members confronted Pastor-C, they did not oppose him

⁹¹Jack, Jun 2014.

⁹² Majd, Mar 2014.

⁹³ Paul, Aug 2014.

⁹⁴ George, who was supposed to replace Pastor-A, spoke about the difficulty the deacons had acting as spiritual authorities at church-A where the pastor should be accountable to them: ‘The problem is the deacons did not operate in their capacity as spiritual authorities...it would have been solved biblically if there had been spiritual authority in the church... since churches are independent, pastors should be accountable to elders and deacons... the deacons should have written a letter to the church requesting Pastor-A to resign and they should have stuck with this until the end, even if that meant going to court.’

⁹⁵ Sami, Feb 2014.

by splitting, which allowed for reintegration (although accompanied by challenges, as discussed in Section 5.4.4).

In response to the use of the alternative-legalistic approach, pastors started to indirectly rebuke the parties wanting change from the pulpit using Bible passages and sermons, and even blamed them for the poor spiritual state of the church. This step contributed to conflict escalation between the two groups. This was also seen in case-C.

This method of rebuke was used by other members – not only pastors and some family members. For example Sami, a young leader, received threatening phone calls from a church member who claimed he was hurting ‘the anointed from God’ with his aggravating letters. Sami informed Pastor-A in a letter that for the sake of saving the face of the church he would not approach the police about the intimidation he was experiencing, however he did request that this person should be disciplined.⁹⁶ Eventually Jack, a deacon, convinced Sami to drop his complaint in order to prevent an escalation in the conflict (*sulha* attitude).⁹⁷ This is another clear example of how the younger generation navigated between two cultures, using a legalistic framework based on the alternative-legalistic approach and Baptist theology, as well as being sensitive to some cultural limitations (saving face and respect to clergy).

It should be mentioned that there is some overlap between the values of Baptist theology (discussed below) and the alternative-legalistic approach familiar to the younger generation who made use of it. These techniques were rejected by the older generation and pastors. Eventually it also escalated the conflict, since some of its values contradicted the values of the traditional *sulha* model. The implicit theology of reconciliation in the alternative-legalistic approach prioritizes justice and rights over relationships.

⁹⁶ Letter 12 Aug 1996.

⁹⁷ Sami, Feb 2014.

In sum, we can see that a shift occurred from case-A (1995) to case-C (2016) from the ‘anointed’ pastor to a ‘confronted’ pastor, from traditional ‘Papal submissiveness’ to ‘submissiveness’ with questioning and split became an option. However, the code of compromise, saving face, good witness, and loyalty to clergy played a role in the cases. The younger generation navigated between the contradictions and tensions that could be summarized in the following polarities of *theology and culture*: hierarchical versus Congregationalist and traditional-patriarchal versus modern-democratic. Younger generation requires both the practice of adjusting to a contradictory situation and the practice of boundary maintenance between two different contradictory sets of values, democratic and traditional. The *habitus* oriented them to consider carefully the limitations of their worldview and motivation even while they also constantly modified their stance. This is also the place where people negotiate meaning, interest, and power in order to achieve change and reproduction.

5.4.3 Hierarchical approach

The hierarchical approach was mainly used by pastors who acted as spiritual fathers. Seemingly the behaviour of the pastors in the case-studies was influenced by the non-evangelical, traditional Palestinian churches both theologically and culturally. Pastors understood that their position could grant them the power to act as a bishops in traditional Palestinian churches and made decisions to solve conflicts by dismissing deacons (case-A) or committee members (case-B) from office, or trying to appoint a successor after they resigned (case-C). Additionally, Pastor-A and Pastor-B did not recognize the authority of the ABC who tried to intervene, emphasizing their individual authority and the autonomy of the local church. This approach was discussed in-depth in Chapter Four.

In the three case-studies pastors tended to see conflicts in their churches as spiritual problems (members were not submissive to clergy). In case-C, when Pastor-C

requested ABC's help, he was hoping they would give him complete support as *the pastor*; this was also seen in case-B when Pastor-B requested ABC recognition that he was *the pastor*. All pastors made the claim 'God told me to...' to increase their power by claiming a high spirituality. Ron, a missionary who served among Palestinian Baptists for many years, concluded, 'Pastors always have the power in the end; culture and society affirms the conservative approach to leadership.'⁹⁸ The hierarchical approach's implicit theology of reconciliation seems to suggest that the patriarch is the one who implements justice and offers forgiveness, as I elaborate in the next chapters.

This approach also failed to solve the conflicts. Church members felt desperate with the authoritarian style of their pastors, voicing their frustration and complaints through confrontation and letters eventually escalating the conflicts which led to splits.

5.4.4 Western-Baptist approach

This approach is another way of managing conflict. Like the other approaches it was not used in a *pure* form, but was mixed with *sulha* and alternative-legalistic approaches. This approach failed to resolve the conflicts in the cases since it did not take into consideration elements of the local culture; the majority of the interveners were either Western American Southern Baptist missionaries or Western-minded Palestinians. Nonetheless, it succeeded in case-C in its second phase (see Section 4.2.3). This approach was more individualistic and did not take family and emotions into account during the process. It exists in two major shapes: fundamentalist and pragmatic.

When I asked people what it meant to resolve conflicts biblically, many answered 'It is to pray and fast and seek God's guidance,⁹⁹ or 'continue to serve at church until God intervenes and brings the solution.'¹⁰⁰ Some, who saw church conflict as a spiritual

⁹⁸ Ron, Jun 2014.

⁹⁹ Rima, Mary, Amal, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Majd, Mar 2014.

problem, said spiritual problems should be dealt with spiritually not culturally.¹⁰¹ However, a few said it was to contact the other party through a mediator and if this failed then each should go their own way; there was also an awareness that compromises are necessary in order to reach an agreement.¹⁰²

I will examine the process of the Western-Baptist approach in two interventions in case-A and case-C.¹⁰³

5.4.4.1 The process

a) The formation of a third-party

In case-A, after a few weeks of consultation the ABC and BCI initiated a retreat between the disputants and invited a few highly respected ministers such as the BCI coordinator, the ABC chairman, an evangelical leader, and a senior pastor to act as facilitators. Seven representatives, determined respectively by the two groups themselves, were invited to attend.¹⁰⁴

In case-C, when Pastor-C decided to leave church-C2 he invited the ABC to lead the church. The ABC-Committee became the third-party trying to mediate between Pastor-C and church-C2. After the ABC constitution was changed, this committee gained more power. This committee included five local pastors, two of whom were Western-minded, educated, and influential pastors, who had lived in western countries for many years.

b) Bible study and prayer meetings

In case-A, the group was given a few worksheets (formulated by Paul, the BCI coordinator) about biblical peace-making in preparation for the meeting. They met for two days in a BCI retreat centre. The purpose of this gathering was to discuss the

¹⁰¹ Rima, Mar 2014.

¹⁰² Jack, Ramiz, 2014.

¹⁰³ In case-B Pastor-B rejected all intervention.

¹⁰⁴ The pastor group included: the pastor, his son, three young leaders, and two others. The other group included: young leaders who persisted in change and the deacons (BCI report, 13 Apr 1997).

problems and see how they could be resolved. During the meetings, there were sermons and Bible studies based on what Scripture says about unity and reconciliation (with a focus on Matthew 18).¹⁰⁵ Two themes were addressed: relationships between believers and seeking the good of others over one's own desires.¹⁰⁶ Around nine prayer meetings and Bible studies took place during the retreat. While one group met with facilitators, the other group had prayer meetings.¹⁰⁷

In case-C, the ABC-Committee met with each party separately in around ten meetings, talking about forgiveness, grace, good witness, and acceptance of others (they also studied Matthew 18, and Galatians 6).¹⁰⁸

c) Separate meetings

In both cases, Pastor-A and Pastor-C cooperated as third-parties met separately with each group to discuss their requests. Additional joint discussions were held between third-parties and both groups.

d) Preliminary agreement and honour restoration

As a result of the retreat in case-A, a preliminary agreement was drafted that included the appointment of a nine-person committee from both parties to work on uniting the church and looking for a pastoral candidate. This new committee included five from Pastor-A's new church committee, two deacons from the original four, and

¹⁰⁵ Paul, Aug 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Based on Scripture such as Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:1-2, Philippians 2:3-8. They also studied the following themes: Commitment in Matthew 28:19-20, cooperation in Ephesians 4:10-16, interpersonal relationships in Colossians 3:12-17, communication in Ephesians 4:15, unconditional acceptance in Colossians 3:13 (BCI report Apr 13, 1997).

¹⁰⁷The invitation to this retreat included these words: 'These prayer times can be as important, perhaps more important, than the meetings with the facilitators. If we cannot hear God's voice, how can we hear our brother's voice?' They also encouraged calling a 24-hour prayer marathon during this meeting. 'The BCI will also be praying... others will be enlisted throughout the Middle East, North Africa and the world to pray for us, we want everything that happens during our time together to be under the leadership of the Holy Spirit' (BCI report, 13 Apr 1997).

¹⁰⁸ David, Aug 2015; George, Mar 2014.

two from the opposing group. The outcome would then go to the church assembly for a final decision.

Some of those I interviewed said there was a verbal suggestion, accepted by Pastor-A, that he would become the 'Pastor Emeritus' and continue his salary. The retreat ended with a prayer time and follow-up meeting. This was also an attempt at honour restoration for Pastor-A, which he later rejected as I elaborate in the next chapters.

In case-C, it was agreed Pastor-C would leave the church and focus on pastoring church-D.¹⁰⁹ The ABC-Committee met with the opposition group and requested that they be submissive to their spiritual father who had also served them for many years. The ABC-Committee suggested that Pastor-C would stay at church-C2 for a few more months, and leave the church respectfully with a church-organized party held in his honour. Thus his departure would not be shameful in the community's eyes. This was another attempt to restore honour for Pastor-C, which he rejected. Pastor-C refused to drop his membership in church-C2, for his family's sake. The ABC-Committee insisted he drop his membership and requested that his family stay at church-C2. Pastor-C became angry and decided to leave the church with his family.

In both cases these agreements failed.

5.4.4.2 The reason for the Western-Baptist approach failure

The findings show that studying Scripture together was not sufficient to deal with the conflict. Interveners (missionaries and Western-minded Palestinian pastors) focused on how to act and relate to God and others. However, this approach ignored the pastors' struggle such as how to deal with feelings of rejection, anger, insult and loss of dignity. Also, it did not take into consideration that the parties were deeply related and influenced by their families, and so any agreement was incomplete until approved by

¹⁰⁹ Pastor-C has been pastoring church-D for the last ten years in a nearby village.

the family. Another important element was the internal struggle of the third-party (ABC-Committee), mainly in case-C, around issues concerning authority, confidentiality and theological disagreement within the committee, and other limitations. We will now look at each struggle in turn.

a) Pastors' struggle

The pastors believed their long years of service earned them the privilege to decide what was right at church; they felt ownership of the churches they founded. As clergy with a high view of ordination, they expected members to be submissive. They felt huge pain of rejection and betrayal by people they had long served. This led them to rebuke and finally dismiss those who were not 'loyal' to them. This also led to their overreactions and refusal to accept help. Rebellion against pastoral hierarchy was perceived by pastors as sin and thus they felt these members had to repent. When the younger generation left, pastors lost their honour publicly since this action indicated public rejection of the spiritual father in a religious town full of religious symbols. Under *sulha*, lost honour can only be restored publicly.

Three important issues were not addressed properly and contributed to unsuccessful management of the conflict; emotions, family and economic as I elaborate.

1) Failure to address emotions. Venting is an indispensable part of every *sulha* since it helps the disputants move beyond their immediate grief and anger to agree to give reconciliation a chance.¹¹⁰ All pastors expressed in their letters to the ABC the pain and hurt they had experienced during the splits.¹¹¹ One of the pastors signed his letters with the phrase 'your wounded brother'. During my interviews with the pastors many years after the split, I could feel the pain and shame they had experienced as they

¹¹⁰ See Section 5.2.1.

¹¹¹ Pastor-C's letter, 14 May 2014, Pastor-B letters, 23 Apr 2007, 7 Dec 2005, and 9 Dec 2005.

sometimes became tearful; some even mentioned becoming ill. John, an evangelical leader, initiated a conversation with Pastor-A 18 years after the split and told me Pastor-A was still hurt. John explained, ‘There is no address for these people [pastors] to cry and express their hurt... they need God’s intervention to be healed.’¹¹²

Another example of the power of emotions in case-A was the follow-up meeting after the retreat, which aimed to approve the outcome of the retreat. The Chairman of the ABC, and Paul, the BCI coordinator who led the retreat, were present as observers. A young leader, who had not been present at the retreat, showed up in this meeting unexpectedly. The meeting began by reviewing the summary of what was agreed in the first meeting but they could not agree on the results. This young leader then spoke impolitely to the Chairman of the ABC, and Jack, a deacon. As a result, the meeting ‘exploded’ and no progress was made. The opponents left the meeting and the mediators remained to try to soften Pastor-A’s group. They failed and decided to give up. Paul (BCI coordinator) also perceived strong emotions as a barrier to reconciliation, saying, ‘It is the attitude and emotions of those involved and not the means for conflict resolution that is the root problem.’¹¹³ He added, ‘In church conflicts he has observed people do not really act rationally... but it was very strong emotionally in this case [case-A].’¹¹⁴

In case-C, a committee of two respected leaders (a lawyer and a Western-minded pastor) were authorized to deal with the website-conflict that eventually caused church-C2’s split. They led the mediation sessions using mediation techniques, taking cultural codes into consideration. After spending long hours trying to convince Pastor-C and Bishara to reconcile and not divorce for the sake of good witness in the community, they tried to push for a resolution honouring Pastor-C. To their surprise, Pastor-C

¹¹² April 2014.

¹¹³ Paul, Aug 2014.

¹¹⁴ Paul, Aug 2014.

rejected the process and the agreement. When I asked if the issue of hurt had been addressed, they explained that would be dealt with next – after resolving the conflict. It is likely that not addressing the issue of emotions and hurt prior to a solution prevented them from giving reconciliation a chance. George, a member of the ABC-Committee, viewed emotions as a barrier to achieving reconciliation in case-C; he argued that the main challenge to receiving reconciliation is what he calls the ‘emotional mentality.’¹¹⁵ Seemingly, interveners viewed venting as spiritual immaturity and ‘acting according to the flesh’ and thus emotions were not given legitimacy and were viewed as a barrier to, and rejection of, reconciliation, therefore leading interveners to give up.¹¹⁶

2) Failure to address the centrality of the family. As mentioned,¹¹⁷ in the same manner that the family may be the key to resolving conflicts, they could also cause the eruption or quick expansion of conflicts. In case-A, it was common knowledge that Pastor-A’s decisions were influenced by his family. This resulted in conflict escalation as he would frequently change his mind even with third-parties, as happened in the follow-up meeting after the retreat.

In case-C, since the ABC-Committee did not address the needs of Pastor-C’s family after he left church-C2 at their request, the result was Pastor-C ended up founding a new church for his family and relatives who left church with him. It is likely that this factor was critical in causing the split, as we read in Pastor-C’s letter to the ABC-Committee:

After praying and consulting my family regarding closing the meeting at my mother’s house [at the request of the ABC-committee] and despite the fact that according to the Baptist faith... each church is independent... and that no institution can force or control independent churches... and despite the fact that this decision will cause injustice to my family’s right for religious freedom and for the sake of good witness... we decided to stop this meeting and my family would join church-D, despite the expenses and transportation [to its location in a different village]... we

¹¹⁵ Focus group, June 2016.

¹¹⁶ Peter, Phil, Paul, Jack, Ramiz and Nabil.

¹¹⁷ See Section 1.3.1 and Section 5.2.1.

would bear this cross for God's glory... and to show submissiveness to one another in God's fear.¹¹⁸

Later on, Pastor-C decided to start church-C3 since his family was not able to continue to travel to church-D during difficult weather. He met with the ABC-Committee but they insisted that starting a new Baptist church in the same town was unacceptable. According to Pastor-C, he decided to resign from the ABC so he could pastor his family.¹¹⁹

3) Failure to address the economic factor. Culturally, talking about economic factors is unacceptable; it would be perceived as 'unspiritual' and worldly. Thus, although the economic factor was essential to conflict management, pastors and third-parties did not mention it. Issues of salary and funds to pay for renting and so on remained important but were not dealt with. Indirectly this made church conflicts more complicated and unresolvable. Interestingly, younger generation interviewees did mention these issues as an important element in the conflict.

b) Third-party's struggles

1) Late stage of intervention. In the cases intervention came late; the conflicts had existed at least five years before the split. Most third-parties said they felt helpless since the disputants had already burned their bridges and it was difficult to intervene. Jack, a deacon (case-A) explained, 'If dissatisfaction in church is not dealt with immediately it will mostly lead to a split.'¹²⁰ Albert, a church leader, mentioned that since the conflict in case-C was not managed early on it was followed by many mistakes, becoming complex and involving many other members.

2) Lack of third-party authority. In *sulha* the third-party acts as arbitrator. According to the ABC-constitution, the ABC-Committee acts as a mediator and cannot

¹¹⁸ Letter, 23 Feb 2014.

¹¹⁹ Letter, 7 Apr 2014.

¹²⁰ Jack, Apr 2014.

force a resolution. In the cases interveners could not reconcile the disputants, since ultimately the pastor or the church could reject the agreement if they did not like it. This happened in case-A when Pastor-A's family intervened and in case-C when Pastor-C refused to listen to the ABC-Committee and founded church-C3. David, an ABC-Committee member, argued since there is no accountability and the committee acts as a mediator (not an arbitrator), resolving conflicts would take a very long time. He suggested third-parties should be arbitrators because it is impossible to achieve consensus in every conflict resolution and it is hard to satisfy everybody.¹²¹

3) Lack of confidentiality. In *sulha*, third-parties are obliged to keep the information they collect confidential as they meet and interview witnesses and members of disputants' families.¹²² In case-C, David, a third-party, complained, 'In the midst of negotiation we felt we were in a war zone, we were trying to make peace during war, there were members from both sides shooting';¹²³ hinting concerning the chatter that was going on which, in his opinion, was destroying their reconciliation work. As a result, they had to invest considerable time into building trust between the parties at every meeting.

4) Lack of third-party consensus. Another level of confidentiality in *sulha* is the decision-making process of the committee when it reflects on its verdict.¹²⁴ Since different third-party members may have various views as the process evolves, it is critical to maintain confidentiality about the committee's discussions and its members' positions and opinions, so as to reduce their exposure to pressures following a verdict

¹²¹ David, Aug 2015.

¹²² See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1.1 for further information on the importance of confidentiality in *sulha*.

¹²³ David, Aug 2015.

¹²⁴ See Section 5.2.1.

that may be sensed to be unfair by one or more disputants.¹²⁵ In *sulha*, members of the committee keep discussing until they achieve consensus.

The ABC constitution has no clear instruction on church conflict management.¹²⁶ For example, the third-party in case-A acted differently from the third-party (ABC-Committee) in case-C. The mechanism they used was the personal subjective opinion of committee members.

In case-C, the lack of instructions on how to deal with the conflict caused tension between Pastor-C and one of the ABC-Committee members. I attended one of the ABC-Committee meetings. The tension was obvious in the committee itself and its attitude towards both the conflict and Pastor-C. Some preferred not to take a stance in order to maintain a good relationship with Pastor-C or church-C2; for them, relationships were more important than resolution of the conflict. Others thought that the church was more important than Pastor-C. The rest thought that both Pastor-C and church-C2 were equally important.

I find two approaches could be seen in use during that meeting, as well as through interviews and documents: fundamentalist and pragmatic.¹²⁷ These differ according to the attitudes of people involved in the attempts at conflict resolution.¹²⁸

According to the Fundamentalist approach, there is one interpretation to any problem; the problem is seen from the law perspective. The issue is viewed in terms of

¹²⁵ Jabbour 1993; Pely 2011c.

¹²⁶ George, Albert, Shirin, David. §4 in the constitution deals with the procedure for dealing with disputes, 'The procedure for dealing with disputes shall be first to ask the various disputants to meet in private and seek reconciliation and agreement as to the way forward. If this fails, the Ministry Committee shall appoint a delegation to call together the disputants for the same ends. If this fails, the Ministry Committee shall decide any terms it may deem appropriate for the disputants to settle matters or otherwise. Refusal to accept this judgment shall be deemed an act of resignation from the ABC by the Church or pastor concerned, with the loss of all rights and privileges of membership.'

¹²⁷ Fundamentalism is a type of militantly conservative religious movement characterized by the advocacy of strict conformity to sacred texts. Christian fundamentalists vigorously opposed theological modernism which attempts to reconcile traditional Christian beliefs with modern science. Fundamentalism as a movement arose in the United States. Henry Munson, 'Fundamentalism Religious Movement.' Retrieved from, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fundamentalism#toc1191955main>. Accessed 3 November 2017.

¹²⁸ Field note, May 2014.

right and wrong and the Bible is seen to be clear about attitudes. Every wrong attitude is viewed as a sin, for example, Pastor-C's lack of submissiveness to spiritual authority (ABC-Committee) was interpreted as a spiritual problem.¹²⁹ The opposing side evaluated Pastor-C according to his personality, not his attitudes. They also tended to generalize. In order to convince the committee regarding their resolution they tried to bring his past patterns of behaviour as evidence. Because of their attitude they did not take into consideration his hurt emotions and family. As a result, Pastor-C's relationship with one of the committee members became tense and he did not cooperate with the committee. However, they believed they were very tolerant with Pastor-C and made many compromises for the sake of their future relationship. In the ABC constitution there is no clear mechanism to evaluate a pastor's ministry, so this was done according to personal subjective opinions, and the decision was made that this case would be an example to other churches of how to resolve problems with splits. They also disagreed with Pastor-C coming to one of the meetings, despite his desire to do so. They viewed relationships as more important than ministry, while Pastor-C viewed ministry as more important. According to this view, sometimes called evangelical Biblicism, there is only one way to deal with conflict and that is God's way. All problems of faith, life and theology are solved simply by use of the Bible and no other considerations are needed; neither psychology nor sociology must be consulted, the Bible alone is sufficient.¹³⁰

People using the Pragmatic approach see problems as an opportunity to grow by looking for common ground and finding constructive ways to solve problems; they separate the person from the problem. They tried to see Pastor-C's humanity, and believed their job was not to evaluate his life and ministry but to deal with a specific problem. They were able to see his hurt and need to be healed. They suggested there

¹²⁹ George, Aug 2015.

¹³⁰ Fulkerson 2007:182.

should be an objective mechanism to evaluate the problem. For them, the purpose of the law was to serve mankind and not vice versa. They saw Pastor-C as being in an unhealthy situation and in need of help and support. They saw Pastor-C's problem as a complex of problems, not one big problem, and thus saw some of his attitudes as positive. They said he should be part of that meeting since he was still open to negotiations. They believed that their role was to help him make better decisions and not force him to obey rules. Accordingly, there could be a number of different godly resolutions, and not only one. The purpose of canonical discipline is to restore relationships not to punish. It is likely that this approach is close to transformative mediation, where conflict is looked at not as a problem but as an opportunity for growth and transformation, and where anger and venting are seen as contributing to empowerment, recognition, and the making of outcome-related decisions.¹³¹

By the end of this meeting a letter was drafted to Pastor-C concerning his request to resign from the ABC (since they insisted he could not start church-C3). Adherents of the fundamentalist approach wanted to draft an assertive, hard letter, while those with a pragmatic theological approach wanted to invite Pastor-C to that meeting and keep negotiating. They also proposed bringing in professional help. Disagreements at this meeting were obvious; finally, they drafted a letter that focused on the problem not on the person. They accepted his resignation from the ABC, nonetheless welcomed him to re-join the ABC when his attitude changed.¹³²

Eventually, what helped Pastor-C was being surrounded by loving pragmatic people who rejected his attitude but supported him (such as Rami, David, and the Canadian pastor). One year later Pastor-C started to negotiate to re-join the ABC. This also led to the reconciliation-retreat that took place a year after. Four months later church-C2 and church-C3 reintegrated.

¹³¹ Bush and Folger 1994.

¹³² ABC letter, 23 May 2014.

5) No post-ceremony activities to ensure the durability of the agreement.

Members of church-C2 felt the ABC-Committee did not continue to work with them as they should have following the merger between the two churches. Some believe the merger was too early since church-C2 was not yet ready to accept Pastor-C back. According to some church-C2 leaders, the ABC-Committee expressed weariness and dissatisfaction with both Pastor-C and church-C2 members since this conflict management had taken so long (five years). This also explained the third-party's limitations. First, the limitation of time meant they were not available when needed. Second, the ABC-Committee members were neither unified nor working together; they had different attitudes and were not kept up-to-date with each other about what some of them had done. Third, not all of them were suitable for this position.¹³³

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I identified two cultural approaches and two theological approaches at work in the case-studies. These approaches were unproductive in resolving intra-church conflict because of the contradiction between the cultural approaches, namely *sulha* and alternative legalistic, and a contradiction between the theological approaches, namely hierarchical and Western-Baptist. Stated differently, the traditional power of the pastor in a patriarchal-hierarchical community, the movement towards modern culture and democratic Congregationalist ecclesiology by the new generation, and the newness of the Palestinian Baptist churches that have not yet institutionalized their church conflict management practices are the main reasons for the failure of the four approaches. Nonetheless, this process of conflict management is polyphonic and dynamic and includes an ongoing and internal dialogue between the four approaches.

¹³³ Albert, Oct 2016; Shirin, Jul 2016.

The *sulha* approach was used by all disputants, either solely or combined with other approaches. For *sulha*, conflict is a negative interaction; social codes of non-confrontation, compromise, deference to clergy, shame, saving face, good witness are critical. Disputants and third-parties used some elements of *sulha* but did not comprehensively apply its stages and rituals. They also did not fully address emotions and dignity and had no authority and experience. They faced a new reality of church conflict where their traditional model (in the way they applied it) failed.

However, we also saw the creativity of the younger generation who mainly used the alternative legalistic approach, alongside *sulha* and/or a Western-Baptist approach. They focused on individual rights and used confrontation and legalistic framework to seek change and power challenging patriarchal and traditional limitations to expand their life opportunities, in addition to identifying with the values of their own culture. To a degree, they were agents of change. Between case-A (1995) and case-C (2016) we saw the following shifts: (1) from the pastor as the ‘anointed one’ to a pastor confronted directly by congregants and the ABC, (2) from members being passive at church to members exercising the right to lead the church with the pastor, (3) from traditional ‘Papal submissiveness’ to submissiveness with questioning, and (4) splits became an option as the ABC gave legitimacy to churches that split by accepting them as members.

It seems that the pastors and laity held different implicit theologies of forgiveness and reconciliation which were all imperfect in some aspects. *Sulha* lacks internal forgiveness and justice, since it preserves imbalanced power which often contradicts the value of justice and individual rights. The alternative-legalistic approach prioritizes justice and individual rights over relationships. In the hierarchical approach the pastor is the one who implements justice and offers forgiveness and laity has to obey; this approach often resulted in pastors making one-sided decisions. Western-Baptist theology is more individualistic and partly succeeded to solve the conflicts since it did

not take into consideration some elements of the Palestinian culture. This approach could not sustain justice.

This calls for a more rounded and comprehensive theology of forgiveness and reconciliation. Volf may help in this direction, which is the subject of the next chapters.

Chapter Six

6. Theology of Remembrance

6.1 Introduction¹

Thus far in the first half of the thesis I have described the context of Palestinian Baptists in Israel (Chapter One), explained my methodology (Chapter Two), described the environment and the potential factors that contributed to conflict in the Palestinian Baptist churches (Chapter Three), identified the nature and causes of intra-church conflict in three case-studies (Chapter Four) and explored the four conflict management approaches used during church conflicts in the cases (Chapter Five). In Chapters Six to Nine I theologially evaluate the four approaches using Volf's model of reconciliation.¹ I also evaluate the applicability of his model within a Palestinian Baptist context. In these chapters we see the fundamental significance of the combination of *theology and culture* in the solution.

In this research Volf's themes cannot be adequately discussed if his model is addressed as an abstract concept; it must be contextualized. How is reconciliation understood in the Palestinian Baptist context? How might culture or religious beliefs influence reconciliation both in understanding and in its enactment? Some offences are considered more seriously depending on the cultural context: does this have a bearing on remembrance, forgiveness, justice and embrace? A key issue in the analysis has to do with understanding the spoken and enacted language of these themes.

My main argument in the second half of the thesis is that Palestinian Baptists in Israel are in the process of conceptualizing and integrating new meanings into their theology of reconciliation. As we will see in the case-studies, they are also experiencing a shift from what I called a 'diplomatic reconciliation' that involves divorce, ceasefire,

¹ See Chapter one, Section 1.5.
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shaking hands and superficial cooperation, to beginning a reconciliation taking the form of reintegration of churches that had split.

The splits within the local Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel arise from multiple characteristics that uniquely define them, which can be summarized as follows: (1) church members are a threefold minority, second class citizens with an identity crisis, living in a legally uncertain environment that mirrors their insecure feelings in church life; (2) church structure is flat with no patriarch yet living in a patriarchal community; (3) the churches consist of a scattered field of very small churches lacking an organic community and consisting of different generations distinct from one another; (4) there is a low level of institutionalization in these churches; (5) the pastors hold a high view of ordination and face struggle over livelihood and power, which are constantly being threatened by young laity; (6) there is a lack of economic capital, and few churches have church buildings; (7) there has been an influx of very educated young leaders with a commitment to individual rights, individualistic-oriented competitiveness, and an attitude of 'rebellion' against patriarchal leadership though still maintaining some aspects of their patriarchal culture; (8) most importantly they are Christian believers but have no clear Christian model to deal with church conflict – their conflict management practices are complex and dynamic, involving an internal dialogue between their traditional practices (*sulha* and traditional churches) and innovative practices (alternative-legalistic and Western-Baptist theology). Because Palestinian Baptists are caught between all of these characteristics, in what follows I try to explain how I contribute through Volf's model to overcome this trap. I argue that Volf's model needs cultural translation in order to be applicable in this context.

In the next four chapters I will analyse and evaluate the four conflict management approaches used by Palestinian Baptists during their cases of church conflict² in terms of Volf's four basic elements for reconciliation between people: (1) remembrance, (2) forgiveness (repentance and apology), (3) justice, and (4) embrace.

I begin by describing Volf's theme of remembrance then, using his theme, I evaluate remembrance as demonstrated in the four approaches. I also evaluate Volf's theme of remembrance in light of each approach and present some recommendations.

6.2 Volf's Theology of Remembrance

The theme of remembrance is drawn mainly from Volf's book *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (2006). His thesis is that choices made in remembrance have the power to stem evil and thus to support or counter reconciliation between peoples. He argues we should remember a past wrong for the sake of both the victims and perpetrators, and the proper goal of such remembering is in fact non-remembrance, or more precisely, the state of being reconciled in which memories of wrongdoing will not come to mind of either victims or perpetrators.³ His central questions in this book are: How do we 'remember rightly'? How long should we remember?

6.2.1 How do we 'remember rightly'?

Memory, Volf (2006) argues, is essential both to human functioning and to our sense of identity. Without memory, we could not recognize ourselves or each other as temporally continuous beings. 'To be human is to be able to remember. It is as simple as that: no memory, no human identity' (147). Given the importance of memory to our

² As described in Chapter Five.

³ Volf shares the personal account of his own struggle with remembrance as a result of the intimidation and interrogation he received at the hands of the communist Yugoslavian military in the mid-1980s. As a Christian married to an American, a pacifist, and an expert on Marxist socialism, he was perceived to be a security threat to communist Yugoslavia. Long after these events, Volf has remained haunted by the memories of his interrogation. This led him to write his book *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (2006).

human identity, argues Volf, the question is not whether we should remember our past or forget it but how, what and for how long should we remember the past wrongdoing? (148).

According to Volf our identity is not just shaped by our memories; we ourselves shape the memories that shape us. What we do with our memories will depend on how we see ourselves in the present and how we project ourselves into the future (25-26).

Volf argues that only reconciliation can liberate us from the poisoning effect of past wrongdoing upon the present and the future. At the same time freedom from this poisoning is the condition of reconciliation. He suggests we need to remember rightly, an act which involves four elements essential to reconciliation: remembering truthfully, therapeutically, responsibly, and in reconciling ways. These elements involve three different levels concerned with oneself, those who have done wrong and the broader society (Volf 2006, 2015).

6.2.1.1 Remembering truthfully

It is important for all those involved in reconciliation to have what Volf calls 'truthful remembering', since victims tend towards exaggeration and at the same time perpetrators' memories tend to be short and exculpating.

Volf suggests the word 'remember' contains within itself two obligations: an obligation to truthfulness and 'a moral obligation to remember truthfully' (51). However, since our ability to fulfil this obligation is limited because we always remember partially and do not have complete control over our memories, (51-52) our goal should be to remember as truthfully as possible, regardless of our perspectives and interests. Another reason for truthfulness in remembering is to treat others justly; every untruthful memory is an unjust memory. 'Obligation to do justice' is important to avoid fuelling further conflict or allowing wrongdoing to be repeated. An additional obligation for remembering truthfully is that it is an indispensable precondition of

reconciliation between parties, ‘for peace can be honest and lasting only if it rests on the foundation of truth and justice’ (56).

For Volf, ‘remembering truthfully’ has two aspects: one negative and one positive. In its negative aspect it is necessary not to speak falsely about the past.⁴ In its positive aspect it is to ‘speak lovingly the truth about the past.’ Volf argues remembering truthfully is part of the larger obligation to speak well of our neighbours and thereby to sustain and heal relationships (63). He adds that those who seek to be fair do not remember a person’s evil deeds without also remembering their good deeds. Similarly, those who love do not remember a perpetrator’s wrongdoing without also being mindful of their own failings (Galatians 6:1-2).

6.2.1.2 Remembering therapeutically

The rule ‘remember truthfully’ is insufficient, argues Volf, because it does not address the use of memory. The use of memory is important since what we do with our memories places restrictions on what we are willing to remember, and that truthfulness constitutes a just use of memories, and it constrains their misuse (71). Truthfulness is also important for inner healing. Memories which deeply trouble us ‘must pass through the narrow gate of truth to become memories which allow us to live at peace with ourselves’ (72).⁵ Volf suggests three requirements for remembering therapeutically: integration, new identity and new possibilities.⁶

⁴ Volf notes that truthful remembering amounts to an application of the ninth commandment: ‘you shall not bear false witness’ (Exodus 20:16). He suggests, ‘The rule provides an indispensable presupposition for employing memories as a shield rather than wielding them as a sword’ (66). For Martin Luther, argues Volf, the ninth commandment not only prohibits false witness; it is also a manner of speech that urges us to speak well of our neighbour, ‘benefits everyone, reconciles the discordant, excuses and defends the maligned’ (as cited in Volf 2006:63). Based on the statement of the Apostle Peter ‘love covers a multitude of sins’ (1 Peter 4:8), Luther took one more radical step stating we are to be ‘Christ’ to our neighbours, by covering their sins in a way that reflects Christ’s covering of our sins by means of his atoning death (64).

⁵ Volf argues that, ‘In most cases by far, we remember mistreatment rather than repressing it. But in memory we distort it, mostly giving its intolerable content a more acceptable form... It takes knowing the truth to be set free from the psychic injury caused by wrongdoing... We must name the troubling past

Of 'integration', he explains that we try to integrate events into our life-story by giving them positive meaning within that story by understanding how they contribute to the goodness of the whole and how they have made us better people (77). However, not everything in our lives can be integrated into a good wholeness. That is one of the reasons for non-remembrance. In Volf's words:

Our judgments on how such events contribute to some good are always provisional. For tomorrow may reveal insights about yesterday that are hidden from us today; and we can understand any given event adequately only from the perspective of the whole, which is to say when our lives and history have run their courses (78).

'New identity' means that we remember wrongs as a self with a new identity defined by God, not by wrongdoers' evil deeds and their echo in our memory (79-80). Volf argues, 'When wrongdoing defines us, we take on "distorted identities, frozen in time and closed in growth"... the wrongdoing may not define us fully; yet it lodges in our core self and casts a dark shadow on everything we think and do' (79). Jesus Christ gives a new identity. Instead of being defined by wrongdoing or how others define us, we are defined by how God relates to us by opening ourselves to God's love through faith, our bodies and souls become sanctified spaces, God's 'temples'.⁷

'New possibilities' are important, because in the Christian way of life, future possibilities do not grow simply out of the actuality of the past and present. As Jurgen Moltmann has argued in *Theology of Hope*, instead of arising simply from what was or is, the future comes from the realm of what is not yet, 'from outside' – from God. God's promise engenders new possibilities (82).

Volf speaks about the 'identity-healing' use of memory whose primary concern is our own well-being: to construct a plausible narrative of the wrongdoing, to understand its effects on us, to condemn the wrongdoer, and to recover and stabilize identity (87).

truthfully – we must come to clarity about what happened, how we reacted to it, and how we are reacting to it now – to be freed from its destructive hold on our lives' (74-75).

⁶ These three elements of healing memories draw their basic content from the memory of the Passion understood as a new Exodus, a new deliverance (103).

⁷ As the apostle Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 6:19.

Without remembering therapeutically, we take two risks: allowing the wrongs suffered to control our lives and poisoning our future expectations. Remembering therapeutically is remembering the past but expecting something new will come.

To complete healing, argues Volf, the relationship between the disputants needs to be repaired. For Christians, this is what reconciliation is all about. Yet remembering so as to relate well to the self and remembering so as to relate well to others are different activities (84).

6.2.1.3 Remembering responsibly

Remembering truthfully and therapeutically is not sufficient to help us remember rightly, notes Volf. It is necessary to think about the impact of our remembering on people not yet involved in the cycle of abuse. People who are defined by victimization can cause the perpetuation of the cycle of abuse on a third-party.⁸

In contrast to the identity-healing use of memory, remembering responsibly pushes us beyond the concern for our own wellbeing by helping us learn lessons from the past so as to apply them in new situations. On account of the injustice we have suffered, we decide to fight injustice done now to others (88). Volf identifies two weaknesses: the difficulty of identifying a situation in which to apply the lessons of memory, and not knowing exactly what a particular past situation exemplifies.

Volf concludes that the rules ‘remember truthfully,’ ‘remember therapeutically,’ and ‘remember responsibly’ are all essential, but insufficient. Volf suggests that we need to place the action of remembering in a larger ethical and theological framework (93). He focuses on ways we are encouraged to remember the two central events of redemptive history: the Exodus and the Passion. Volf points out four important features

⁸ According to Volf, this is why the Old Testament keeps returning to Israel’s remembering of slavery in Egypt.

shared by the sacred memories of the Exodus and Passion:⁹ (1) they shape identity,¹⁰ (2) they are embraced and deployed in community,¹¹ (3) they are defined in a horizon of expectations,¹² and (4) they are primarily concerned with God.¹³ When the people of God remember wrongs suffered, they remember them out of a sense of identity and community, out of expectations and ultimate trust derived from the sacred memory of the Exodus and Passion (102).¹⁴

The implications of the Exodus memory for ordinary memories of wrongs suffered are: (1) the imperative to remember – ‘no deliverance without memory’, (2) the imperative to remember truthfully, (3) the imperative to remember so as to help those in need, and (4) concerning God and the future, to link the memory to a redeemed future (108). However, the Exodus memory, argues Volf, is not a fully adequate framework for remembering rightly from a Christian perspective (110), and he suggests remembering in reconciling ways.

⁹ Volf states that we operate in a framework comprised of four components: Who are we? Where do we belong? What do we expect? What/who do we ultimately trust?

¹⁰ Identity: memory defines the identities of Jews when they remember the Exodus, and Christians when they remember the Passion (Volf 2006).

¹¹ Community: religious communities sustain sacred memories and revitalize them in new contexts just as sacred memories define religious communities. Take the community away and sacred memory disappears; take the sacred memory away and the community disintegrates (Volf 2006:99-100).

¹² The future: The story of the Exodus tells not just what happened, but also what will happen in our own future. Similarly, if Christ’s story is our story, then in remembering Christ we remember not just his past but also in a significant sense our future (Volf 2006:100-101).

¹³ God: The memories of the Exodus and Passion are most basically memories of God (Volf 2006:101).

¹⁴ Two things about remembering the Exodus are significant. First, the Passover Seder of Jewish memory is a ritual meal planned to memorialize Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The purpose of this ritual meal is intended to make present the past event of redemption. Second, there is the notion of God’s involvement; God heard the cries and God liberated. Israel’s memory, therefore, reinforces Israel’s obedience to God and, inversely, Israel’s obedience to God takes the form of right remembering. Obedience and memory are the commandments that link Israel’s former slavery in Egypt with Israel’s present treatment of slaves and aliens in Deuteronomy (15:12-15). In this case memory strengthens the commands, and the commands inform them how to remember. The lessons of memory seem different, however, for Israel’s enemies. The memory of Amalek’s treatment in Deuteronomy (25:17-19), would teach the punishment of the violent, not compassionate protection of the weak. Volf concludes with a dual memory in the Exodus, what Israel has experienced – suffering, enmity, and liberation – and what God has done. From this dual memory, two lessons are drawn: (1) a lesson of solidarity: act in favour of the oppressed as God acted in your favour when you were oppressed. (2) A lesson related to retributive justice: oppose oppressors and punish them as God opposed and punished those who oppressed you (Volf 2006:107).

6.2.1.4 Remembering in reconciling ways

In the Passion memory Christ's death and resurrection are obviously a past event, but when we remember them we remember both past and the future. We remember in Christ what will happen to all humanity in the future. What implications does Christ's Passion have for our ways of remembering evil suffered? Volf considers two topics: suffering and reconciliation. Regarding suffering, the New Testament lesson is continuous with the Old. For reconciliation, on the other hand, there is a significant difference between the Old and New Testaments.

Christ's death is never remembered for its own sake;¹⁵ it is remembered as the death and resurrection of Christ. We remember deliverance in Christ. Therefore, the remembrance of suffering is a hopeful remembering, open to a transformed future. This pattern of *suffering—deliverance* is similar to the memory of the Exodus. Israel suffered, and God delivered them. People suffer, and Christ's death in solidarity with them lifts them to resurrection and liberation.

Volf addresses two problems with seeing Christ's passion solely as an act of deliverance: (1) Christ's act of liberation is a universal event, including both the offender and the perpetrator, so any memory of suffering or liberation has to be included in this large picture of Christ's death for all humanity. (2) Memory is put to its most deadly uses precisely by those who have suffered in the past. In the process new victims are created, and the cycle of violence continues. For these two reasons, the axis of *suffering—deliverance* is insufficient; Volf suggests that we organize our memory along the axis *enmity—reconciliation* (115).

Volf speaks of three practical lessons of the Passion memory. First, there is a need to remember that we are all sinners. Consciousness of that principle can help us to avoid seeing ourselves, in our victimhood, as inherently innocent. Second, wrongdoing having

¹⁵ The same is true of Exodus as it is remembered in the OT and the way Jews remember it today. The key novelty is universality and grace to perpetrators.

been atoned for assumes both affirmation of the valid claims of justice and not counting them against the perpetrator.¹⁶ Third, Volf instructs us to aim for communion and reconciliation, and remember every wrongdoing in the light of future final reconciliation with the wrongdoer (118-125).¹⁷

The death and resurrection of Christ suggests that we and the other are reconciled and we form one community, our relationships will be healed, and we ought to remember each other as those who will be both healed and ultimately reconciled in Christ's presence forever.

In sum, Volf concludes, 'Communities of sacred memory are, at their best, schools of right remembering— remembering that is truthful and just, that heals individuals without injuring others, that allows the past to motivate a struggle for justice and the grace filled work of reconciliation' (128). The struggle to 'remember rightly' is the very struggle to do justice and show grace to the wrongdoer.

6.2.2 How long should we remember?

Volf argues against the widespread assumption that wrongdoings should be remembered forever, as we worry that if we were to forget wrongs committed we would lose a sense of identity. Volf suggests Karl Barth's worry is different, 'If we were to remember the wrongs we have committed, we may not be able to live with ourselves' (134).

Volf distinguishes between forgetting and non-remembering. According to him, forgetting is the inability to recall an event, even when one makes an effort to do so. In non-remembering the event can still be recalled if desired, but no longer presents itself without being intentionally recalled (146). For Volf non-remembrance is a divine gift, a fruit of successful reconciliation rather than a precondition of it. He explains, 'Since no

¹⁶ Volf centred on Paul's assertion in the New Testament that Christ died for all and therefore all have died – including those who have wronged us (Romans 5:9-10).

¹⁷ In the Eucharistic feast, we remember Christ's act of reconciliation between God and humanity and we enact the memory of each other as those who are reconciled to God and each other in Christ (Volf 2006).

final redemption is possible without the redemption of the past and since every attempt to redeem the past through reflection must fail because no theodicy can succeed, the final redemption is unthinkable without a certain kind of forgetting', namely non-remembrance (135-143). However, for Volf this event is ultimately eschatological. It can indeed be anticipated in real life, though in an incomplete and never fully stable and accomplished way. This is seen most in more intimate relationships such as family and church. Volf refers to Isaiah (65:17), 'For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth. The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.' There are four features of this gift: (1) wrongdoers do not deserve it, (2) we give it to imitate God, (3) it presupposes that those who suffered have forgiven and the wrongdoer has repented, received forgiveness and mended his way, (4) the gift can be given irrevocably only in God's new world (142-143).

But how does the future non-remembrance of wrongs suffered inform the way in which we should live in the here and now?¹⁸ Volf explains in the here and now non-remembrance rarely happens; in this world the memory of wrongdoing is needed mainly as an instrument of justice and as a protection against injustice. Yet, Volf asserts:

Every act of reconciliation, incomplete as it mostly is in this world, stretches itself toward completion in that world of love. Similarly, remembering wrongdoing now lives in the hope of its own superfluity then. Even more, only those willing to let the memory of wrongdoing slip ultimately out of their minds will be able to remember wrongdoing rightly now. For we remember wrongs rightly when memory serves reconciliation (149-150).

To understand the tension between remembering rightly and the promise of non-remembrance, Volf explains the difference between this world and the world to come. In this world justice is hardly ever attained and threats continue; therefore we remember wrongs suffered. In the world to come justice will have been done, and threats will no longer be present; therefore, we will be able to let go of memories of wrongs suffered

¹⁸ Volf notes, 'By showing how reconciliation reaches completion: a wrongdoing is both condemned and forgiven; the wrongdoer's guilt is cancelled; through the gift of non-remembrance, the wrongdoer is transposed to a state untainted by the wrongdoing; and bound in a communion of love, both the wronged and the wrongdoer rejoice in their renewed relationship' (149).

(150-151). Volf asserts that a journey from this world to the world to come must be taken, 'We take this journey partially and provisionally here and now when we forgive and reconcile – and on rare occasions release the memory of wrong suffered. We undertake it once again, definitively and finally, at the threshold of the world to come' (151).

While conventional wisdom says that we would lose our identities if we stop remembering, Volf presents an alternative construal of personal identity. Volf distinguishes between 'person' and 'personality'. In terms of person, as Christian we do not live within ourselves; we live outside ourselves – in God. Therefore, we receive our identity from 'outside ourselves'; we are located in God, and our identity is found in God (198). We are not the sum of our deeds and sufferings; we are as God relates to us. In terms of personality, our identity is shaped by how we relate to what we did and what happened to us, including not remembering even some of the most formative things in our lives. Thus the non-remembrance of past wrongs does not violate our identity and person. On the contrary, being in God frees us from the unchangeable past exercises. The God who redeems the past 'does not take away our past; God gives it back to us... selves truly redeemed... forever reconciled' (201).

Volf asserts that each wrong suffered will be exposed, its perpetrators condemned and the repentant transformed, and its victims healed. Then, after evil has been both condemned and overcome, we will be able to release the memories of wrongs suffered. Volf insists that we will not 'forget' so we can rejoice; we will rejoice and therefore let memories of wrongs suffered be removed from our minds which will be rapt with the goodness of God (214).

In sum, Volf presents a new interpretation of the concept of memory. When we remember rightly, we imitate 'the enemy-loving God' (9) in forgiveness and reconciliation. The goal of this remembering is love that remembers no wrongs.

Makant argues against Volf's claim that there are some memories so horrible as to be irredeemable. For Volf the memory of suffering is antithetical to the notion of heaven to the extent that the memory of suffering limits the eternal experience of joy. Makant's suggests that there is no suffering which is irredeemable, and, rather than limiting joy, 'the memory of redeemed suffering' becomes a different type of memory (4). Makant (2012) explains that Volf understands non-remembrance as a gift because he sees the recession of painful memories as an important step in the healing of memories, particularly those he sees as irredeemable; she sees Volf's account of memory only considers memory as *a cognitive* event (83). Volf's response is that, although the cognitive dimension of memories is central in his account, it also has emotional and bodily dimensions.

Regarding the Palestinian context, it is not clear how Palestinians can remember rightly. The memory of trauma carried by Palestinians as members of the wider traumatized society of Israel/Palestine, each with their collective experience of collective national catastrophe (Holocaust *and nakba*) and who live in a continual state of conflict, mean that it is difficult to determine how Palestinians can remember rightly. This is different from situations of post-conflict such as the Balkans, Northern Ireland and South Africa.

Another area of criticism concerns Volf's discussion of the relationship between memory and forgetting, which assumes a more or less linear structure (Huebner 2008) – we have a duty to remember rightly up to a certain point when forgiveness takes place and the parties are reconciled, and what follows is a purposeful letting go of the memory of the offence. Huebner also critiques Volf's treatment of memory and forgetting, as if they are primarily individual activities rather than aspects of larger social practices and cultural performances. In response, Volf argues that this linear structure is a trajectory of a cycle, not a sequence of one-time finished acts; this cycle is

how we participate in the eschatological non-remembrance in the here and now. However, I find this *linear structure*, although a cyclical process, is challenging to Palestinian Baptists whose reconciliation does not have a linear frame. Many times they practise a ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ – an action that is ‘forced’ by the community to achieve social order. This does not necessarily happen after remembering rightly, repentance or forgiveness.

The theme of remembrance seems to be an important element of reconciliation to other scholars such as Tutu (1999) and Jones (1995) who also emphasize the necessity of dealing with the past and remembering, although they would address this using the language of forgiveness and forgetting. Jones sees the problem of ‘forgive and forget’ as threefold: psychologically impossible, morally difficult and theologically unfaithful.¹⁹ Like Volf, Jones argues the risen Christ does not come to ask us to forget the past but to allow it to be redeemed. Shriver (2001) says that the past is indeed ‘unchangeable’ but one’s relationship to it is not, though what is first required is ‘uncovering its dreaded secrets’ and so to ‘remember and forgive.’²⁰

In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) created forums for contact and remembering together in order to acknowledge crimes committed during the apartheid era, seek truth about the past and facilitate national reconciliation (DeGruchy 2002). Tutu practised the application of remembering truthfully during his term with the TRC post-apartheid; promotion of truth-telling in exchange for less harsh sentencing, to encourage forgiveness and repentance. However, those who were recording the proceedings admitted that the reconciliation that was occurring was ‘a form of reconciliation without apologies by those responsible or forgiveness by

¹⁹ It is psychologically impossible for us to control what we remember and what we forget – therefore when people retain that idea of ‘forgive and forget’ as part of what they think they have to do, they think it is impossible to forgive if they cannot forget. It is morally difficult and problematic; since those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. It is theologically unfaithful as it means that we end up worshipping Christ un-crucified rather than Christ crucified and risen.

²⁰ Shriver 2001:26-8; Goins 2008:47.

victims.’²¹ For Kairos theologians, reconciliation had been manipulated in South Africa since justice also was not represented and thus the remaining concept was truth. TRC advocates on the other hand see this as necessary for the peace process (Robinson 2014). Interestingly, TRC resonate more with *sulha* and its goal of achieving peace and coexistence even when justice and genuine forgiveness are not present. In Section 6.4, I will explain in more detail the Palestinian position regarding remembrance.

6.3 Remembrance in the Case-Studies

In dealing with remembering the wrongdoing, findings show that most Palestinian Baptists in the cases have struggled to forget wrongdoings and relied on the concepts of ‘forgive and forget’ and ‘time will heal’.²² Almost all interviewees said forgiveness means *forgetting* the wrongdoing. Many others said we have to forget wrongdoing as ‘God throws our sins in the sea of forgetfulness.’ This saying is very common among Christian Arabs in the Middle East, and it is often heard in their hymns. They interpret Isaiah (65:17, ESV), ‘The former things shall not be remembered, or come into mind’ as God’s forgetting. It is thus clear my interviewees relate forgiveness to forgetting.

Interviewees also emphasized the difficulty of forgetting because of close and intimate interconnections between people in the community that sometimes result in deep wounds and resentments. Some interviewees used Arabic poems stressing how hard this is, particularly when the issue is injustice, ‘injustice with proximity is tougher for oneself than the impact of a sharp sword’²³ and ‘the sorrow is not to be forgotten’.²⁴ Others rely on time to heal their wounds. Nonetheless there were a few interviewees, especially from case-C, who believed forgiveness is not about forgetting the

²¹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Vol. 5 (repr. 1998, London: MacMillan Reference Limited, 1999), 400. As cited in Robinson 2014.

²² Forgetting in these cases implies a disconnection with a past where people may be held captive. In this case, there is no healing possible (Hamber 2003).

²³ The name of the poet is Tarafa ibn al-Abd.

²⁴ Hiyam and Tamer, Mar 2014.

wrongdoing but rather remembering it without pain and requires divine intervention.²⁵

According to them this happens gradually and as a result of healing.²⁶

I will explain how each conflict management approach relates to Volf's theme of remembrance. These are rough guidelines; they do not necessarily describe the remembrance of a particular individual using the relevant conflict management approach.

6.3.1 Hierarchical Approach

This approach is associated with the pastors' way of dealing with conflict. When I describe Pastor-C's attitude below, this refers to his attitude *before* the act of reintegration; since then his attitude has changed and he has transitioned to the use of a Western-Baptist approach.

The pastors who still felt hurt could not remember rightly in terms of Volf's theme of remembrance. For the pastors right and wrong are defined by acts and duties.²⁷ They remembered and described the dishonouring actions of the 'rebellious-groups' with great pain and spoke unsympathetically about them.²⁸ It is likely these memories shaped the pastors' view of themselves as victims, they were broken and felt deeply humiliated, they remembered the conflict with a sense of shame for being rejected as the spiritual fathers (theologically inappropriate), and they experienced disloyalty from 'rebellious-groups' who wanted to replace them (culturally inappropriate). They defined these actions as wrong and unrighteous, believing they themselves did nothing wrong,

²⁵Shirin, a young leader at church C2, believed that, 'Real reconciliation happens when I don't remember the details of conflict anymore and this is hard. Only God can help in that.' She also views forgetting (or some kind of forgetting, such as not remembering) as an essential element in dealing with the past, something that probably requires divine intervention. Rana, a member at church-B2, also said, 'In forgiveness we might not forget the wrongdoing but we need to get to the point that when I remember, this incident will not affect me or cause me sadness or anger any more... this happened gradually' (Rana, Aug 2015).

²⁶ It is worth noting that interviewees in the three case-studies remembered the other party's wrongdoing in detail but only briefly described their contribution to the conflict, providing some justifications.

²⁷Deontology ethical theory.

²⁸ Although pastors said they tolerate them.

and conditioned forgiveness upon a public repentance of the ‘rebellious-groups’.²⁹ These memories occupy their present with shame as they are still feeling pain.³⁰ They have not felt able to cooperate with past or present reconciliation attempts and their churches have shrunk. This seems to support Volf’s point, ‘When wrongdoing defines us, we take on “distorted identities, frozen in time and closed in growth” ’ (2006:79).

Additionally, pastors remembered and focused on their church’s past glory and their contributions. They wondered how the ‘rebellious-groups’ could forget these past contributions. Pastor-A spent 90% of the interview describing in detail the glory of church-A during the 1970s-1980s revival. Pastor-A’s wife told me, teary-eyed, ‘When I remember [the split] I get sad and so does Pastor-A who has served the church all his life.’³¹ Rami, an ABC leader told me that, history is still alive in people’s minds; pastors expected that members would not forget their decades of service, and thus expected their past contributions must influence the church’s present decision-making.³²

I will evaluate pastors’ memory in light of Volf’s four elements of remembering rightly.

a) Remembering truthfully. We can argue, in Volf’s terms, it is not clear whether the pastors remembered truthfully or not. They did not believe they had contributed to the conflict and entirely blamed the ‘rebellious-group’, conditioning forgiveness upon their repentance. The pastors evaluated the actions of the ‘rebellious-groups’ as sinful and thus their decisions to ‘fire’ them from church were held to be ethically correct. Additionally, the pastors’ *truth* was influenced by their belief that members should submit to their spiritual fathers. Thus the pastors felt their actions were justified since they were directed to protect their pastoral role (sacramental) and the church.

²⁹ As explained in Chapter Seven (Theology of Forgiveness).

³⁰ According to Volf, ‘Wrongdoing suffered is never dead; with the help of individual and communal memory, it reaches through the present and into the future, and occupies both with shame’ (Volf, 2015:175).

³¹ Suhad, Apr 2014.

³² Rami, Open interview.

b) Remembering therapeutically. Pastors could not remember therapeutically in terms of Volf's requirements for inner-healing. They still seemed hurt when I interviewed them and could neither integrate these conflicts into their life-stories by giving them positive meaning nor understand how conflict could contribute to their growth as pastors. Sadly they remembered the conflict as one of the worst events in their lives, causing them deep sorrow and, possibly, hindering church growth. They could not remember wrongs in terms of a new identity defined by God; rather they seemed to view themselves as victims unable to see how God would engender new opportunities and growth from these conflicts.

Without remembering therapeutically, pastors take two risks: first, they allow their suffering to control their lives and second, to poison their expectations of the future. If pastors remember therapeutically, they should remember the past but expect that something new will come. The impression I have from my observations post-split is that most pastors and many church members who experienced splits, in fact experienced a traumatic event. They seemed broken, sad, had lost their zeal and could not remember hopefully. This could be seen through their preaching, through the dramatically weakened church ministries to children, women and others, the fact that less financial giving was taking place and that membership decreased.

c) Remembering responsibly. It was difficult for the pastors to remember responsibly since their pain seemingly remains unhealed. Although they appointed friends and family members in church positions to help strengthen and protect their pastoral role (sacramental) after the split, they seemed unable to bring significant change in their churches and the churches declined in numbers.

d) *Remembering in reconciling ways.* Most pastors did not remember in reconciling ways as they felt unable to cooperate with many reconciliation attempts.³³ They adhered to their obligations and duties to protect their position (sacramental) and churches from the ‘evil’ actions of the ‘rebellious-groups’. It seems pastors considered that not responding to reconciliation attempts was morally right for them. It is noteworthy that the duties of the pastors were in conflict when some of them overrode the constitution in order to protect their positions and churches, which could be seen as being in opposition to their obligation to work according to the constitution.

6.3.2 *Sulha* and alternative-legalistic approaches

Advocates of *sulha* are mainly the older, more traditional generations who used elements of *sulha* in dealing with conflict.³⁴ Advocates of the alternative-legalistic approach are the younger generation who used some of alternative-legal conflict resolution techniques. Results show that advocates of both *sulha* and alternative-legalistic approaches *partly* remembered rightly; they struggled in remembering therapeutically and responsibly and their remembrance did not lead to reconciliation. I distinguish between these approaches in the following analysis.

a) *Remembering truthfully.* Advocates of the alternative-legalistic approach sought change at their churches for the greater benefit of the church community and used a legal framework to achieve that end.³⁵ However their prediction of the outcomes was inaccurate. The unexpected results made their decision appear unethical to pastors and the broader community. Some members of the ‘rebellious-groups’ in the cases said they were enthusiastic about bringing change and might have wronged their pastors by their behaviours, realising the dishonour only later. In case-A Sami, a church-A2 leader, admitted some of their ways were not appropriate. In case-B some voices confessed

³³ See Chapter Four.

³⁴ See Chapter Five.

³⁵ Utilitarian ethical theory.

they were mistaken to leave church-B. Elias, a church-B2 leader, explained, ‘We insisted on doing things our way, we did not take Pastor-B’s interests into account, the communication was poor.’³⁶ In case-C, Albert, a church-C2 leader, said he could not solely blame Pastor-C; members of church-C2 had contributed even more to the conflict. In a sense they remembered ‘truthfully’ as they could somewhat see their contribution to the conflict and by their willingness to restore relationships with their pastors they, perhaps, showed some kind of repentance.

Advocates of the *sulha* approach give weight to the consequences in evaluating the rightness and wrongness of actions.³⁷ For them peace and social order are right and a split is wrong, and both parties contributed to the wrong. Advocates of *sulha* also remembered truthfully; they blamed themselves for compromising and keeping the status quo that eventually led to the split. Jack, a deacon, wrote to Pastor-A, ‘Our compromise for many years is the reason for the hardships of today.’^{38 39}

b) Remembering therapeutically. In terms of Volf’s three requirements for inner-healing, the alternative-legalistic approach, used by most members of church-A2 and church-B2, integrated conflict events into their life-story, as they admitted they were young, enthusiastic and wanted to shape the church future. They had learned from that experience and were willing to reconcile. Church-B2 even expressed its willingness to reintegrate and expected to have positions at church-B, but Pastor-B did not agree. Some interviewees were hesitant to talk negatively about the pastors and stressed that they had no resentment towards them.⁴⁰

³⁶ Elias, Aug 2015.

³⁷ Teleology ethical theory.

³⁸ Jack’s letter, 14 Apr 1996.

³⁹ Again split is viewed as an acceptable, although not optimal and preferable, solution. See Chapter Five, Footnote 81.

⁴⁰ In case-A, Mary (the wife of George who pastored church-A2 after the split) told me, ‘At the beginning [after the split] each time members of church-A2 gathered they remembered the wrongdoing against them and were very hurt, but forgiveness is a continual process and gradually God healed their wounds’ (Mary, Apr 2014).

Nonetheless, churches A2 and B2 were seeking their wellbeing too, for they did not want to live in shame (which might explain why they agreed to participate in joint church services). For many years some pastors boycotted churches A2 and B2, and did not agree to attend or preach in them, since their split had caused shame within the community.⁴¹ Sami, a church-A2 leader, explained the importance of joint services, ‘We tried to bring about “normalization” and to forget the past. God taught us to forgive, and time will help us to ignore our resentment.’⁴² They did not want to live in the prison of bitterness. As Pastor Mark, a third-party, noted, ‘If we don’t forgive, our heavenly father will not forgive us; we forgive for our sake so we can be blessed.’⁴³

In the *sulha* approach members were more *accepting* of their suffering as part of their past and *letting it go*,⁴⁴ they were ready to compromise for the sake of peace and social order. Seemingly, in both alternative-legalistic and *sulha* approaches members *partly* remembered therapeutically. They continued to rely on *time and forgetting* to deal with the past, accepting their suffering as part of their past; they are moving on, but they are not necessarily healed.

c) Remembering responsibly. In the alternative-legalistic approach, both churches A2 and B2, for more than ten years following the split, did not appoint new pastors. On the one hand, from their point of view they remembered responsibly because they did not want to repeat their harsh experience. On the other hand, they possibly replicated the attitudes of pastors by creating a situation in which church leaders were not given authority and so they, the church leaders, left (church-A2 experienced four exits and church-B2 suffered two exits). We can argue they did not remember responsibly.

⁴¹ See Chapter Five.

⁴² Sami, Feb 2014.

⁴³ Mark, Aug 2014.

⁴⁴ Makant (2008) presents three common responses to suffering within the popular self-help genre: (1) to remember that things could have been even worse, (2) the suffering has made one a stronger and wiser person, (3) suffering is something which a person should be able to quickly ‘get over’ in order to ‘move on’, there is an unspoken expectation that once this acceptable time has passed any continued recognition of suffering is seen as a form of self-pitying (84).

Advocates of the *sulha* approach did not remember responsibly either, for they became passive after the split (perhaps they felt they failed to prevent the split), and allowed the younger generation to lead the new churches (church-A2 and B2) that were established as a result of the splits.

d) Remembering in reconciling ways. In both alternative-legalistic and *sulha* approaches members remembered in a reconciling way. For many years church-A2 welcomed all attempts to reconcile with Pastor-A, albeit with no success. As of 2018 members of church-B2 are open to reintegration, but Pastor-B is sceptical.

6.3.3 Western-Baptist approach

This approach was mainly seen in case-C after the split.⁴⁵ In evaluating the memories of members of church-C2 and Pastor-C in terms of Volf's four elements of remembering rightly, I find that they remembered rightly. Even though they struggled in remembering therapeutically, their remembrances led to the beginning of reconciliation (reintegration).

a) Remembering truthfully. Many members of church-C2 remembered Pastor-C's past wrongdoing in detail, but they also admitted their own wrongdoing (even while justifying it). During the reconciliation-retreat Pastor-C publicly apologized from the pulpit for the wrongs he had committed against church-C2.⁴⁶ Pastor-C's truthful confession was a very crucial step towards reconciliation. We can conclude that members of church-C2 and Pastor-C remembered the wrongdoing 'truthfully'.

b) Remembering therapeutically. Church-C2 judged Pastor-C by his old character rather than by his later actions towards motivating reconciliation. Their evaluation of his

⁴⁵ See Chapter Five.

⁴⁶ See Chapter Four.

desire to reintegrate was based on his character as shaped by his past wrongdoings.⁴⁷

The ABC-Committee also judged Pastor-C based on his character and past reputation.

Findings indicate most members of church-C2 and church-C3 believed the reconciliation-retreat was a ‘divine work’; where God intervened, brought forgiveness and *healed* hurt emotions and broken relationships.⁴⁸ For participants, the Spirit was present in some kind of tangible way, emotionally they felt love towards the other group, they prayed for hours in tears, apologized and forgave one another. They believed this was led by the Spirit. Nonetheless, after the reintegration, members of church-C2 realized that they were still displeased with Pastor-C and that healing was not complete despite the reconciliation-retreat. Members still struggled to forget the wrongdoing and thus interpreted Pastor-C’s behaviour based on his past wrongdoings. In terms of Volf’s requirements, they integrated a new meaning to their story post-reconciliation, but they still could not see new possibilities and felt stuck again with Pastor-C. This time the ABC-Committee could not help (it had recommended Pastor-C should not pastor church-C2 post-reintegration) since Pastor-C insisted he must repair what the conflict had caused. Nonetheless members of church-C2 gave him a chance, predicting his failure as they did not trust he was changed despite his retreat apology. According to Volf, when we remember the past, we allow it to come into the present together with the feelings associated with the memory, and since memories shape present identities we cannot be redeemed without the redemption of our remembered past (1996:133). Since members’ memories regarding Pastor-C as being controlling still captured their thoughts and interpretation, we can conclude that they only partly remembered therapeutically.

It is likely that Pastor-C remembered therapeutically as he integrated a new meaning into his life after his repentance, seeing God’s hand in the reconciliation,

⁴⁷ Virtue ethical theory.

⁴⁸ This is also discussed in Chapter Seven.

seeing a new opportunity, and even insisting on pastoring church-C2 again despite the challenges he was facing.⁴⁹

c) Remembering responsibly. Members of church-C2 said they forgave Pastor-C but they did not trust he was changed and kept examining his motivation in every action. They also believed he should not pastor post-reintegration. We can conclude this attitude is remembering responsibly since they admitted their distrust in Pastor-C could cause more conflict at church-C2. Furthermore, some leaders told me they had learned from the splits in cases A and B and that they did not want to replicate these mistakes. Apparently, their attitude was also influenced by the Canadian pastor who mentored them to not leave church, to pray, to forgive and act lovingly towards Pastor-C. My observation and impression during the interviews is that the Canadian pastor's instructions and his influence on church-C2 affected the whole dynamic of this conflict and its management.

Pastor-C remembered responsibly. He remembered his old conflict (of 25 years ago) with the former pastor of church-C.⁵⁰ He told me that in his conflict with church-C2 he did not want to follow the former pastor's model and attempted to learn from his former pastor's mistakes. This was the main reason he decided to reconcile with church-C2. Interestingly, both members of church-C2 and Pastor-C sadly mentioned that spiritually they believe the first split with the former pastor still follows them as they are facing a third split, as if history keeps repeating itself. We can argue that Pastor-C and church-C2 remembered the conflict in a responsible way.

d) Remembering in reconciling ways. Members of church-C2 remembered in a reconciling way even while struggling. Despite their reintegration, they struggled to forget; they still remember the wrongdoings, blamed Pastor-C and interpreted his

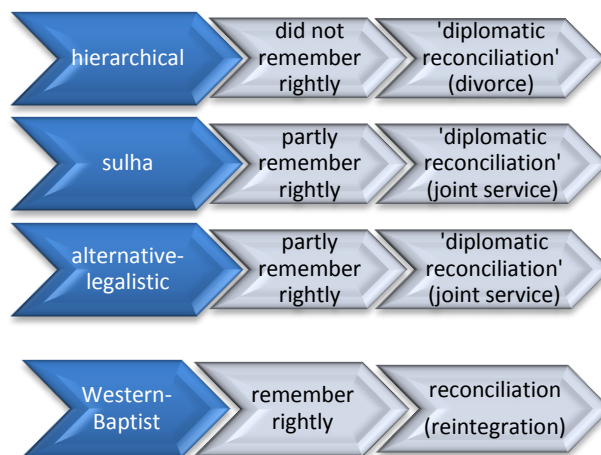
⁴⁹ I will discuss this argument in more detail later.

⁵⁰ See Chapter Four.

motivations based on his character and past. However, they did not resist the reintegration and a few of them cooperated with Pastor-C. Pastor-C remembered in a reconciling way. He insisted on reconciling despite the ABC-Committee’s recommendation. He told me that for a whole year before the reintegration he was planning for this reconciliation.

In sum, when reflecting on the remembrances of the Palestinian Baptists concerning the three cases, it is evident that all struggled to forget the wrongdoings. In terms of Volf’s remembering rightly, in the hierarchical approach, pastors struggled to remember rightly. Those of *sulha* and alternative-legalistic approaches *partly* remembered rightly (while struggling to remember therapeutically and responsibly), but their remembrances led to ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ (pacification). In the Western-Baptist approach Pastor-C remembered rightly. Members of church-C2 remembered rightly (somewhat struggling in remembering therapeutically) – indeed, their remembrances *led to the beginning of reconciliation* in the form of reintegration, as illustrated below:

Figure A: remembering rightly in the case-studies



6.4 Challenges and Recommendations

As we have seen in the four approaches, there are two common issues posing a challenge for Palestinian Baptists when dealing with cases of church conflict: (1)

forgetting the wrongdoing and, (2) *remembering therapeutically*. I begin by listing some general factors challenging Palestinian Baptists in practising the theme of remembrance, and then move to discuss how I deal with these challenges by proposing some recommendations through adjusting Volf's theory.

Several factors from the Palestinian Baptists' context affect the process of backgrounding their memories. First, church buildings function as continual reminders of conflicts. Second, the disputants stand in intimate relationships with each other. Third, they belong to a broader traumatized society (Israeli-Palestinian) with a traumatized memory, each with the experience of a collective national catastrophe (Holocaust and *nakba*). These communities continually call for these catastrophes to never be forgotten. I will look at each issue briefly.

First, the church building itself was an important factor in the conflicts, particularly in case-A. It is constantly present; seeing it continually reminds the disputants of their past pain, making it difficult to forget. Every Sunday as church-A2 meets next door to church-A they can see the conflict is alive since church-A's building was one of the main reasons for the unresolved conflict.

Second, people cannot run away from their past because of the relatedness and closeness between them. Part of the problem is that the Palestinian Baptist community is very small and concentrated within the Galilee region. The churches and ministries are confined physically in the area due to many factors and thus people live in close proximity to one another and all they do is more or less interconnected. Even when people want to forget their past they are 'not allowed' to, since, they are being constantly reminded of it. Pastor-C complained, 'The old conflict [with the former pastor] still follows me even after I ran away from it.'⁵¹ It is likely this old conflict, although 25 years ago, is still alive and influences Pastor-C's present and perhaps

⁵¹ See Chapter Four, Section 4.2.3.

future. When the ABC-Committee discussed the conflict in case-C, some committee members mentioned Pastor-C's past conflict in order to evaluate his present attitude.

Third, living in un-forgetting traumatized communities with unhealed memories makes it even harder to deal with a past memory of suffering. In moving towards reconciliation, we cannot bypass the difficulty of struggling with forgiveness in relation to memory. Generally traumatized people are bothered by intrusive thoughts and memories. Unless memories connected to trauma are reframed or 'healed' they can be a source of recurring emotional distress.⁵² Within the confines of this dissertation, it is not practical to develop the subject of trauma but it is important to note that a clear understanding of what is involved in living in traumatized societies is essential for understanding how Palestinian Baptists view the theme of remembrance.

In light of these factors, how can Palestinian Baptists deal with forgetting? If they relate forgiveness with forgetting, and since forgetting is not a liberating act to be associated with forgiveness in this context, how can they then be reconciled? How can they, as a closely intertwined community who belongs to broader traumatized society, remember truthfully and therapeutically?

Regarding the Palestinian Baptist struggle to forget, Volf's theory of remembrance provides a helpful perception of forgetting. Forgetting does not serve healing and should not be connected with forgiveness for several reasons: (1) We cannot control what we can forget and what we can remember, (2) forgiveness presupposes remembering; we cannot forgive if we have already forgotten (we condemn the wrongdoing and then do not count that against the wrongdoer, both of which require remembering), (3) non-remembrance is a fruit of forgiveness, not part of forgiveness itself, (4) we have the imperative to remember so that the wrong will not be repeated, (5) no deliverance and no healing can happen without attending the past and thus

⁵² See Goins (2008). Even though thoughts and memories associated with trauma are culturally interpreted.

forgetting will not help in healing, only *redeeming the past* will. The question is not whether or not one ought to remember but rather more *what to do with the memories* – those explicit and implicit memories which continue to shape identity whether they are recognized or not.

I agree with Volf that the focus should be on remembering rightly (or in a redeeming way) rather than forgetting. Since Palestinian Baptists live in an unforgiving environment politically, socio-culturally and religiously,⁵³ I suggest that it would be beneficial for them to focus on the language of transformation rather than on that of forgetting the wrongdoing which poses a challenge in their specific context. Stated differently, how can Palestinian Baptists transform the saying '*the sorrow is not to be forgotten*' to '*the past sorrow is to be transformed to a redeemed sorrow*'?⁵⁴

Volf's theme of remembrance is insightful and compelling, offering helpful insights on forgetting and remembering for the Palestinian Baptist context. Nonetheless, his theory seems to miss some aspects that relate to the Palestinian Baptist cultural context as I will explain.

First, on *remembering truthfully* I agree with Volf that it is necessary to lovingly speak the truth about the past, and that our goal should be to seek truth and remember the facts as truthfully as possible, regardless of our perspectives and interests. However, it is not clear exactly how we can evaluate the narratives of pastors and laity regarding the conflict in terms of truthfulness. Culturally and theologically pastors viewed their decision to 'fire' church leaders/deacons as morally correct. The pastors' truth was influenced by their religious belief that members should submit to their spiritual fathers

⁵³ See Chapter Seven.

⁵⁴ This is similar to Gregory Jones' (1999) point that the emphasis should be more on healing memories rather than forgetting or erasing memories, since 'healing' language better serves the need for 'continuity in the stories of our lives' and fits the biblical imagery, assuming that deleting memory would seem more connected 'to "un-crucifying" Christ'. He notes in this life, we are called not to forget but to remember differently. God's gift in Christ enables us to be freed from the burden of a broken past, to see it as a redeemed past (178).

who implement order. Emotionally, for pastors the trauma of the church splits became a formative part of their identity and thus it is hard to evaluate their reactions during the conflict as truthful or untruthful. The laity's truth was also influenced by their theological-cultural beliefs of Congregationalist democratic principles.

Second, in relation to *remembering therapeutically*, the difficulty in forgetting has forced Palestinian Baptists to develop a kind of therapeutic remembering which was *accepting the suffering* and oriented towards *moving on*.⁵⁵ However, this is different from Volf's theory of remembering therapeutically (that is, integrating a new story into their lives, a new identity and new possibilities). *Acceptance and moving on* is putting up with the past, *not redeeming it*.⁵⁶ Nonetheless Volf's theory of remembering therapeutically lacks an essential factor of healing in the cultural model of *sulha*, namely *venting*. *Venting* must be enabled in the reconciliation process to make way for peace and there has to be a place where anger will be *publicly expressed*; naming wrong as wrong and blaming the wrongdoer (an indispensable aspect of forgiveness). This will enable the reversal of dignity violation through public acknowledgement of the moral standing of the victim – a form of symbolically reinstating the victim back to the status from which the injury has taken them down. This then makes the future possible, as the victim is freed from fear that the future will be like the one of wrongdoing suffered and humiliation. I thus suggest adding this *venting* process to Volf's theme of *remembering therapeutically*.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ In case-C, in the reconciliation-retreat there was collective repentance, forgiveness and beginning of reconciliation that led to reintegration. However, after this reintegration members still struggled with remembering the past wrongdoings. Members of Church-C2 missed the old days and blamed Pastor-C and this was an obstacle towards real reconciliation, one in which the past is freed from poisoning the present and the future.

⁵⁶ Therapeutic approaches to suffering focus on making those who have suffered feel better about themselves and the suffering they have experienced, but do little or nothing to actually make better the past, present, or future of the person.

⁵⁷ Another important issue is the need to repent as victims. When victims repent they resist sinful values and practices and let the new order of God's reign be established in their heart (Volf 1996:116) which will bring about social change.

Third, although Volf mentions the significance of community and the society, seemingly, for Volf, the task of dealing with one's memories ultimately rests on the shoulders of the individual who has suffered wrong. Given the communal nature of Palestinian Baptists and, as we will see, given that community is a crucial element in achieving forgiveness and repentance,⁵⁸ I suggest adding the *community* as an essential participant in the process of redeeming the past wrongdoings, in which the community will support the offended in bearing the burden with them.⁵⁹

Fourth, Volf's theory of remembrance does not suggest *concrete practical actions* for how past sorrow is to be remembered in a redeemed way. I find that case-C provides a significant insight into how to transform past sorrow into redeemed sorrow, while also involving the community, namely *church practices*. As noted in case-C, a transformation in remembering the past occurred between the two conferences. In the second conference another 'wall fell down' and some members started to view Pastor-C with different lens. They could see repentance in his life and started to trust him again. Apparently, what contributed to the transformation in their remembering of the past were some *communal church practices* done repeatedly over seven years: (1) the ABC-Committee engagement with church-C2 in prayer meetings, (2) individual/group consultations and listening to their pain (venting) post-split, (3) worship meetings, (4) conferences, (5) studying Scripture and thereby allowing the word of God to work in their minds and hearts in reshaping their memory, (6) communion, remembering the promise of redemption as an eschatological reality and the recognition of partial redemption now,⁶⁰ and (7) foot-washing.⁶¹ The participation in these church practices

⁵⁸ See Chapter Seven.

⁵⁹ If a community is a place of belonging for people who share, identify with one another and feel responsible for and obligated to one another, does this sense of belonging and responsibility to one another imply that remembering rightly, forgiving and embracing the other in a group or communal setting is possible and moral? Some would say it is not only possible but a moral obligation, which is reinforced by the 'breadth of love' which one has for one's community (Smedes 1998).

⁶⁰ Boulus, the interim pastor, told me that during the conflict church-C2 did not practice communion.

enabled church members to partly experience redemption of past sorrow. Church practices contribute to the transformation and reshaping of memories if they happen repeatedly and continually.

Fifth, according to Volf, we cannot be redeemed without the redemption of our remembered past.⁶² The final redemption is unthinkable without non-remembrance, an eschatological gift; a fruit of real reconciliation which takes place in a *linear structure*; in a trajectory of a cycle: remember rightly, forgive, reconcile and then let go of the memory of the offence. I find this *linear structure* is challenging to Palestinian Baptists because their own reconciliation methods tend to take place outside of a linear time frame. They often practise ‘diplomatic reconciliation’, an action that is ‘forced’ by the community to regain social order, but this does not always need to take place after remembering rightly, repentance or offering forgiveness. The process of forgiveness and remembering rightly can take place after the ‘diplomatic reconciliation’. In case-A for example, there was a ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ between the two churches, but forgiveness was external and they partly remember rightly.⁶³

In sum, Palestinian Baptists can learn from Volf’s theme of remembrance that remembering in a *redeeming way* is more persuasive than *forgetting suffering*; the focus on transformation language in the Palestinian culture is more applicable than forgetting language, and that the gift of non-remembrance is a fruit of forgiveness. Although redemption and non-remembrance will only be final in an eschatological reality, they can experience partial present redemption. However, Volf’s theory can be informed by several elements from the Palestinian culture: (1) *venting* is an essential factor in redeeming the past sorrow,⁶⁴ (2) *community* is a fundamental participant in the process

⁶¹ Foot washing was done by David, a member of the ABC-Committee, during the conflict.

⁶² Volf (2015) points out that to reconcile is to attend to the past in order to keep it from colonising the future.

⁶³ For more information about ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ see Section 5.4.1.2 and Section 7.2.2.

⁶⁴ Although it was done privately and not intentionally as part of the formal process. See Chapter Five.

of redeeming the past sorrow, (3) repeated *church practices* are helpful ways to redeem the past sorrow and to gain the community involvement, (4) reconciliation does not necessarily happen in a *linear structure*; ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ may precede forgiveness and remembering rightly, and (5) given the Palestinian Baptist religious beliefs, culture and traumatized society, it is not clear how they can evaluate the truthfulness of one’s narratives regarding the conflict, in terms of Volf’s remembering truthfully.

God’s gift in Christ allows us to be freed from the broken past and to redeem it. Forgiveness does not only look backward to the healing of the past; it looks forward to changed and different ways of living into the future. Freed from the burden of the past, we can begin the complicated, difficult process of redeeming the past. It is a difficult and complicated process because of the layers of trauma and suffering and because of the ambiguities and complexities of memory, but it is an important and crucial task nonetheless.⁶⁵

Forgiveness, which is the subject of the next chapter, is the only way to deal with memories.

⁶⁵ Jones 1995.

Chapter Seven

7. Theology of Forgiveness

In this chapter I first describe Volf's theme of forgiveness, then explain four different perceptions of forgiveness demonstrated in the four approaches in the case-studies. I also evaluate Volf's forgiveness in light of these approaches and propose several recommendations.

7.1 Volf's Theology of Forgiveness

The theme of forgiveness is drawn mainly from Volf's book *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (2005). Volf writes that the key to learning how to give and forgive in a godly way is to look at how God gives and forgives. Volf correctly presents the inevitable connections between doctrine and practice, and between the nature of God and the nature of the Christian.

7.1.1 Understand God's forgiveness

Volf (2005) argues there are two reasons we can neither undo nor disregard wrongdoing and therefore need to do the hard work of forgiving. First, the metaphysical structure of the world; time does not run backwards. Second, the abiding effect of guilt; wrongdoing sits like a burden on the shoulders of the one who has committed it (128-129).

According to Volf to forgive is to name wrong in the sense that it entails it, but the heart of forgiveness is not naming and blaming. Forgiveness is a special kind of gift, and by forgiving we release others from the burden of their wrongdoing (130). As for Christians, forgiving always takes place in a triangle involving the wrongdoer, the wronged person, and God. In this regard Volf argues that if we forgive because God

forgives, then we should forgive as God forgives by echoing God's forgiveness. Thus, to understand our own forgiveness we should understand God's (131).¹

In understanding how God forgives, Volf highlights the difference between doing justice and forgiving. He argues, 'To be just is to condemn the fault and, because of the fault, to condemn the doer as well. To forgive is to condemn the fault but to spare the doer. That's what the forgiving God does' (141). But God does not merely spare sinners the penalty for sin, God also separates their sin from them.² Our unforgiveness, explains Volf, may make manifest the fact we have not allowed ourselves to receive and be shaped by God's forgiveness.³

In sum, to receive forgiveness means to receive both the accusation and the release from debt. To receive release from debt, we simply believe and rejoice in gratitude for the generous gift. To receive the accusation, we confess our offence and repent (153).

7.1.2 How should we forgive?

According to Volf, in discussing forgiveness we can distinguish between three corresponding modes in which we relate to offenders and their offence: revenge, the demand for justice, and forgiving (158). He affirms that revenge is morally wrong. In its zeal to punish, it overindulgently takes from the offender more than is due. In Romans (12:19-20) the Apostle Paul wrote we should not avenge ourselves; instead of revenge

¹ Volf continues to explain two common misconceptions of God: God is an 'implacable judge' (or tough divine negotiator) and God is a 'doting grandparent' (or a soft, heavenly Santa) (131). Volf argues if God is an 'implacable judge' then he would deal with wrongdoing by punishment. If he is a 'doting grandparent' then he would leave our wrongdoing alone and take care of our well-being. However, Volf concludes, 'the world is sinful. That's why God doesn't affirm it indiscriminately. God loves the world. That's why God doesn't punish it in justice' (140).

² God can do that because: first, Christ who died for our sins is one with God, and second, Christ who died for our sins is also one with humanity. It is because of Christ's union with humanity that God can separate sinners from their sin (146). Volf mentions two effects of the union with Christ: (1) we are freed from the power of sin and the life we live is God's life in us. (2) God does not count our sins to us but instead counts to us Christ's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:17). So in fact God does not only forgive us; he transforms us into Christ-like figures (148-151).

³ This is how Luther explained forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, 'The outward forgiveness that I show in my deeds is a sure sign that I have the forgiveness of sin in the sight of God. On the other hand, if I do not show this in my relations with my neighbour, I have a sure sign that I do not have the forgiveness of sin in the sight of God and am still stuck in my unbelief' (as cited in Volf 2005:156).

we should give gifts to those who have offended us (159). But why is forgiveness, rather than retributive justice, a Christian duty? Volf claims, ‘Consistent enforcement of justice would wreak havoc in a world shot through with transgression. It may rid the world of evil, but at the cost of the world’s destruction’ (160). Additionally, the line between vengeance and justice is often hard to draw (160).

Then why do we forgive instead of giving in to vengeance? Volf explains, we should forgive because ‘saving’ our enemies matters more to us than punishing them (162), just as God re-established communion with us by forgiving our sin. He adds we cannot forgive exactly as God does, but because we were created to be like the God who forgives we should imitate God in our own way as an instrument of God (165).⁴ Since God is in us and Christ lives through us, God forgives and we make God’s forgiveness our own and so pass it on (165).

For Volf, to forgive means doing the following activities:

To condemn: condemnation and blame are intrinsic to the process of forgiveness (167), ‘we accuse when we forgive, and in doing that, we affirm the rightful claims of justice’ (166-169).

To not shrug off: we should forgive primarily for the other’s sake, not our own, as a gift we give to the one who has wronged us. Emotional healing is not the main purpose of forgiveness.

To release debt: (1) not to press charges against the wrongdoer, (2) to forgo the demand of retribution, (3) to absorb the injury, (4) to blame but not to punish (169-170).

⁴ Volf argues, ‘Revenge multiples evil, retributive justice contains evil—and threatens the world with destruction. Forgiveness overcomes evil with good. Forgiveness mirrors the generosity of God whose ultimate goal is neither to satisfy injured pride nor to justly apportion reward and punishment, but to free sinful humanity from evil and thereby re-establish communion with us... this is the gospel in its stark simplicity—as radically countercultural and at the same time as beautifully human as anything one can imagine’ (161).

To release of guilt: punishment cannot release us from guilt. Only forgiveness can. 'Christ didn't only bear our punishment on account of his oneness with God; Christ also separated us, the doers, from our evil deeds and released us from guilt on account of his oneness with humanity' (172). Those who forgive see the forgiven offenders as innocent, not guilty.

To forgive indiscriminately: before we existed, God's forgiving was already there (180). 'God's forgiveness is not reactive-dependent on our repentance' (179). It is original and conditioned by nothing on our part.

To apologize and repent: to apologize is to say we are sorry for committing the wrongdoing and for causing suffering. We also commit ourselves to not repeating the wrong in the future and repairing the damage. For an apology to be honest, repentance must be truthful. In the Christian sacrament of confession, repentance of the heart accompanies confession of the mouth. The only way to freedom from the wrongdoing leads through repentance and confession, through apology (Volf 2015).⁵

Restitution: repentance will prove sincere only if the wrongdoer is willing to repair what wrongdoing took away from the victim (187).

To reconcile: we forgive in hope that forgiveness will bring repentance, reparation and restoration of relationships (188-189).

Forgiveness is an important factor in the God-humanity restoration (189).⁶ We forgive because we love even our enemies. This love, that motivates forgiveness, 'pushes forgiveness not just from exclusion to neutrality, but from neutrality to

⁵ Volf (2005) explains, without faith and repentance we are not forgiven because, 'forgiveness is stuck in the middle between the God who forgives and humans who don't receive' (182-183). Repentance is a necessary consequence of forgiveness and not a condition of forgiveness, but it does help make repentance possible (183-186).

⁶ Volf points out that, in Scripture (Romans 5:1) peace is not the absence of war. Peace is the flourishing of the community and its people. And 'Peace with God is our delight in communion with God... God forgives by indwelling us and indwells us by forgiving us' (2005:189).

embrace' (189). Volf concludes, forgiveness is embedded in a way of life that is committed to overcoming evil by doing good (189).⁷

7.1.3 How can we forgive?

Volf argues we have the *power* and the *right* to forgive. Since every wrong committed against a creature is a sin against the creator, God has the power to forgive all sins (196), and He has already forgiven sinful humanity (197). When we forgive, we make God's sending of the forgiveness package our own. This is why we have the power to forgive. Whether the package will be received depends on the recipients, and on whether they admit to the wrongdoing and repent (197). We too have the right to forgive because God has forgiven. We do not have that right on our own. But we have the right and the obligation to make God's forgiving our own – to forgive on our part what has already been forgiven by God (199), so we have a derivative authority. Without such authority, Scripture could not urge us to forgive and God's warning not to be forgiven if we do not forgive others would only mock us (199).

The relationship between God's forgiveness and ours: Volf illustrates the idea that God forgives and we take this divine forgiving and put our own signature under God's.

⁷ Forgiveness is often described as a shift in *attitude and feelings* towards the offender. From a psychological perspective, forgiveness begins as an internal process of overcoming negative emotions and attitudes towards the offender- resentment, anger, avoidance and revenge (Worthington Jr 1998:108). Enright et. al (1998) broaden this to include fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love. Philosophers such as Murphy and Hampton (1988) and Govier (2002) describe forgiveness as abandoning negative emotions and attitudes such as anger, hatred and resentment and working towards feelings of compassion/love for the offender. Biggar (2001:215) says forgiveness involves, in part, overcoming 'vindictive' resentment and encouraging the growth of compassion and a desire for 'friendship'. Thus, the intrapersonal process of shifting in attitude and emotions may lead to the interpersonal process of relational restoration. For some, if this intrapersonal process stops short of becoming interpersonal, forgiveness is either incomplete or has not happened at all. Empathy, frequently discussed, has to do with entering the world of the other and responding accordingly (Rogers 1980:142). Some talk about empathy as entering God's point of view, which may happen through prayer and through a realistic assessment of one's own self and one's weaknesses (Adams 1991, Biggar 2001, Govier 2002, Jones 1995, Volf 2005). Empathy is even said to reduce the injustice gap by helping victims to see themselves as less innocent and their offenders as less evil (Armour and Umbreit 2005). Forgiveness can be seen as a shift in *behaviour*, for instance, through the action of 'opening the arms' for the embrace of the offender (Volf 1996, 2005:98). Jones (1995) sees forgiveness in terms of action, as a craft that is practised and improved upon throughout one's lifetime. Forgiveness is an embodied way of life, meaning that it is practised in such a way that one cannot separate 'the art from the artist'. This requires consistent practice in shifting attitudes and adjusting behaviours for the sake of the other person and the community.

This activity is God's work, so when we forgive it is Christ who forgives through us. In comparing our forgiving with God's Volf states:

All our forgiving is inescapably incomplete. That's why it's so crucial to see our forgiving not simply as our own act, but as participation in God's forgiving. Our forgiving is faulty; God's is faultless. Our forgiving is provisional; God's is final. We forgive tenuously and tentatively; God forgives unhesitatingly and definitely. As we forgive, we always wrong the offender by inadequate judgment and pride; God forgives with justice and genuine love the only way we dare forgive is by making our forgiving transparent to God's and always open to revision. After all our forgiveness is only possible as an echo of God's (220).

How can we let that echo become full of our own real voices? Volf proposes that when things go well forgiveness gives birth to forgiveness. When things go ill forgiveness remains barren. That's the impotence of forgivers, for they can only 'knock at the door' by forgiving and they ought to wait, 'trusting that the Spirit of the resurrected Christ will make the seed of their forgiveness bear fruit' (205).⁸

In relation to the burden of mending relationships resting on shoulders of victims, Volf agrees that although it is unfair for victims to bear it, they should.⁹ We bear the burden of forgiveness because: first, God is such a forgiver and Christ forgave in such a way, and second, when we are forgivers 'we are restored to our full human splendour' (209), as we were created to mirror God (209). However, as long as victims do not forgive (due to death, mental illness) even if we have received God's forgiveness we will have to live with a small wound of unforgiveness. In the world to come, all partial

⁸ Sometimes, Volf notes, we practise prideful forgiveness. Volf suggests the source of such a pride: (1) we feel we have been sinned against, (2) when we forgive, we give, and the offenders receive, giving itself can be a source of pride. Sometimes we forgive for the wrong reason and in the wrong way, when we feel we are right, superior, on the side of the light, and the offender is the wrong, inferior, on the darkness side (215). Volf argues that, 'In forgiving we sometimes put on a display of our righteousness, magnanimity, and greatness, and in the process, insult, demean, and diminish the offenders. It is possible to forgive so wrongly that it can seem that we need to be forgiven for forgiving' (215). In this regard, Volf suggests that it is good to remind ourselves that, 'We are always sinners... victims included... we always remain God's good creatures... offenders included. No wrongdoing is an isolated act... it is nourished by our sinful inclination and reinforced by a sinful culture' (216). Pride subverts what forgiveness seeks to achieve, 'because forgiveness is not a private act, it's part of a larger strategy of overcoming evil with good and bringing about reconciliation' (217). In this regard we achieve two victories: (1) when we forgive, and (2) when we reconcile.

⁹ Volf explains, 'Because that's what it means to be followers of Christ. Forgiving the unrepentant is not an optional extra in the Christian way of life; it is the heart of the thing' (209).

forgiveness will be made complete.¹⁰ Forgiveness is a social relationship, not an act of a solitary individual. God works in the lives of forgivers ‘not through the isolated decision of self-enclosed individuals but through a life lived in response to the God of grace and through a community that makes the practice of forgiveness meaningful’ (214).¹¹

Volf advocates an *unconditional* view of forgiveness; it is unilateral and is a process within a person and between persons. A unilateral act aiming at response so that it is always interpersonal, like giving, has the structure of giving and receiving. Ideally, forgiveness is also bilateral.¹² Therefore we forgive, even without repentance. To do that, ‘We shield the tender plant of forgiveness from the frigid winds that blow from unrepentant perpetrators, and we nourish it with the food of God’s goodness’ (209). Even when offenders are unrepentant we can and should forgive. There are better ways to protect ourselves than the refusal to forgive. For Volf, forgiveness is not a reaction to something but the beginning of something new (209).

As mentioned in Section 1.5.1 Schreiter (1998) and Liechty (2006), in the Northern Ireland context, associate reconciliation with forgiveness and repentance. Tutu (1999) also explains that there is no future for an interdependent world without forgiveness and that the act of forgiveness declares faith in the very future of relationship. For Tutu forgiveness is an unconditional gift that frees our own minds from the prison of hatred as it is not dependent on repentance. The spirit of

¹⁰ Volf also explains that we always ought to forgive humbly and provisionally. Sometimes what we thought was an offence against us is an offence for which we need to apologize far more than we need to forgive. We do not need to know the exact nature and extent of the offence, argues Volf, since God knows, and ‘we join God in forgiving’ (2005:211).

¹¹ Sometimes the reason we do not forgive is that we live in an unforgiving culture. Since we are social beings, shaped by our environment, what we in fact think and choose often merely ‘Echoes the choices of a group to which we belong and a wider culture in which we live... once a culture has become litigious, forgiveness starts making less and less sense’ (212). Volf concludes that in order to forgive, we need an environment in which forgiveness is valuable and nurtured (212).

¹² The central question is whether that bilateral relation has a nature of the exchange of some kind of equivalents (so that forgiveness is dependent on adequate repentance and if repentance is not there forgiveness is withdrawn) or whether it has the nature of a gift – Volf advocates the latter.

unconditional forgiveness was behind the TRC, which was chaired by Tutu post-apartheid.

Some Palestinian scholars also advocate unconditional forgiveness in action. Abu El-Assal (1999) and Younan (2003) highlight the importance of relationships focusing on coexistence avoiding confrontations. Massad (2000) sees that only confession, repentance, forgiveness, and love, leads to reconciliation. Munayer (2014) also asserts that forgiveness is unconditional and reconciliation is unattainable without forgiveness.

For advocates of *conditional* forgiveness, forgiveness is bilateral.¹³ It is conditioned by the offender's repentance and should include remorse, confession, and restitution. Without repentance the offended is obligated to withhold forgiveness (Caneday 2011).¹⁴ For conditional forgiveness, reconciliation automatically follows forgiveness (Brauns 2008). Forgiveness is modelled after God's forgiveness, which is conditioned on repentance (Adams 1994).¹⁵ Biggar (2008), in his work on the Northern Ireland conflict, advocates conditional forgiveness, his proposal of forgiveness being a two-part process: 'The Two Moments of Forgiveness'. The first moment he calls 'forgiveness-as-compassion', where the offended allows his feelings to be moderated by sympathy and love for the offender. The second moment is 'forgiveness-as-absolution', where the offended says 'I forgive you', but the absolution waits for signs of repentance of the offender. One important challenge with conditional forgiveness is to decide when there is enough demonstration of repentance for forgiveness to finally be given and when we think repentance is truly genuine. Conditional forgiveness is consistent with our natural inclinations and cultural climate. We believe that we have the right – indeed

¹³ According to Nelson (2012), two passages are commonly used to support conditional forgiveness. The first is Colossians 3:13, 'Forgive as the Lord forgave you' (Ephesians 4:32). The second passage is Luke 17:3, 'if he repents, forgive him'.

¹⁴ Ardel Caneday (2011) comments, 'We would be mistaken to suppose that we are obligated to forgive the sins of those who will not repent in violation of the order of the gospel' (10).

¹⁵ Although not all advocates of conditional forgiveness would agree, Sande (2004) allows for unconditional forgiveness only in the case of minor offences.

the obligation – to withhold forgiveness from those who wronged us. In a sense withholding forgiveness seems to border on vengeance (Nelson 2012, Adams 1994).¹⁶

Nelson (2012) notes conditional and unconditional forgiveness have many common aspects: (1) the offence was wrong and the injury was real. In forgiveness, the offended releases the offender from his moral liability. (2) A personal offence damages the relationship. (3) It is wrong either to play the victim or to seek vengeance. (4) There are consequences, natural and judicial, that follow wrongdoing even when forgiveness is granted. (5) Our forgiveness of others should be modelled after God’s forgiveness of us. (6) Reconciliation is the end goal. Since conditional and unconditional forgiveness have much in common, while differing in the means by which reconciliation is realized, Nelson suggests the focus should be on reconciliation.

I agree with Nelson that conditional and unconditional forgiveness have much in common and suggest that Palestinians focus on achieving reconciliation and restoring relationships whether they practice conditional or unconditional forgiveness, as I will explain in Section 7.3.

7.1.4 A cultural critique of Volf’s theme of forgiveness in light of local culture (*sulha*)

Sulha functions as a social mechanism for the promotion of forgiveness. When a conflict breaks out, dignitaries recruit the victim’s clan into the *sulha* process, achieve a ceasefire and generally convince the disputants that their honour will be restored and increased if they forgive much more than if they seek vengeance. In a public reconciliation ceremony, dignitaries become communal guardians of the

¹⁶ According to Adams (1994), ‘refusal to forgive is a decision for vengeance. It is taking vengeance into your own hands... Because the Lord has said, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,” to take vengeance of any kind—even the withholding of forgiveness—is an attempt to arrogate God’s work to oneself’ (25).

reconciliation.¹⁷ The final ceremony is centred on forgiveness, peace and compromise for the greater good of society.¹⁸ In *sulha* forgiveness is mandatory, since only with forgiveness can the torn social fabric be mended. ‘*Sulha* is first and foremost based on forgiveness. If the offended side does not forgive, there will be no *sulha* and there will be no peace’ (Jabbour 1993:31), in a similar way Volf (2011) states that forgiveness is the only solution to vast conflicts. Forgiving strengthens communal bonds and restores relationship (Volf 2005).

As mentioned in Chapter Five, a *sulha* ceremony involves three symbolic rituals: (1) *Musafaha*, the hand shake, (2) *Musamaha*, declaring forgiveness, (3) *Mumalaha*, the ceremonial meal. *Musamaha* (declaring forgiveness) is demonstrated by both parties, the offender’s family humbly accepts the wrongdoings and offers compensation on behalf of their family member; the bereaved family respectfully forgives the offender’s family as an act of humility. These cultural symbols and rituals are necessary for societal constructions of peaceful coexistence, even if they are done with resentment.

More importantly, in *sulha* forgiveness (unlike revenge)¹⁹ demands the participation of the whole community with the rituals, otherwise restoration of honour will fail. In *sulha* forgiveness is not divine;²⁰ it is a mostly external, decisional and communal process that takes place in a triangle consisting of the offender’s family, the offended family and the community. Without the involvement of the *community*, *sulha* fails. Given that religious dignitaries are part of the *sulha* process, it is likely God has a role in this process; however it is not a clear role as in Volf’s. Volf’s definition of

¹⁷ Leaders from different religions are always present at the reconciliation ceremony to symbolize the coming together of the community.

¹⁸ Smith 1989. See Chapter Five.

¹⁹ According to Pely (2011b) theorists have viewed forgiveness through frames similar to those of revenge. Some have argued that revenge is like forgiveness in having an evolutionary function; just like revenge, the capacity to forgive is authentic, intrinsic to human nature, and a result of natural selection. The authors investigated whether within-persons increases in rumination about an interpersonal transgression were associated with within-persons reductions in forgiveness. Results supported this hypothesis (McCullough 2007).

²⁰ It means that human beings, apart from acknowledging or invoking deity, still do practise forgiveness, which is a necessary invention for living, but not a process of transcendence as in Volf’s.

forgiveness is a divine gift, it is an internal, decisional and individualistic process (compared to *sulha*) and takes place in a triangle of the offender, the offended, and God, ‘take God away,’ Volf argues, ‘and the foundations of forgiveness become unsteady and may even crumble’ (131). I am aware Volf distinguishes between social agents and social arrangements. While he argues the latter are important, his focus is on social agents. However, in Arab culture this distinction cannot be so easily made.²¹

Additionally, Volf’s theme of forgiveness does not require *public restoration of dignity* as in *sulha*, although for Volf it is part of a ‘larger strategy of overcoming evil with good and bringing about reconciliation’ (2005:217). Volf speaks about restoration of a lost human identity, an individual’s own ‘dignity’; in his words ‘When we are forgivers we are restored to our full human splendour’ (2005:209). For Volf the good is primary and dignity is secondary. In *sulha*, it is also related to the primacy of the good, however, restoration of dignity is a significant tool to achieve forgiveness.²²

In *sulha*, forgiveness covers past, present, and future generations and has a declaratory nature. The *sulha* ceremony transforms forgiveness from a private affair to a public formal one involving the community and multiple witnesses. The formal text in the *sulha* ceremony says: ‘This peace is valid for all those who are present here, and all those who are absent, for every embryo in the womb of its mother or for every sperm from the back of the father’ (Jabbour 1993:53). This means the community (in particular the victim’s family) has a ritualistic and practical obligation to forgive, though, of course, not the duty to *forget*, and that the act of reconciliation is binding for all of the victim’s ‘circles of responsibility’ (Pely 2011b). Volf’s forgiveness covers past, present, and future. For Volf, God works in the lives of forgivers through a life lived in response to God and a ‘community that makes the practice of forgiveness meaningful’ (2005:214). Compared to *sulha*, Volf’s forgiveness is binding by virtue of

²¹ See Chapter One, Section 1.3.

²² See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1.

an internal personal obligation to imitate God and not an external obligation binding by the community the way we see in *sulha rituals*.

In *sulha*, the victims absorb the wrongdoing to maintain the social order and communal peace and be freed from *shame*.²³ However, for Volf, the victim should absorb the wrongdoing in order to transform the wrongdoer and to release him from the burden of *guilt*; the same way God has freed us from sin's guilt. The goal is community of love.

The practical meaning of forgiveness in *sulha* is, first and foremost, pacification and the decision not to seek revenge, and also restoration of relationships on different levels. The psychological component of forgiveness means the disputants will not view the 'others' as enemies, but will treat them as equal members in the community and rise above the dispute and its memory of conflict. If a member of the victim's family does not forgive the offender and his clan, any revenge from his side will bring dishonour on his family and community and regional dignitaries who signed the forgiveness agreement. Even though Volf's forgiveness is aimed at stopping the circle of revenge and restoring relationships and is connected with the affirmation of common humanity, it is not about the affirmation of common belonging to a specific group. Again, Volf's forgiveness has the primacy of the good over dignity.

In sum, forgiveness in *sulha* is mandatory; its aim is to transform revenge to forgiveness through the tool of public restoration of honour. This forgiveness is human; not divine. It is decisional and external process. It demands the participation of the whole community with the rituals; without this, restoration of honour will fail. It has a declaratory nature and transforms forgiveness from a private to a public affair covering past, present, and future generations. The victim's family has both a ritualistic and

²³ Forgiveness is a fundamental value in Arab culture. It is related to honour and shame, and forgiveness is the only replacement of revenge that can redeem the disputant's honour.

practical obligation to forgive. This act of reconciliation is binding. Practically forgiveness in *sulha* is a pacification, which also includes restoration of relationships.

Volf's definition of forgiveness, like *sulha*'s, is decisional and a process needing to be nurtured. While in *sulha* forgiveness is human, and conditional on achieving reconciliation, Volf's forgiveness is divine and human, it is unconditional and yet it aims at the reception of itself in repentance and restitution and is not complete until that happens;²⁴ its aim is not pacification but restoration of the offended and the offender to the communion of love. It is a social event and it involves God, the offended and the offender who can receive forgiveness by repentance, apology, and restitution. The community has a role in encouraging forgiveness, but not a role in 'imposing' forgiveness or becoming guardians of its practical application as in *sulha*. This has implications for justice as well.

7.2 Theology of Forgiveness in the Case-Studies

In this section I introduce the concepts of *internal*, *external*, and *collective-public forgiveness*. *Internal forgiveness* is an internal process of overcoming negative emotions and attitudes towards the offender, such as avoidance, anger and vengeance. *External forgiveness* is an external process aimed at restoring social order and is realized in the broader community. *Collective-public forgiveness* is public and involves members of the community in apology and forgiveness.²⁵

I argue that Palestinian Baptists in the three cases are experiencing a shift in a growing understanding of forgiveness as a divine gift. The shift is from internal and/or external forgiveness (with private apology), as in *sulha* and alternative-legalistic

²⁴ According to Volf, 'We forgive because Christ has forgiven us and because Christ forgives through us' (206).

²⁵ Literature from different disciplines emphasizes the intrapersonal nature of forgiveness, involving only one party to the offence, or the interpersonal nature of forgiveness, involving both parties to the offence. Others consider it in the collective, political, spiritual and cultural context (Biggar 2001; Jones 1995; Murphy 1988; Shriver 1995; Volf 1996; Worthington Jr 1998).

approaches (case-A and case-B), to internal divine collective-public forgiveness (with public apology) in the Western-Baptist approach (case-C). This understanding of forgiveness as a divine gift can reasonably lead to reconciliation in terms of reintegration of churches which had split.

I identify four different perceptions of forgiveness in the four approaches.

7.2.1 Hierarchical approach

Results show that for the pastors, granting forgiveness is *conditioned by public repentance directed to restore their dignity*.²⁶ Seemingly, this is affected by how pastors perceive their identity as clergy (sacramental). Pastors were influenced by traditional churches where the priest was the one who declared forgiveness (*ghofran*) based on divine authority given to him by God (and any wrong committed against them was perceived as wrong committed against the church). Also pastors' conditional forgiveness was influenced by the broader cultural context.

When evaluating the Palestinian pastors' attitudes in relation to their view of their identity as clergy (remembering they were raised in traditional churches), it would be helpful to understand the meaning of *ghofran* in its Christian Middle Eastern context. In the ancient Middle East, *ghofran* was a purification priestly reality and the idea of *ghofran* is still practised by priests in traditional churches in the Middle East, where the priests declare *ghofran* based on divine authority given to them by God.²⁷ This might

²⁶ Dignity is important to every human being and any threat provokes a strong reaction. When a relationship has been broken, affirmation of dignity in others is essential for releasing the pain – especially when conflict was caused by dignity violations (Hicks 2011). I discussed the importance of pastors' dignity restoration in Chapter Five.

²⁷In the OT *ghofran* includes the removal of sin and the restoration to the community or peace with God and peace with human beings. Forgiveness does not necessarily exclude punishment (see Numbers 14: 19-25). There are places in Scripture where God refuses to offer forgiveness (2 Kings 24: 4; Deuteronomy 29: 19-20; Jeremiah 5: 7; Lamentations 3: 42).

explain why the pastors viewed their role as being the one to extend God's forgiveness.²⁸

Regarding sin against the pastor, pastors tended to see church conflicts as spiritual problems. They often struggled to see the two different points of view and emphasized that the problem was members were not submissive to their spiritual fathers. They perceived questioning their authority by the younger generation as disrespect for clergy and a 'sin'. Additionally, splitting their churches brought shame on them. This burden of shame and humiliation at being the object of offences, their loss of status and reputation and the failures in one's own and other's eyes have caused them deep pain.

It is likely, each pastor viewed his church as his domain and any 'sin' against the pastor was perceived as against his church. As a result, when members wrong the pastor this might lead to a church split as seen in the three cases; however, a split will not occur when two members wrong one another at church. Bassam,²⁹ an ABC leader, claimed pastors believe they must not compromise their ministry (church) for the sake of their members. David,³⁰ a third-party, argued pastors perceive themselves as ruling a small 'kingdom', and thus are the ones implementing justice and order. According to David the absence of clear church policies and the weak theology of justice caused them to act in monarchical ways. Thus they struggled to offer forgiveness, preferring punishment.³¹ This raises a question about church discipline, which is generally understood in a negative rather than a positive way.³²

Pastors believed apology and repentance should be done publicly to restore their and their churches' dignity, which they felt were violated by the 'rebellious-groups'. Pastors emphasized the importance of repenting (for not submitting to clergy) if anyone

²⁸ In Palestinian traditional churches clergy can also forgive sins of dead members during their funeral.

²⁹ Focus group, June 2016.

³⁰ Open interview, David, 2017.

³¹ David, Jan 2017.

³² This will be discussed in Chapter Eight 'Theology of Justice'.

wanted to re-join the church.³³ Pastor-C said that if Bishara (regarding the evangelistic ministry conflict) repented the conflict would be resolved. Pastor-B stated, ‘I tolerate them ... but I cannot have them back unless they repent.’³⁴ Pastor-A’s wife said forgiveness is conditioned by repentance. Some interviewees told me Pastor-A cannot forgive church-A2 because of its location next door to his church, and thus he did not welcome any reconciliation. The interviews with the pastors left me with an impression that they felt the ‘rebellious-groups’ did not deserve to be forgiven unless they repented. For example, they used the word ‘tolerate’ and not ‘forgive’. For pastors repentance included leaving the church location (as in case-A), and apology/repentance done publicly and not privately (case-A, B, C).

Concerning *apology*, I find two different levels of apology in the cases: *private* and *public*. Pastors rejected private or public apology not directed to the restoration of their dignity. For example in case-C, in a private meeting mediated by the ABC-Committee, Bishara and Pastor-C apologized to one another (each told me this was ‘false reconciliation’). Afterwards Bishara was asked by the ABC-Committee to apologize in front of the church. Since Pastor-C was not present during this church meeting he did not accept Bishara’s apology and the church split. It is noteworthy the ABC-Committee did not ask Pastor-C to apologize even though he could also be seen to have contributed to the conflict. This shows that the community, whose members were also converted from traditional churches, holds a deep respect for clergy, and thus the pastor’s own actions were perceived differently (overlooked or not highlighted) than those of church members.

The need for *public* apology or repentance was an essential tool for dignity restoration for both the pastor and his church. This was evident when Pastor-A and

³³ David, Pastor-B, and Pastor-C.

³⁴ Pastor-B, Aug 2015.

Pastor-B did not accept any attempt from the ‘rebellious-groups’ to connect with them or to apologize privately. Elias, a leader at church-B2, initiated a conversation with Pastor-B requesting to visit him in order to apologize. He noted, ‘Pastor-B told me I tolerate you but there is no need to meet’³⁵ (private apology). He added, ‘Seven years after the split we initiated a joint service during Christmas but Pastor-B refused to join.’³⁶ This might indicate that for the pastor accepting this invitation would imply an act of accepting apology. Apparently, the reason for not forgiving is because the pastors, still hurting and feeling dishonoured, conditioned forgiveness on *public apology and repentance*. Pastors perceived their decision for repentance to be a precondition to forgiveness as an ethical decision since they evaluated the actions of the ‘rebellious-groups’ as wrong and thus requiring public repentance or punishment.

Seemingly, the pastors’ perception of forgiveness as being conditional was also shaped by the broader cultural context in which they live. In Arab culture, there is a saying that ‘the sorrow should not be forgotten’ and Palestinian culture has additionally been shaped by many assumptions from the surrounding Muslim culture, such as the belief in Islam that forgiveness is conditioned by repentance.³⁷ Similarly, among the Jewish communities in Israel there is a Hebrew saying ‘never forgive, never forget’. According to Volf (2005), sometimes the reason we do not forgive is that we live in an unforgiving environment. As social beings shaped by our environment, our choices and thoughts echo the choices of a group to which we belong and the culture in which we live.³⁸

³⁵ Elias, Aug 2015.

³⁶ Elias, Aug 2015.

³⁷ The Quran recommends, whenever possible, it is better to forgive another Muslim. However, forgiveness is not recommended in the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims (Quran, Surah Ash-Shuraa 42:36-39).

³⁸ According to Volf (2015) other traditions, Jewish and Islamic, generally make repentance and apology a condition of forgiveness (see Auerbach 2005). In recent years, some prominent Christian philosophers have argued that in Christian thought as well repentance is a condition of forgiveness (Volf 2015).

There are three main differences between the hierarchical approach and that of Volf concerning forgiveness. First, in the hierarchical approach forgiveness is conditioned by public repentance; in contrast Volf's theme of forgiveness is an unconditional gift that seeks to elicit repentance. Second, pastors are confused between their own act of forgiveness and the reception of forgiveness by the rebellious-groups. According to Volf, while pastors ought to forgive even without reparation (restoration of dignity) the 'rebellious-groups' can receive forgiveness only through apology and reparation. Volf highlights the difference between doing justice and forgiving: to be just is to condemn both the fault and the doer, to forgive is to condemn only the fault and release the doer. Third, pastors did not see their need for repentance even as 'victims'. They sincerely believed they had committed no wrong and blamed the 'rebellious-group'. This is in contrast to Volf's theory, as he argues even as a 'victim' one needs to repent, based on Jesus' demand for a pure heart, for letting one's own character and practices be shaped by wrongdoing.

7.2.2 *Sulha* approach

I find that in *sulha* forgiveness is decisional, *external and a public process*. Its goal is to restore social order and to be apparent to the broader community as a form of 'diplomatic reconciliation'.³⁹

Different interpretations of forgiveness were identified here. Interviewees used the terms *musamaha* and *ghofran* interchangeably,⁴⁰ as if they were synonyms. A few interviewees used the word 'tolerance' (*musamaha*) in the sense of 'to forgo our claim against the wrongdoer';⁴¹ some said it means 'to condemn no more.' Most interviewees

³⁹ See Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1.2 where I first introduce this term.

⁴⁰ *Musamaha* means tolerance, which refers to the capacity to endure the existence of someone you may not agree with, and *ghofran* means forgiveness.

⁴¹ Majd, Mar 2014.

stated forgiveness means *forgetting* the wrongdoing.⁴² They highlighted the following Scripture to explain their beliefs: ‘But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead’ (Philippians 3:13, ESV). They asserted we have to forgive as we were forgiven. Others related forgiveness to loving God,⁴³ since love is patient and tolerates everything (I Corinthians 13:4-7), or they argued loving others is a motivation to forgive.⁴⁴ Seemingly in case-A and case-B, this kind of love pushed those involved to neutrality, and not to embrace as in case-C.⁴⁵

Many interviewees stressed how hard it is to forgive and forget because of intimate relationships between disputants. Hiyam, a church-A2 member, explained, ‘Forgiveness means to forget, but we can’t forget... It is like a tape in our mind taking us to the past. The hardest thing is to forgive’. Both Hiyam and Tamer, a deacon, referred to the Arab saying, ‘The sorrow should not be forgotten’, Tamer added, ‘We heard this saying from our pastor during his sermons! This means the conflict will remain an obstacle between us.’⁴⁶

Forgiveness in *sulha* does not answer how to deal with *forgetting* the wrongdoing.⁴⁷ This will remain an issue that might leave forgiveness as external and not address all the issues.⁴⁸

A few interviewees told me that they reconcile but they do not forgive (pacification). I do not agree. There is no ‘peace’ without some kind of forgiveness – whether seeds of forgiveness, conditional forgiveness, external forgiveness, internal

⁴² Bishara, Tamer, Hiyam, Dan, Nabil, Amal, Ramiz, Jack, Pastor-B, and Jack.

⁴³ Emily, Michel, Boulus.

⁴⁴ Boulus. Aug 2015.

⁴⁵ ‘In a Christian account of things, we forgive because we love – specifically, because we love our debtors, our offenders, and even our enemies. The same love that motivates forgiveness pushes forgiveness not just from exclusion to neutrality, but from neutrality to embrace. Forgiveness between human beings is one crucial step in a large process whose final goal is the embrace of former enemies in a community of love... forgiveness is embedded in a way of life that is committed to overcoming evil by doing good’ (Volf 2005:189).

⁴⁶ Tamer, Mar 2014.

⁴⁷ Forgetting was discussed in depth in Chapter Six.

⁴⁸ The more formal the process is the more there is a danger of forgiveness becoming external.

forgiveness or divine forgiveness. It is likely that different kinds of forgiveness lead to different forms of peace, as I will discuss in Chapter Nine. In this chapter I argue external forgiveness leads to ‘diplomatic reconciliation’.

In the Arab social and cultural context, ‘reconciliation’ (*sulha*) might be a condition for achieving forgiveness. However, reconciliation rituals (*sulha*) do not always incorporate conditions for promoting forgiveness.⁴⁹ We can identify patterns of on-going relationships despite imperfect forgiveness. For example, joint church services between church-A and church-A2 (post-split) were partly parallel to the *sulha* ceremony. Members of both churches shook hands (first step in a *sulha* ceremony)⁵⁰ and participated in a service although they chose to skip declaring forgiveness/apologizing (the second step in a *sulha* ceremony).⁵¹ Joint church services can be interpreted as a form of ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ for several reasons: they are a declaration of continuous relationships, softening of deep resentments, cessation of hostilities and a form of ‘repentance’.⁵²

First, engagement in worship services is indirectly a declaration that those who worship together are brothers and sisters in Christ and not enemies; it is an indication that there is at least *moderation and softening of deep resentments*.⁵³

⁴⁹ Nasser and Abu-Nimer, 2016:197.

⁵⁰ These symbols were seen in the case-studies. Although the conflict was not resolved, many interviewees in the three cases told me that when they met with the other party after the split they shook hands although they wouldn’t talk much.

⁵¹ As noted in Chapter Five, in the three cases dignitaries were not authoritative enough to become the communal guardians of a settlement.

⁵² Bryan, who also initiated a joint service between church-A and A2, said, ‘certain bitterness remained on both sides, which may still be lying under the surface today, even though they are talking to one another much more easily and readily’ (Mar 2014).

⁵³ Resentment is a normal emotional response (bitterness or anger) to an offence. It is seen as an indication of self-respect and respect for others and the moral order (Biggar 2001, Murphy and Hampton 1988, Murphy 2005, Volf 2005). It is also considered an obstacle to forgiveness (Govier 2002:144). If one is still struggling with resentment or revenge one may have some work to do in forgiving, which does not imply that some forgiving has not taken place (if we consider forgiveness as a process). Yet there are those who would argue for maintaining resentment for the sake of one’s self-respect particularly in the absence of repentance (Biggar 2001, Lamb and Murphy 2002, Murphy and Hampton 1988). If forgiveness was given in the absence of sustained repentance, then the forgiver is actually suffering from moral defect (Goins 2008). Others argue that overcoming resentment would have a positive effect on one’s wellbeing and rightful dealing with oneself. It also can promote relationships (Govier 2002,

Second, Joint services reflects realism about existing realities; for example, church-A2 is not going to win church-A's building. Reintegrating church-A and A2, though ideal is unlikely, at least in the foreseeable future. The practical meaning was achieved in all three cases; there is a cessation of hostilities and no seeking of revenge. No one is to be completely determined by the wrongdoings of the past.

Third, church-B2 tried to initiate a joint church service with church-B; according to some church-B2 members there was a sense of guilt 'perhaps we were wrong when we decided to split the church and leave.' The thought to initiate a joint service can be interpreted as a kind of 'repentance', a turning away from former methods in pursuing their goals and positions.

Finally, every Sunday church-A2 sees the church they renovated and remember they were 'fired' by Pastor-A and yet still did not seek revenge. This lack of action demonstrates a kind of forgiveness or transcendence.⁵⁴ It is likely their acceptance of participation in joint church services demonstrated a public, external forgiveness that would open possibilities for internal forgiveness.⁵⁵

Other examples of external forgiveness and 'diplomatic reconciliation', outside of these joint services, were mutual help between both parties. The closeness and interconnectedness between Palestinian Baptists oriented them to develop a kind of forgiveness (external) that is reasonable and enables them to connect despite unresolved conflicts. Pastor-A, for example, requested assistance from members of church-A2; at the same time he allowed church-A2 to use the church building for different occasions.

Schimmel 2002) and in the absence of repentance, forgiveness could be understood and practised as a way to increase self-respect. Theologically, unforgiving means to disrespect oneself and the Creator's spirit within. Scriptures such as 'Do not let the sun go down on your anger' (Ephesians 4:26, ESV) could be interpreted as against maintaining resentment. As Volf puts it, when we are forgivers 'We are restored to our full human splendour' (2005:209).

⁵⁴ Müller-Fahrenheit (1998) speaks of an element in forgiveness that brings freedom from shame, guilt and anger, so that people may forgive and be reconciled. This he calls a transcending element, 'a spark of courage to open up, that moment of daring and trusting which causes the heart to jump over the fence. It is this surprising energy which lays down the dividing walls between us' (236).

⁵⁵ I will explain that in the Western-Baptist approach.

On several occasions relationships were restored to a limited degree for the sake of mutual interests but not for the sake of the relationship itself. Nonetheless, people still remember these acts and say there was ‘forgiveness’. Although seemingly this forgiveness is imperfect and incomplete, it still is a kind of forgiveness – a forgiveness that is external and public, demonstrated in action although not by declaration.

This kind of forgiveness might make sense in a communal society.⁵⁶ This explains why *sulha* advocates focus on the outcomes in evaluating the rightness and wrongness of actions, for them split (divorce) is wrong so both parties should come together and demonstrate some kind of external forgiveness.

Cultural and religious beliefs guide the forgiveness process, and it may be difficult to determine whether the order of this process begins intrapersonally or interpersonally.⁵⁷ As demonstrated in case-C, the intrapersonal process of shifting in attitude and emotions leads to the interpersonal process of relational restoration.⁵⁸ However, in the *sulha* approach people first ‘forgive’ publicly in a ritual performance (external) and later have to struggle through forgetting and dealing with internal forgiveness. The decisional and external forgiveness in this relational approach opens a space and opportunity for internal forgiveness and renewing of relationships. It is important to see forgiveness as a process further or closer towards completion. The internal work of forgiveness meets the felt needs of those involved in the process. The external work of forgiveness is realized in joint services/reintegration; both are

⁵⁶ *Sulha* highlights commonality between different groups so as to maintain the social order, especially as Palestinian Baptists are a minority between Muslims and Jews. Research on forgiveness in Arab communities shows that the majority of Muslim religious scholars and theologians have emphasized justice as a central and primary value in Islam, while the majority of Christian theologians have emphasized forgiveness in the New Testament and Christ’s life as a defining value (Abu-Nimer 2003).

⁵⁷ Intrapersonal forgiveness means unilateral forgiveness in the literature, which is not complete. The term interpersonal forgiveness means forgiveness involving the offender and offended.

⁵⁸ Generally, forgiveness and acceptance come at the end of a long emotional process.

important in the transformation process, yet joint services/reintegration are not simply external programmes, they are internal processes.⁵⁹

7.2.3 Alternative-legalistic approach

I find that forgiveness here is *external* and involves *private apology*. Its main goal is to ‘move on’, seek mutual gain and promote *normalization* between the two churches that split; it is a form of ‘diplomatic reconciliation’, but not necessarily reintegration.

While forgiveness in *sulha* is mandatory it is not a critical element in the alternative-legal approach. The literature on this approach includes references to ‘apology’ as part of a dispute resolution process, but is largely silent on forgiveness.⁶⁰

The ‘rebellious-groups’ using this approach sought to benefit the church community by trying to become part of the church leadership in order to shape the church future. They evaluated the church conflict and conflict management in terms of secular rational measures and mutual gain and interests using a legalistic framework. Seemingly, they failed to predict the consequences and caused a church split. After the split, because of the shame they experienced in the broader community, along with the boycott by some pastors who refused to preach in their churches, perhaps due to experiencing similar problems in their new churches, they realized they might have wronged their pastors. All this influenced their decision to apologize and their desire to seek normalization. However, they preferred to apologize *privately*.⁶¹ This attitude was expected since the alternative-legalistic approach is individually oriented. Similar to Volf, those using this approach also believe the only path to freedom from wrongdoing is through confession, apology, repentance and forgiveness. ‘Rebellious-groups’ realized refusal to apologize would highlight the shame on their image in front of their

⁵⁹ I will elaborate in Section 7.2.4.

⁶⁰ However, the transformative reconciliation model includes forgiveness as a component of the process.

⁶¹ See Section 7.2.2.

broader community; as Volf puts it, ‘genuine apology makes the stain begin to fade’ (2015).

Generally, forgiveness in this approach is benefit oriented (there are some exceptions of members who demonstrated internal forgiveness). The potential advantages of pleasure and healing gained by offering forgiveness are realized to be the reason for forgiveness. These advantages are greater than the emotional costs of withholding forgiveness. Volf agrees that when we forgive we find inner peace and freedom. However he asserts we should forgive primarily for the other’s sake, not our own, as emotional healing is not the main purpose of forgiveness but it is for the transformation of the wrongdoers so that reconciliation can take place – a community of love is the goal.

Forgiveness in the alternative-legalistic approach is in tension with justice. This approach focuses on rights and is oriented in a rational, calculative manner. External forgiveness appears to be one way ‘rebellious-groups’ chose to reduce the tension between forgiveness and justice.⁶² Perhaps for them external forgiveness should be sufficient in order to restore relationships based on mutual interests, especially relationships they cannot escape in such a small, interconnected community.

Volf’s theme of forgiveness could enrich this approach in several aspects. First, Volf argues that forgiveness is a divine gift but also a form of suffering. Second, one becomes aware that God is both Love and Justice only in the presence of God, and forgiveness provides a framework in which justice can be pursued.⁶³ Third, Volf asserts forgiveness is not to replace justice. Because the framework of strict restorative justice

⁶² This tension is discussed in Chapter Eight.

⁶³ Volf 2005:123.

can never be satisfied, no reconciliation is possible without the framework of forgiveness.⁶⁴

In sum, forgiveness in *sulha* and alternative-legalistic approaches can maximum achieve ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ (pacification). The closeness and interconnectedness between the Palestinian Baptists oriented them to develop *external* forgiveness that involved *public* actions (such as shaking hands, joint church services). In this way they could ‘restore relationships’, although this might still involve a feeling of resentment/blame and not forgetting the wrongdoing.

7.2.4 Western-Baptist approach

In this approach the findings show two main stages and perceptions of forgiveness. First, forgiveness is an *internal*, gradual process and relates to personal *healing*. Second, forgiveness is a *divine* work which gradually heals broken relationships. Given the fact that the Palestinian Baptist churches are influenced by the Charismatic movement,⁶⁵ it is likely the above perceptions are also influenced by charismatic teachings (which focus on emotional and relational healing) such as those taught by George, a Western-minded pastor (who pastored church-A2 post-split), the Canadian pastor (who mentored church-C2 during and post-split), and the ABC-Committee (who pastored church-C2 post-split and included George, David and two charismatic pastor). These teachings are not necessarily exclusively charismatic, but the focus on healing highlights the charismatic influence.

I begin with describing the two stages and perceptions and then compare them with Volf’s theme of forgiveness.

7.2.4.1 Forgiveness is an internal process

Some interviewees viewed forgiveness as an *internal process* and tended to relate it to healing gradually. Others said forgiveness and healing happened in parallel. Rima,

⁶⁴ Volf 2005:122-123.

⁶⁵ See Chapter Three.

a member at church-A2, spoke about the internal process of forgiveness she went through, ‘I was struggling in forgiveness and prayed a lot, I wanted to forgive, to be released and not keep holding against Pastor-A each time I greeted him. Today I can meet Pastor-A and greet him gladly and have no resentment against him.’⁶⁶

Rana, a member at church-B2, said forgiveness includes gradual healing, explaining that ‘In forgiveness we might not forget the wrongdoing but we need to get to the point that when I remember, this incident will not cause me sadness or anger any more... this happened gradually.’⁶⁷ She added this forgiveness is Jesus-like and includes healing. Others said forgiveness comes after healing, Albert, a leader at Church-C2, explained, ‘Forgiveness happened as a result of healing and healing happened when we stopped getting upset when we remember the wrongdoing.’⁶⁸ Boulus, the interim pastor of church-C2, said forgiveness is a continuous action, ‘Forgiveness is an attitude I have to adopt every day, it is to act as Jesus acted on the cross’ and referred to Jesus’ cry on the cross: ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34, ESV).⁶⁹

In this perception, forgiveness is an internal, gradual, and continuous process linked to personal healing. This view of forgiveness was identified in case-A (by a few members from church-A and some members from church-A2) and in case-B (some members from church-B2).

7.2.4.2 Forgiveness is a divine work

After the reintegration between churches C2 and C3, interviewees became more aware of forgiveness as a *divine* action and tended to relate it to relationship restoration. Shirin, a church-C2 leader, explained there are levels in forgiveness and only divine forgiveness given by God is able to completely restore a broken relationship. David, an

⁶⁶ Rima, Mar 2014.

⁶⁷ Rana, Aug 2015.

⁶⁸ Albert, Aug 2015.

⁶⁹ Boulus, Aug 2015.

ABC-Committee member, differentiated between forgiveness and tolerance, saying, 'Tolerance is done by the offended, while forgiveness needs divine help to happen.'⁷⁰

As mentioned, during and after the split, church-C2 was pastored by the ABC-Committee, most of whose members are influenced by charismatic teaching and focused on forgiveness and healing. Additionally, church-C2's leaders took direct consultation from the Canadian pastor (a charismatic Arab evangelical), who also focused on healing. He insisted church-C2 must forgive Pastor-C, respect him, act in love, and pray for him. He told them God is in control and brings justice.

Another important charismatic element that shaped the perception of forgiveness, besides the focus on healing, was *experiencing* a 'divine presence' in a tangible way during the two conferences: the reconciliation-retreat and the Canadian Pastor's conferences.⁷¹ Interviewees perceived these conferences as 'divine presence' which brought healing and forgiveness, although partial. Pastor-C and his wife told me that a few months before the reconciliation-retreat conference they were praying and fasting for reconciliation. She added, 'People from both churches were praying for reconciliation, and God answered the prayer; this indeed was a divine work, humans cannot do that.'⁷²

Pastor-C, who went through the repentance process himself, decided to apologize and reconcile. He told me that during the burial of the former pastor of church-C he was in shock for a few minutes and suddenly understood when this pastor died that 'even his grave was not his own; he begged it from another person.' Pastor-C explained, 'This was a lesson for me and I decided to reconcile with church-C2.'⁷³ Pastor-C's wife added, a few months earlier one of their guests had a dream and wrote it in their guest book. He dreamed that two groups were fighting, and in both groups there were hidden

⁷⁰ David, Aug 2015.

⁷¹ The Canadian Arab pastor was the main speaker in this conference.

⁷² Susan, Jul 2015.

⁷³ Pastor-C, Jul 2015.

people praying; afterward he saw the two groups peacefully having dinner together. This ‘prophetic dream’ as she called it, encouraged her to gather women from both groups to pray for reconciliation.⁷⁴

It is likely that in the three cases there were some individuals who forgave, repented, and apologized, but not publicly and collectively as a church. Nonetheless, collective-public, internal and divine forgiveness was achieved in case-C when Pastor-C took his church (church-C3) to visit church-C2 during its retreat, and there apologized from the pulpit. This was followed by members of both churches apologizing and forgiving one another, praying with tears throughout the evening. In describing the reconciliation-retreat, Pastor-C spoke about a *breakthrough*:

It is hard to explain what happened in the reconciliation-retreat conference... in that meeting we all cried; there was a breakthrough, we experienced a real healing and this has nothing to do with feeling alone – it was real! I apologized to everybody from the pulpit. I told them we had all wronged each other, we had all gossiped, and now we needed to reconcile and mend the relationships.⁷⁵

This approach is close to Volf’s concept of forgiveness as a divine gift. In case-C, although the conflict and church split involved wrongdoing from both sides and their forgiveness was incomplete, both parties transcended ‘knocked at the door’⁷⁶ by not rejecting a reconciliation attempt and were open to the work of the Spirit and waited. Two years post-split the reintegration happened. We can conclude that they trusted ‘The Spirit of the resurrected Christ will make the seed of their forgiveness bear fruit.’⁷⁷ They also realized the need to nourish the ‘seeds of forgiveness’ with the food of God’s goodness.⁷⁸ This is what church-C2 did post-reintegration in order to maintain the reconciliation. Nonetheless, this was not the attitude of all members of church-C2; some members were opposed but did not fight the process.

⁷⁴ Susan, Jul 2015.

⁷⁵ Pastor-C, Jul 2015.

⁷⁶ Volf 2005:205

⁷⁷ Volf 2005:205.

⁷⁸ Volf 2005:209.

There are two differences between this Western-Baptist approach and Volf's. First, most advocates of this approach linked forgiveness with healing. For them forgiveness is a result of healing (both forgiveness and healing took place at the conference). According to Volf, forgiveness is decisional, processual and we forgive mainly because we love and seek to transform the wrongdoer and restore community. Second, interviewees were aware they should forgive, because God forgives. However, it is not obvious whether they fully understood why they have the power and the right to forgive. Concerning the power to forgive Volf asserts that when we forgive, we make God's sending of the 'forgiveness package' our own. In relation to the right to forgive, Volf explains, 'It is a derivative authority, dependent completely on God's.'⁷⁹

Forgiveness in this approach potentially achieved more than pacification (as in the *sulha* and alternative-legalistic approaches). It made possible a reintegration after a split as in case-C. However, personal agency seemed to contribute to this reconciliation, as I will discuss in Section 9.4. Reconciliation needed the contribution of both church members and the pastor, which might explain why reconciliation did not take place in cases A and B even though some church members perceived forgiveness as internal and divine.

In sum, between case-A (1995) and case-C (2016), we saw a shifting of beliefs from external and/or internal forgiveness with private apology towards internal divine collective-public forgiveness. As we saw, forgiveness in the hierarchical approach is conditioned by public repentance. Forgiveness in *sulha* is an external public action. In the alternative-legalistic approach, forgiveness is also external but involves private apology. However, in the Western-Baptist approach Palestinian Baptists in case-C viewed the first stage of forgiveness as internal and public, leading to reintegration, and

⁷⁹ Volf 2005:199.
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the second stage as divine and collective-public, leading to the start of reconciliation.

This is illustrated in the following diagram:

Figure B: forgiveness in the case-studies



In case-C two stages of forgiveness, internal and divine:



7.3 Challenges and Recommendations

How might Palestinian Baptists in Israel, whose context is very complex, living as a threefold minority with an identity crisis in a traumatized society, fulfil the requirements of Volf’s forgiveness? In addition, how can they forgive unconditionally when they live in an unforgiving environment in terms of culture and context? How can the concepts of shame and dignity, which are critical to Palestinian culture, be integrated in forgiveness? How can forgiveness be sustained when conflicts remain unresolved, and when living together in a closely intertwined community within the contradictory frameworks of Congregationalist churches in a patriarchal-hierarchical tradition?

Volf’s theory offers valuable elements that can enrich a Palestinian Baptist theology of forgiveness. First, in order to forgive, we need a community in which forgiveness is valued and nurtured. This can happen through preaching/teaching that

focuses on the horizontal dimension of forgiveness and reconciliation. Theology of forgiveness in Palestinian Baptist churches tends to focus on the vertical dimension and one's relationship with God and less on relationship with one another.⁸⁰ More importantly, reconciliation rituals (like *sulha*) should incorporate conditions for promoting a theology of forgiveness. Second, in order to forgive we need to understand forgiveness as a divine gift so that we have the power and the right to forgive. Third, forgiveness is decisional, processual and presumes and enacts a transformation and is nurtured in the context of communities of forgiveness. Fourth, we can *receive* forgiveness only through apology and reparation. Fifth, even as 'victim' one needs to repent for letting one's own character and practices be shaped by wrongdoing. Finally, forgiveness is a form of suffering but it does not replace justice; forgiveness provides a framework in which justice can be pursued.⁸¹

While Volf's theory is persuasive, several aspects that are important to Palestinian culture are missing in his theory or require cultural translation. The key to developing a successful framework of forgiveness in the Palestinian Baptist context is to build it from within the cultural values and social structure of the community. I have identified five important aspects: conditional forgiveness, formality, dignity, venting and community. I will discuss each aspect in turn.

First, *conditional forgiveness*. Many interviewees said they forgave the other party, and some were even hesitant to share negative things about them, but they still saw the wrongdoer as guilty. After we forgive, are guilt, shame or blame removed - or just anger? If to forgive is merely to forgo revenge and resentment, then that does not necessarily seem to remove shame or guilt. This question is important, especially in situations of unresolved conflicts. If we decide to forgive without repentance from the other side, then how can we nourish the seeds of forgiveness with God's goodness, as

⁸⁰ See Chapter Three.

⁸¹ I discuss justice in Chapter Eight.

Volf suggests?⁸² For Volf, we are obliged to forgive even without repentance; such forgiveness, though deeply meaningful, is not complete.

The issue of repentance has been addressed in church discipline as well as in religious courts in Palestinian traditional churches. Both church discipline and religious courts are absent in Palestinian Baptist churches. This issue has a large impact on pastors' forgiveness, which they understand as conditional. Additionally, the Palestinian traditional model (*sulha*) and the approaches identified in the cases view forgiveness as conditional. This issue might provide a challenge for them to be able to practise unconditional forgiveness.

One important challenge with conditional forgiveness is to decide when there is enough of a demonstration of repentance for forgiveness to finally be given and when we think that repentance is truly genuine. Conditional forgiveness is consistent with our natural inclinations and cultural climate. We believe that we have the right, indeed the obligation, to withhold forgiveness from those who wronged us. In a sense withholding forgiveness seems to border on vengeance (Nelson 2012, Adams 1994).⁸³

I suggest to follow Nelson's (2012) recommendation not to focus on whether forgiveness is conditional (consistent with human natural instinct) or unconditional⁸⁴ (consistent with Jesus' countercultural message). Since both have much in common,⁸⁵ while differing in the means by which reconciliation is realized, *the focus should be on reconciliation*. Forgiveness can be unilateral, but reconciliation is bilateral; requiring the best efforts of both parties. If the offender is a Christian who refuses to be

⁸² Volf 2005:209.

⁸³ According to Adams (1994), 'refusal to forgive is a decision for vengeance. It is taking vengeance into your own hands... Because the Lord has said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," to take vengeance of any kind—even the withholding of forgiveness—is an attempt to arrogate God's work to oneself' (25).

⁸⁴ While there are no conditions to this forgiveness there still may well be consequences, both natural and judicial.

⁸⁵ See Section 7.1.3.

reconciled, then the offended can use a formal process, such as church discipline, which aims at restoration rather than punishment.

Second, *formality*. While forgiveness may begin as an intrapersonal initiative, it may also be worked out intrapersonally and interpersonally in the collective as it is expressed by the community in rituals, religious practices and other public activities as seen in the *sulha* ceremony. Churches should rely on internal and external resources; both conditions (internal and external) can lead both parties to realize forgiveness even though imperfect. I suggest framing reconciliation and declaration of forgiveness by ritualized formal public action, culminating with the Lord's Supper followed by a common meal. Lord's Supper and a common meal were not separated clearly in the early church.⁸⁶ The Aramaic word for forgiveness has the root 'table'.⁸⁷ Augsburg argues that Christ transformed the sharing of a meal (table) into a metaphor for realized forgiveness (1996). Interestingly, this is also an actual sign of forgiveness and reconciliation in the Palestinian culture (*sulha* ceremony). This ritual would transform forgiveness from a private affair to a public, formal and binding one; one involving the church community and multiple witnesses. Another important ritual might be the creating and authorizing of a third-party as in *jaha*,⁸⁸ who would have the role of bringing ceasefire, transforming revenge/resentment to forgiveness/compassion.

Third, *venting*.⁸⁹ Volf's theory of forgiveness does not offer practical suggestions of how resentment can shift to compassion towards the offender. I suggest adding venting to the process. It allows condemning the wrongdoings as well as the expression of negative feelings such as hatred, resentment and pain in order to transform them into tolerance and compassion. These are essential elements in achieving forgiveness. It is

⁸⁶ The Lord's meal is an appropriate ritual for the community to confirm the completion of the process of forgiveness, because it celebrates God's reconciliation with us as the foundation of human reconciliation.

⁸⁷ Jesus invited unrepentant sinners to 'table fellowship' (Wright, NT, 1996).

⁸⁸ See Chapter Five.

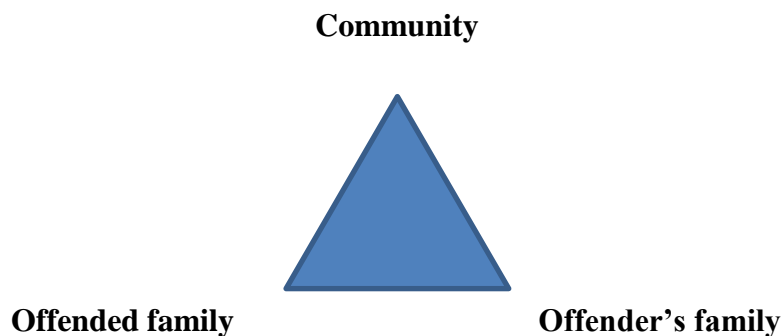
⁸⁹ See Chapters Five and Six.

important that this process is overseen by a third-party who can act as ‘anger absorber.’ Since to forgo revenge and resentment does not necessarily remove *shame*, it is important to add another element, namely dignity restoration.

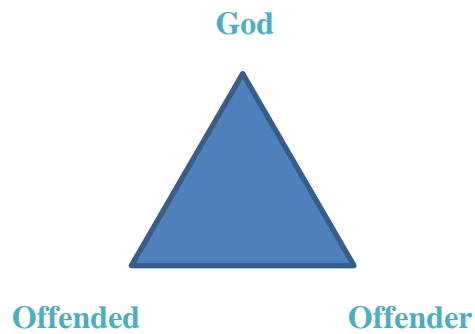
Fourth, *dignity restoration*. I recommend adding another public expression of forgiveness; integrating the concept of dignity restoration as a tool to achieve forgiveness. Since being embraced back into right relationship and community is what heals shame, the process of *musayara* (see Section 5.2.1) temporarily places the offended in a position of ‘patronage’ over the most respected figures in the community (*jaha*). This process is vital in helping to further calm the feelings of humiliation and in contributing to dignity restoration.

Fifth, *community*. We need a more collective and public forgiveness involving a whole church community. The community can offer support to its members, both offended and offender, through bearing the burden of the wrongs done together. I suggest combining Volf’s triangle of God, offender and offended, with the *sulha* triangle as follows.

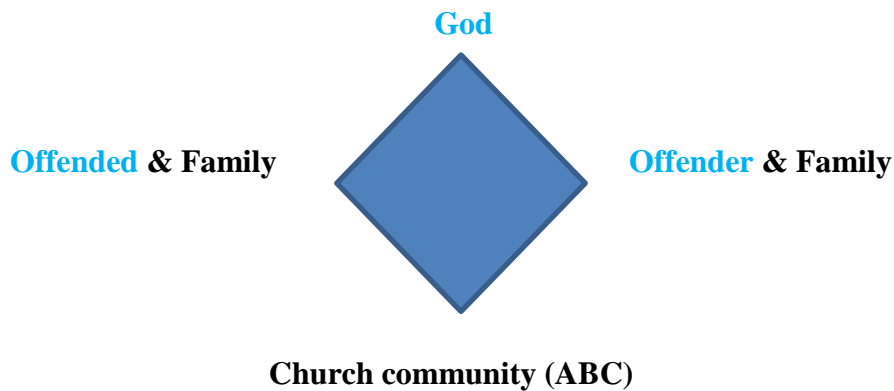
Forgiveness in *sulha* takes place in a triangle consisting of the offender’s family, the offended family and the community:



Volf’s theory of forgiveness takes place in a triangle of the offender, the offended, and God:



I suggest we add a fourth element to Volf's triangle, namely the community, and add the offended and offender's families to the process. The outcome will be that forgiveness takes place not in a triangle but in a rhombus as follow:



I find two important advantages to adding the community. First, the use of inclusive language such as 'we' may help forgiveness interpersonally and in the collective, as members of the community influence and give courage to one another to practise forgiveness. Second, adding community to the process will help in that the burden of remembering rightly, forgiving and mending relationships will not rest only on the victims but also with the community. It is argued that the primary vehicle for forgiveness to be expressed is through family, community and deity supporting and validating the practice of forgiveness. Nonetheless, forgiveness is an act of a person and person's heart. Although, community can promote, sustain and nourish the forgiveness process but community cannot forgive on one's behalf.

So far, forgiveness is the only way to deal with remembrance. Forgiveness is also the framework in which we seek justice, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

8. Theology of Justice

In this chapter I describe Volf's theme of justice in which he proposes how to seek justice, then I explain how the four approaches perceived justice and relaxed the tension between justice and forgiveness. Afterwards I evaluate how they sought justice using Volf's theme. Finally, I evaluate Volf's justice in light of the four approaches and propose several recommendations.

8.1 Volf's Theology of Justice

The theme of justice is drawn from Volf's book *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996), and his article 'The Social Meaning of Reconciliation' (1999). Volf's intention is not to specify what justice is but to propose how to seek justice in a world of plurality and enmity (1996:197).¹ For Volf, justice is broader than removing damage; truthfulness is concerned with justice,² forgiveness is concerned with justice,³ and apology is concerned with justice. He sees justice as having two dimensions: a natural sense of justice in terms of restoration of balance, and righteousness, as doing what is right, which can be identical with love (Volf 2009, 2013).⁴

¹ Volf examines three dominant ways of dealing with the issue of clashing justice: (1) the universalistic affirmation that claims justice is one, (2) the postmodern claim that justice bears many names, and (3) the communitarian which places justice within a tradition (1996:197). Volf concludes that since we are inescapably particular our account of justice cannot be universal, and 'justice' continues to struggle against other 'justice'. Postmodern thinkers believe that the struggle of justice against justice can end sooner, but then we are risking giving up the search for the one and only justice. In 'traditions', 'One tradition struggles against another, its justice against the justice of another tradition, until one defeats the other by proving itself rationally superior' (1996:207).

² Untruthful memories are unjust memories (see Chapter Six, 'Theology of Remembrance').

³ We identify wrong committed against the backdrop of affirmation of what is just; not counting wrong against a person has to do with transcending the demands of justice without invalidating them (see Chapter Seven, 'Theology of Forgiveness').

⁴ As Volf puts it, 'My sense is that we have to ground human rights in an account of divine love that bursts the boundaries of love as attachment and that comes closer to a particular form of benevolence. First, human beings come to be because Love, which is God, has "projected" itself outside the rim of the Trinitarian circle so that there would be both objects and agents of love other than God. The love out of which human beings come to be as bearers of worth is fecund delight in there being additional objects and agents of love—delight in the sheer "thatness" of such creatures. Second, the divine love with which human beings are loved as created is care for the flourishing of these objects and agents of love—their flourishing as both recipients of love and givers of love' (Volf 2009).

8.1.1 Seeking justice

Volf (2015) suggests that to achieve reconciliation a wrongdoer must make an effort to remove the damage he has caused. Although apology removes the harm of having been disrespected, without the willingness to repair other damages the wrongdoer's apology remains mere words. In seeking justice Volf makes three recommendations: practise 'double vision', pursue smaller agreements and live life filled with the Spirit.

First, to practise 'double vision', Volf suggests that since no one is neutral and we all stand within a hybrid of traditions, the proper response is to try to see things through the eyes of 'the other' (1996:213). Volf argues Christians are shaped by, (1) the beliefs and practices of the community they belong to, (2) its biblical traditions, and (3) the surrounding larger culture they inhabit. Volf concludes that since we cannot avoid living in 'overlapping and rapidly changing social spaces we must rest satisfied with holding on to basic commitments ... it is better to give up on "coherent tradition" and, armed with basic Christian commitments, enter boldly the ever changing world of modern culture' (210). We will be able to make these commitments only if we develop 'double vision', by allowing the perspectives of others to resonate within ourselves, through seeing them and ourselves from their perspective, and readjusting our perspective taking into account their perspectives, hoping that competing justices may become converging justices and finally issue in agreement (1996:213).

Volf confirms that the life of Jesus Christ offers the best biblical example for 'double vision'; as Jesus Christ unconditionally embraced us, the godless perpetrators, so we should embrace even our enemies, and be able to see from their perspective

(1996:215).⁵ Volf concludes that the search for justice must ultimately be a search for embrace, as we practise ‘double vision’ (1996:220).⁶

To practise ‘double vision’ Volf proposes that we (1) step outside ourselves, (2) cross a social boundary and move into the world of the other to inhabit it temporarily, (3) take the other into our own world, and (4) repeat the process. By repeating this process, we can bring about a common human understanding and a common language (1996:251-252).

Second, to pursue smaller agreements rather than overall victories he suggests that we lower our sights over the issue of justice in conflicts and instead of seeking overall victory we should look for piecemeal agreements (1996:207).⁷

Third, to underscore the necessity of a grand vision for life that is filled with the Spirit inspired by Acts 2 and Acts 6, Volf says:

Along with the grand vision we need stories of small successful steps of learning to live together even when we do not quite understand each other’s language ... the grand vision and the small steps will together keep us on a journey towards genuine justice between cultures. As we make space in ourselves for the perspective of the other, in a sense we have already arrived at the place where the Spirit was poured out on all flesh. As we desire to embrace the other while we remain true to ourselves and to the crucified messiah, in a sense we already are where we will be when the home of God is established among mortals (1996:230-231).

8.1.2 Justice as a dimension of embrace

Volf urges a moving away from justice as a central focus, to embrace, arguing that, although the struggle for justice is indispensable, in this way the struggle becomes part of the pursuit of reconciliation. However, the pursuit of justice should not be about revenge, restitution, equity or liberation, but it should be about the restoration of communion. Such repositioning provides a framework for the pursuit of justice (1999).⁸

⁵ In relation to embrace see Section 8.1.2 and Chapter Nine ‘Theology of Embrace.’

⁶ See Chapter Nine regarding Volf’s theory of embrace.

⁷ Volf suggests that, ‘Agreement on justice depends on the will to embrace the other and that justice itself will be unjust as long as it does not become a mutual embrace’ (1996:197).

⁸ Volf mentions two ways that embrace serves justice in a world of oppression: (1) ‘the grace of embrace must help justice deal adequately with ever-changing differences among human beings,’ (2) ‘since “justice” is impotent in the face of past injustice, reconciliation is ultimately possible only through injustice being forgiven and, finally, forgotten. ‘The act of forgiveness will ... demand that its [unjust] causes be removed’ (224) Additionally, Volf speaks about identity and its relation to justice. According to

Volf builds his argument on Paul's encounter with Christ and Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. He suggests that, 'Though grace is unthinkable without justice, justice is subordinate to grace' (1999:10). On the road to Damascus, Saul was 'still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord' (Acts 9:1, ESV). Jesus named the injustice by its proper name 'persecution' and made the accusation 'In the very act of offering forgiveness and reconciliation' (1999:10). Paul's conversion was therefore not the result of the pursuit of strict justice. If God used strict justice, argues Volf, Paul never would have become an apostle of the very church he was persecuting. By confronting and reconciling a greater justice was achieved (1999:9-10). Volf's argument is not so much that forgiveness should complete justice, but that forgiveness should come before justice. Volf concludes, 'At the core of the doctrine of reconciliation lies the belief that the offer of reconciliation is not based on justice done and the cause of enmity removed ... but to open up the possibility of doing justice and living in peace whose ultimate shape is a community of love' (1999:10).

Volf argues that *embrace* should be the central category for Christian social engagement in reconciliation and *justice* an essential dimension of embrace. His suggestion is to understand the struggle for justice as a dimension of the pursuit of reconciliation, whose ultimate goal is a community of love (1999:9). According to him reconciliation is not simply the result of a successful struggle for justice. Rather, the move towards reconciliation precedes the achievement of justice and is a means towards greater justice. Reconciliation is seen both as a result of justice and as an instrument of justice. However, Volf's intention is mainly to caution those who would give superiority to justice above reconciliation (1999:11). According to him, not to recognize justice as a means of the broader goal of reconciliation will encourage situations where

him: 'If our identities are shaped in interaction with others, and if we are called ultimately to belong together ... true justice will always be on the way to embrace' (1996:225).

the single-minded pursuit of justice gives up reconciliation.⁹ Full embrace or complete reconciliation can take place only when matters of justice have been attended to. Without the commitment to justice under the umbrella of love, the pursuit of reconciliation will become a pursuit of cheap reconciliation (1999). Volf (2009) sees justice as a dimension of love. Love (as a particular kind of benevolence) precedes justice.

Tutu (1999) does not construe the struggle for justice as an end in itself. Tutu advocates restorative justice, meaning the restoration of a right relationship between victim and perpetrator with the greater goal of restoration of community.¹⁰ Volf is of similar mind when he talks about justice as a dimension of embrace. Tutu practised the application of restorative justice during his term with the TRC.

As mentioned in Section 1.5.1, DeGruchy (2002), in the South African context, sees justice as the primary element in reconciliation. Ateek (1989, 2017), also focuses on justice, arguing that peace begins with doing justice and ends by opening the possibility of reconciliation, forgiveness, healing, and love. Volf (1999) argues against these approaches, seeing that a focus on only justice will lead to injustice and thus justice should be at work under the greater structure of reconciliation. However, both DeGruchy and Volf agree that the meaning of the main concepts in theology of reconciliation is related to each social context, DeGruchy in the South African and Volf in the Croatian contexts.

⁹ Volf argues that there is nothing paradoxical in the fact that the pursuit of reconciliation brings about greater justice. According to him, in situations of significant difference in power as in apartheid South Africa where the struggle for justice was indispensable, the weaker party must often engage in struggle to bring the stronger party to the point of wanting peace with justice rather than pacification of the oppressed. In South Africa at the very time the Kairos document was being written, tentative secret talks were under way between Mandela and the South African government (1999:11).

¹⁰ Tutu explains: 'restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment but, in the spirit of *ubuntu*, the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence' (Tutu 1999:51).

Another Palestinian perspective, regarding Christian-Muslim relationships, sees justice as subordinate to peaceful coexistence, such as Abu El-Assal (1999) and Younan (2003). Massad (2000) even goes further and makes justice unnecessary to reconciliation with regard to Messianic Jewish and Palestinian evangelical relationships; Munayer (1995) contra Massad, suggests that pursuing justice and restoration is a natural part of the reconciliation process, which needs to take place in the context of relationship.

In these writings we notice a recurrent tension between seeking justice and offering forgiveness. As I will illustrate in the next section, this tension was also identified in the case-studies mainly between the young generation who make justice primary and the older generation who view justice as secondary. While justice for the older generation means the restoration of relationships, for the younger generation it is more about achieving one's rights than emphasizing the relational aspect.

Marshall (2005), contra Volf, El-Assal, Younan and Massad, does not see justice as subordinate to grace or love. He also, contra DeGruchy and Ateek, does not view justice as primary to love. He suggests there is no tension between divine justice and grace; they should not be separated or one take precedence over the other. He argues that mercy is an expression of justice; if we understand justice in terms of restoring relationships then mercy will help to bring justice.

Philpott (2012) agrees with Volf that justice is a matter of rights; however, for him biblical justice is wider than rights, it includes the obligation to give others what is not deserved – generosity, mercy, forgiveness. He suggests the best way to render biblical justice is via 'comprehensive right relationship', understood as a restoration of broken relationship. It is through grace and mercy that justice is transformed from being about rights alone to become something wider and richer. God's justice is a saving, healing, restorative justice (Philpott 2012, Marshall 2005, N. T. Wright 2006). For Volf

(2013), however, both justice and mercy together define the right relationship among people and are best termed righteousness that is equivalent to love.

I agree with Marshall, rather than viewing justice as primary or subordinate to love, it is more compelling to view divine justice as compatible with divine love and thus the two should not be separated during conflict. Therefore, I suggest that Palestinian Baptists understand justice in terms of restoring relationships, which is also more compatible with *sulha* their cultural model as I explain in Section 8.2 and 8.3.

8.2 Theology of Justice in the Case-Studies

How did Palestinian Baptists in the case-studies perceive justice? How did they seek justice? How did they relax the tension between seeking justice and offering forgiveness? Most interviewees shared two common understandings. First, justice is subordinate to love and second, God brings justice.¹¹ I argue the four approaches view justice differently.¹² For the hierarchical approach justice is about restoration of honour publicly (restore power),¹³ for *sulha* justice is restoration of relationship and reestablishment of social order (sustain power). The alternative-legalistic approach focuses on their constitutional right to lead church as justice (gain power),¹⁴ and the Western-Baptist approach navigates between both rights and restoration of relationships.

8.2.1 Hierarchical approach

How did the pastors perceive justice? The findings indicate that for the pastors justice meant *public restoration of honour*, and that God brings justice. For them public

¹¹ In contemporary Christianity, believers are to leave vengeance to God, acknowledging that personal revenge is not appropriate (Goins, 2008:275).

¹² Marshall (2005) suggests that justice is an inclusive term that embraces a variety of meanings, involving at least four key ingredients: distribution, equity, power and rights.

¹³ Justice involves the exercise of legitimate *power* to implement social benefits, order or sanctions (Marshall 2005:6).

¹⁴ Justice gives moral legitimacy to the rights of those who have legitimate moral or legal claim on some good (Marshall 2005:7).

restoration of honour was the main thing needed to repair the rejection and shame they experienced by church leaders who split the church. Restoration of honour involves, first, apology and repentance publicly, as one of the pastors put it, ‘I don’t close the church in front of anybody but if they come back they will not be given position at church ... the prodigal son has to repent before he comes back ... I don’t seek my own *right*.’ In a sense, for him justice was to receive a sincere apology and repentance from those who ‘sinned’ and rejected him as their spiritual father (this was expected also as pastors focused on actions in evaluating right and wrong). At the same time he suggested this request had nothing to do with seeking his ‘own right’ but it was merely about accepting the ‘rebellious-group’ back, *as* the father in the prodigal son story accepted his rebellious son. Second, restoration of honour involved both being *accepted* and seen by the broader community as the ‘church’, and *rejecting* the ‘rebellious-group’ as a ‘church’. This explains the conflicts happening at ABC-meetings when both church-A2 and church-B2 requested membership in the ABC, and the two pastors fought against that. At the beginning, when the ABC did not accept Pastor-B’s attitude this was perceived by him as, ‘you [ABC] undermine me and my integrity.’¹⁵ Obviously, for the pastors, acceptance of the ‘rebellious-groups’ by the ABC was perceived as a rejection of the pastors.

How did the pastors seek justice? Although the pastors claimed God brings justice, they had active roles in achieving their justice. Seemingly, punishment was one way to achieve justice. They changed the lock of the churches to indicate not welcoming back the ‘rebellious-group’, they fought against accepting the ‘rebellious-groups’ membership in the ABC,¹⁶ and they were also seen to be punishing the

¹⁵ Letter, 9 Dec 2005.

¹⁶ Although after a few years they were ‘forced’ to accept them.

‘rebellious-groups’ by not accepting reconciliation attempts.¹⁷ Pastor-B saw punishment as justice and part of God’s judgment, insisting that God brings justice and since the ‘rebellious-group’ rejected him ‘God had rejected them from church.’¹⁸ Pastor-A’s wife also confirmed this belief that God ‘fired’ the ‘rebellious-group’ from the church. Put differently, pastors believed God brought their justice in a form of judgments but they seemed to have active roles in achieving that. Pastors’ attitudes and sayings could be translated to express retributive justice – a predictable theme from an unforgiving/non-forgetting environment.

When evaluating how pastors *sought justice* using Volf’s theme of justice, it seems both their pain and perception of the problem prevented them from practising ‘double vision’. For them there was a spiritual problem at church related to young laity being unsubmitive that was treated as sin. As one of the pastors put it, ‘Unsubmitiveness is Satan-like behaviour.’¹⁹ Pastors could not understand the attitudes of the younger generation and their need for change. They viewed members’ disagreements with them as disloyalty and a conspiracy to ‘fire’ them from church. In Volf’s terms they could not step outside themselves; could not enter the younger generation’s world and could not make the younger generation understand their need. This attitude however did not bring the pastors and youth to a common understanding. Nonetheless the pastors pursued small agreements, such as when Pastor-A and Pastor-B eventually agreed to accept church-A2 and B2 in the ABC, or when Pastor-A agreed for joint church services to be held and allowed the use of the church building for several occasions.

How did pastors relax the tension between justice and forgiveness? When pastors feel pain and humiliation because of the ‘wrongdoings’, asking them to come to

¹⁷ Some view this attitude as revenge (Adams 1994).

¹⁸ Pastor-B, Aug 2015.

¹⁹ Pastor-B, Aug 2015.

forgiveness without justice can add hurt to their suffering for not being taken seriously as community religious-leaders. The pastors conditioning forgiveness on public repentance was a way to not only achieve justice but also to relax the tension between justice and forgiveness.

Regarding *easing tension between justice and forgiveness*, Volf's theory might enrich the pastors' practices by the following. First, seeking justice should always be on the way to embrace, and the move towards reconciliation precedes the achievement of justice. Second, condemnation is not forgotten when forgiveness is offered; we accuse when we forgive. Third, disciplinary punishment does not contradict forgiveness; 'disciplinary measures' (deterrence, prevention, or rehabilitation) are compatible with forgiveness since they focus on bringing a better future.²⁰ Thus, combining forgiveness with disciplinary measures will remove obstacles from the past to create conditions for peace in the present.²¹ Punishment often serves as a tool for protecting and restoring *shalom*.²²

8.2.2 The *sulha* approach

I find that advocates of *sulha* perceive justice as the *reestablishment of social order and restoration of relationship*, as justice is subordinate to love and God brings justice.

How did advocates of sulha perceive justice? In the *sulha* approach some members spoke about restoring relations and even reintegration as their justice. Hiyam, a church-A2 member, hoped, 'I wish one day we would all return to the mother church

²⁰ Volf (2015) explains that retribution and reprobation are the two main rationales for punishment strictly understood. Forgiveness is incompatible with retribution (one purpose of punishment) because to forgive is to forego retribution. But forgiveness is compatible with reprobation, for to forgive is to implicitly condemn the forgiven deed.

²¹ Volf 2015.

²² *Shalom* is a Hebrew word meaning 'peace'. It denotes the presence of harmony and wholeness, of health and prosperity, of integration and balance. *Shalom* is when everything is as it ought to be and thus, it combines into one concept the meaning of justice and peace (Marshall 2005:12-13).

[church-A]... this church is our roots.'²³ Interestingly many interviewees when asked about justice paused and did not know what to answer; they said they did not think about justice. Instead many of the answers were similar to Dan, a deacon, 'If we love we overlook. For the sake of peace at church I am ready to compromise. This is what Christ taught us, *to compromise*.'²⁴ They compromise because they focus on the desired outcome, namely social order.

How did advocates of sulha seek justice? Sulha advocates have an active role in seeking justice, they are peaceful and when justice stands in contradiction with future relationships, they leave it completely to God believing God will compensate them. Dan noted proudly, 'I compromise *my right* for the sake of a good relation'. Emily, a church-A2 member, went further; she accepted injustice as a sacrifice for Christ, 'Even if we were treated unjustly we have to accept and sacrifice for Christ's sake.'²⁵ Jack, a deacon, spoke about compensation and divine justice, saying 'God is not content with the split, but God blessed church-A2 and this is compensation. Right is a legal word and logically we had to accept that, however, the divine justice is different from the human. Humans cannot achieve that.'²⁶

When using Volf's theme to evaluate how *sulha* advocates sought justice, 'double vision' appears to have been practised. They did not focus on resolving the problem as much as restoring the social order at church. For many years they compromised for the pastors' sake. They were able to see both viewpoints of hierarchical and alternative-legalistic approaches; they in fact acted as mediators between the advocates of the two approaches. *Sulha* was the approach that convinced Pastor-A and Pastor-B to accept the membership of churches A2 and B2 in the ABC. When there was disagreement, they compromised as to seek right order. Using Volf's terms they stepped outside

²³ Mar 2014.

²⁴ Mar 2014.

²⁵ Mar 2014.

²⁶ Jack, Aug 2014.

themselves; they entered the world of the younger generation and pastors and also understood their needs. Additionally, they frequently pursued small agreements and were very patient.

How did sulha advocates reduce the tension between justice and forgiveness?

When there was tension between justice and forgiveness, justice immediately became subordinate to social order. This generally contributed to conflict de-escalation, but only for a limited time. Eventually this attitude escalated the conflict because of the culture clash between the traditional-patriarchal attitude (pastors) and the modern-democratic attitude (young generation).²⁷

Volf's theory could enrich a *sulha* approach in that the struggle for justice should be indispensable. Although Volf agrees with *sulha* that justice is not a central focus but an 'embrace', the struggle for justice should become part of the pursuit of embrace.

8.2.3. Alternative-legalistic approach

I find advocates of alternative-legalistic approach linked justice to *rights* and relaxed the tension between justice and forgiveness by divorce (split); they gave superiority to justice above reconciliation.

What is justice? Advocates of an alternative-legalistic approach presented a variety of definitions of justice: rights, reparation, social order and punishment.²⁸ I list some of these perceptions. Of justice as *rights*, Elias, a church-B2 leader said, 'I take my rights in a peaceful way without seeking the court. Sometimes I compromise my right because I don't see any solution.'²⁹ He admitted, 'We sought our rights but we did not think about Pastor-B's rights and interests.' Regarding justice as *reparation*, a church-A2 leader said, 'To reconcile we need to attend to justice... in church splits

²⁷ See Chapter Five regarding the contradictory values of these two approaches.

²⁸ Apparently, the reason for this diversity is because people were interviewed a long time after the split (20/10 years) and their perception concerning justice had changed depending on how the split affected their lives.

²⁹ Elias, Aug 2015.

reparation and healing must be attended to.’³⁰ Concerning justice as *right order*, Nabil, a church-A2 leader, said ‘What do we need at church to be just or to worship God? We struggled, but it is not appropriate to fight for my right at church.’³¹ As for justice as punishment, Majd, who exited from church-A, said he did not seek justice since his sufficiency is in God, and at the same time he said, ‘I see justice is happening... the absence of the anointing upon church-A is a real judgment. We are not victims, but our competence comes from God [2 Corinthians 3:5]. I don’t need to ask Him for justice; God does what is best for me.’³²

How did the alternative-legalistic approach seek justice? How did they relax the tension between justice and forgiveness? Many said God brings justice and compensation. Nonetheless, they also played active roles in seeking justice. This approach was more one of seeking and evaluating rights and interests according to legal mechanisms.³³ When justice was in contradiction with future relationships, they confronted the pastors and older generation. They struggled in the tension between justice and forgiveness, which eventually led to split. In a sense, they relaxed this tension by making justice primary and forgiveness external.³⁴ They chose to split the church to seek some of their rights. In this approach, members had a strong feeling of injustice, as Bryan, a third-party, put it, ‘There was a strong feeling of injustice and self-justification was the major force apparent’. Sami, a church-A2 leader, saw the success of church-A2 after the split as a reward from God, ‘We felt deep injustice, but God rewarded us. Even if we don’t reintegrate, it is a shame there is no reconciliation.’³⁵

When using Volf’s theme to evaluate how this approach sought justice, seemingly they practised ‘double vision’ in part, focussing on resolving the problem and achieving

³⁰ Focus group, Jun 2016.

³¹ Nabil, Mar 2014

³² Majd, Mar 2014.

³³ See Chapter Five.

³⁴ See Chapter Seven.

³⁵ Sami, Feb 2014.

their rights and less on future relations. When there were disagreements, they tried to understand the pastor's viewpoint and find a way for mutual gain (for example, they agreed to keep Pastor-A as pastor emeritus with salary); however, when they failed, they rushed into achieving their goals to seek change and power.³⁶ In Volf's terms they stepped outside themselves; they entered the world of the pastors, but they did not take the other into their world or repeat the process. Seemingly, this approach did not take time to understand the real struggle between their pastors and themselves, with their differing theology and culture, or the pastors' struggle to earn a livelihood.³⁷ This approach pursued small agreements when they accepted some compromises such as their rights to use the church building.

Volf's theory differs from this approach in that the pursuit of justice should not be about revenge, restitution, equity or liberation; but it should be about the restoration of communion, of which liberation is an important element. Volf suggests understanding the struggle for justice as a dimension of the pursuit of reconciliation, whose ultimate goal is a community of love, rather than seeing reconciliation as the result of a successful struggle for justice.

According to Volf, in situations of significant power differences (as between pastors and members) the struggle for justice is important. How could the younger generation seek justice in a traditional-patriarchal community which recognizes authority figures (clergy) and age? The weaker party must often engage in a struggle to bring the stronger party to the point of wanting peace with justice, rather than keeping the status quo.³⁸ The younger generation used techniques unacceptable to the older generation.³⁹ For them justice precede reconciliation. Volf (1999) speaks to this attitude, when he cautions those who would give precedence to justice over reconciliation.

³⁶ Elias, Aug 2015 and Jack, Aug 2014.

³⁷ See Chapter Four.

³⁸ Volf 1999:11.

³⁹ See Chapter Five, Section 5.4.2

According to him not to recognize justice as a means of the broader goal of reconciliation will encourage situations where reconciliation is given up on altogether. This was the stance of the hierarchical approach and some advocates of the alternative-legalistic approach.

8.2.4 Western-Baptist approach

For advocates of the Western-Baptist approach, both *justice and love are required*. They navigated between both rights and restoration of relationships. They reduced the tension between justice and forgiveness by seeking *justice that brings right order*, and relying on God to bring justice.

How did Western-Baptist advocates perceive justice? Interviewees spoke about both justice and love. Phil, a third-party, explained, ‘Justice is inferior to love; justice seeks fairness, love goes beyond fairness. If we cannot practice justice at church then we cannot succeed in reaching love, since love is a virtue that rises upon justice’. Similarly David, an ABC-Committee member, stated:

Justice is the complete peace; there is no complete justice because of the broken relationships and wounds. I think if Pastor-A retired and the two churches reintegrated this would be the justice that brings peace. There is no peace without justice and no justice without peace since justice brings the right order which God intended and only then peace happens.⁴⁰

Boulus, church-C2 interim pastor, said, ‘Our God is just and his work on the cross manifests this justice. As a Christian I need to have a voice against injustice in society, but this should be addressed lovingly.’⁴¹ Others said God brings justice, and we should compromise justice for the sake of the church. Albert, a church-C2 leader, said he tends to forgive and forsake his rights so he becomes a good witness for the other party. Bishara (regarding the website-conflict) used Psalm (37:6, ESV): ‘He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday,’ to describe how God will bring his justice regarding the website-conflict with pastor-C. Bishara said, ‘When

⁴⁰ Mar 2014.

⁴¹ Aug 2015.

you walk in truth, even if you were wronged, God will bring back justice, even if it comes late.’ He added that he decided not to fight Pastor-C, in order to prevent a church split, and he trusted God would bring his justice. Bishara explained he made some compromises for he knew God would reward him. However, he sought fair reconciliation, insisting he was ready to apologize at church for his part only, and not for false accusations.

How did advocates of Western-Baptist Approach seek their justice? How did they relax the tension between justice and forgiveness? Members of church-C2 did not split the church. Five years after the conflict they reintegrated, but how did they seek justice? They confronted Pastor-C and sought help from different third-parties (the Canadian Pastor and the ABC). The ABC used certain disciplinary tools against Pastor-C, such as not allowing him to continue to be part of the ABC community if he founded a new church after he split church-C2. Members of church-C2 did not leave the church when they faced problems with Pastor-C, and they told me that when their personal rights contradicted the benefit of the church they compromised their rights, trusting God will reward them. Two leaders decided to stop attending church-C2 but did not establish a new church and did not fight Pastor-C. Nonetheless, they used different ways to express their injustice, such as chatter (sharing frustration and complaints).⁴² However, eventually their struggle in the tension between offering love and seeking justice led to reintegration.⁴³ This reintegration was not only because of their attitude. Pastor-C was very active in such an endeavour. Both church-C2 and Pastor-C were influenced by the mentoring and teaching they received during and post-split. Similar to Volf’s theme, their move towards reconciliation in this approach preceded the achievement of justice. In case-C we can witness the beginning of reconciliation functioning both as an

⁴² See Chapter Five.

⁴³ As I explained in Chapter Six and Seven.

instrument of justice and as a result of justice, which nonetheless could have happened only when justice was sought in parallel with seeking the restoration of relationships.

In sum, each approach perceived justice differently. The hierarchical approach focused on restoration of honour publicly as their justice; *sulha* focused on reestablishment of social order and restoration of relationship as their justice; the alternative-legalistic approach focused on rights; and the Western-Baptist approach navigated between both rights and restoration of relationships. All approaches struggled in the tension between seeking justice and offering forgiveness. In this struggle the hierarchical approach made forgiveness conditional; the *sulha* approach made justice subordinate to social order; the alternative-legalistic approach focused on justice and preferred divorce (split); and the Western-Baptist approach focused on embrace and preferred reintegration, compromising for the sake of right order at church and being a good witness. The following table summarize the results.

Table 8.1 Evaluating the four approaches in terms of Volf's theory of justice

Approach	Justice	Seek justice	Relax tension between justice and forgiveness	Outcome
Hierarchical	Restoration of honour publicly	Punishment no 'double vision'	Conditioning forgiveness on public repentance	'Diplomatic reconciliation' (divorce)
<i>Sulha</i>	Re-establishment of social order	Compromise. 'Double vision' in part	Justice becomes subordinate to social order	'Diplomatic reconciliation' (joint service)
Alternative-legalistic	Rights	Confrontation and split. 'Double vision' in part	Justice becomes primary and forgiveness external	'Diplomatic reconciliation' (joint service)
Western Baptist-before re-integration	Rights and restoration of relationships	Disciplinary tools 'Double vision'	Navigates between both rights and restoration of relationships	Reintegration
Western-Baptist after re-integration	Right order at church/good witness	'Double vision'	Compromises for right order at church and good witness (focus on embrace)	Reconciliation

8.3 Challenges and Recommendations

For Palestinians in general, justice is a fundamental issue – especially since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the works of Palestinian Protestant theologians do not discuss biblical justice profoundly (Katanacho 2008). Except for a few theologians such as Ateek's liberation theology, many Palestinian theologians view justice as subordinate to love and reconciliation. Interestingly, this is also reflected in the data. Many interviewees when asked about justice were uncertain about the right answer, telling me they did not think about justice since it is less important than forgiveness and reconciliation. The preaching in most Palestinian Baptist churches tends to focus on the vertical dimension, with almost no teaching about justice – except for God's justice demonstrated on the cross. This attitude could be related to the tendency of the Palestinian Baptist churches to be apolitically pietistic,⁴⁵ with their hopes focused on the bodily return of Christ or on escaping from worldly issues such as struggling to seek change and justice.⁴⁶

In the Bible doing justice conveys the idea of righting what has gone wrong, of restoring things to a condition of 'rightness' or righteousness.⁴⁷ In the case-studies, most interviewees did not assume this interpretation in the daily use. Many interviewees used the word 'rights' to talk about justice. They expressed their individual rights at church. For pastors, their 'right' is restoring their honour (restore power); for the young

⁴⁴ Barakat points out that, 'A countercultural emphasis on justice rather than charity has been slowly and gradually developing in Arab society since the decline of the Ottomans. Increasingly, Arabs are becoming convinced that justice is a basic human rights issue, and that societies are judged by their readiness and ability to secure the well-being of all their people. Societies must provide for equal opportunities in developing the capabilities of all their people, and in improving the conditions under which all citizens live' (1993:204).

⁴⁵ In many translations the word *dikaïos* (the Greek word for justice used in the New Testament) is translated as righteousness and not justice. This might lead to the idea that the New Testament is less concerned with justice, especially among the evangelical church which has emphasized personal righteousness and piety and has missed much of the intended meaning bursting through the Scriptures about justice (Cannon 2009).

⁴⁶ See Chapter Three, Section 3.3.1.3.

⁴⁷ In biblical usage, righteousness includes what we mean by justice. Often in the Hebrew Bible 'righteousness' (*sedeqah*) and 'justice' (*mishpat*) occur as a word-pair with virtually identical meanings. In modern English, 'righteousness' carries the sense of personal moral purity and 'justice' relates to public judicial fairness and equity (Marshall 2005:11-12).

generation it is their constitutional right to lead church (gain power); for *sulha* it is to keep the status quo (sustain power). Generally, the word 'right' is understood and used in legal, political and social contexts. A 'right' exists when someone has a legitimate moral or legal claim on some good, which others have a duty to respect. This perception influences the way people perceive their 'rights' at church too. So often conflicts are resolved but without taking into consideration God's 'right' and the community's 'right' (the good witness of the church). Theologically, 'right' is not a biblical word. We talk about divine justice, and thus church conflict should be resolved taking into consideration honouring God; this is more about God's justice than 'rights'. When we think about 'rights' from an individualistic perspective the church loses its role in the community since we do not have the 'right' to give up the 'right' of the community or the 'right' of God.

Besides the word 'rights', another common saying from interviewees was 'God brings justice'. It is important to distinguish between our rights in a fallen world and our eternal rights in the Kingdom of God now and forever. God will restore our eternal rights as part of bringing forth the kingdom of justice. However, in the here and now we are to act as *agents of justice*. Marshall (2005) sees God's coming justice as 'the culmination of, not a substitute for, human striving for greater justice here and now.' He adds, since justice is an attribute of God, those who bear God's image must also be agents of justice (22-29).

With regard to the word 'compromise' used by *sulha* advocates, we need to distinguish between wisdom and law. The moral law must be in place in strong, non-compromising ways but implementing it must be done with wisdom and flexibility.

I suggest that Palestinian Baptists view justice in its biblical perspective, in which divine justice is seen as compatible with divine love and thus should not separate them during conflict. God's justice saves, heals, and restores; however, discipline

punishments often serves as a tool to achieve restoration. Additionally, seeking justice should be a primary obligation of the church as a lifestyle which indicates holiness.

One challenge is related to disciplinary punishment, which is a tool to promote restoration, while *church discipline* is nonetheless viewed as a negative approach within Palestinian Baptist churches (as in many other contexts) and not as a tool to lead to reconciliation. This is why it is not practised, and eventually ‘encourages’ a split. At the same time, Palestinian traditional churches have religious courts in which the bishops authorize clergy judges to resolve conflicts using disciplinary measures. Do Palestinian Baptist churches need a similar system of religious courts to implement justice? David, an ABC-Committee member who was involved in some church conflicts, concluded that the only successful way to deal with conflict would be to have religious courts as in the traditional churches.⁴⁸ But how can this be applied in a Congregationalist polity? How can the ABC, with its limitations, succeed in such a role?

Another challenge is how the younger generation can seek justice in a traditional-patriarchal community which recognizes authority figures (clergy) and age. The powerless party should often fight to bring the stronger party to recognize their rights. At the same time how can pastors implement order at church in a Congregationalist polity where unsatisfied members can easily exit?

Volf’s theology of justice is indeed insightful and enriches each of the four approaches as I explained. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how we should pursue justice in this world, or how offenders are called to justice within the framework of the will to embrace. More importantly, after achieving justice how can justice be sustained? Finally, repairing damage and restitution may take care of guilt, but what kind of justice deals with shame?

⁴⁸ Focus group, Jun 2016.
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I suggest that Volf's theory of justice should be amended in order to be applicable to this context, by adding the *community* as a fundamental factor in his theory, for the following reasons. First, the communal approach to conflict in *sulha* is based on the view that hurting an individual means hurting the entire community,⁴⁹ and injuries between individuals and groups will fester and expand if not acknowledged, repaired, forgiven and transcended.⁵⁰ *Sulha* rituals create the space for restoring dignity lost as a result of the offence.⁵¹ As an interpersonal strategy, *sulha* has the capability for micro and macro-level restoration.⁵² With that being said, I suggest the Palestinian Baptist community should become part of the process of seeking justice as well. This would support the offended to practice the will to embrace as they are embraced by the community throughout the whole process. Additionally, this would impact the offender in that the community's pressure would encourage repentance and repair of the damage. For example, Pastor-C acknowledged the offence in a public setting. The justice was minimal and partial in that no material reparations were made, nor could the split be undone. Yet the possible restoration of dignity for both sides, inner peace, and forgiveness were on the horizon, followed by the potential for a new relationship, bringing back the view of justice as restoration of broken relationships.

Second, regarding *sustaining justice*, the community could also be the best guardian to ensure the durability of the agreement post-conflict, since the third-party (*jaha*- representative of the community) participates in post-ceremony activities to ensure the stability of the settlement. More importantly, the practices of justice and reconciliation are themselves strengthened and sustained by forgiveness. This also has to do with community.

⁴⁹ Jabbour, 1993.

⁵⁰ Said et al. 2001.

⁵¹ Irani and Funk, 2001.

⁵² Gellman and Vuinovich, 2008.

Third, Shults and Sandage (2003) point out that, ‘Paying a debt to justice may take care of guilt, but it does not heal shame’ (215). What heals *shame* is to be re-embraced into relationship and community. What would truly satisfy the human heart is transformation that reshapes people and communities more than a transaction that brings justice. Stated differently, what heals shame is restorative *divine justice*. Thus, to embrace or to exclude is the main issue and is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Nine

9. Theology of Embrace

In this chapter I describe Volf's theology of embrace, then I evaluate embrace as demonstrated in the four approaches using Volf's theme and evaluate Volf's embrace in light of them.

9.1 Volf's Theology of Embrace

9.1.1 The social construction of identity

According to Volf the expanding conflicts between cultures worldwide are 'part of a larger problem of identity and otherness' (1996:16), and thus he claims that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and otherness (1996:20). Therefore, to address the social meaning of reconciliation means unavoidably to address the issue of identity. Volf poses the following questions: how should one think of one's identity and how should one relate to different people? How should one go about making peace with the other?

Volf addresses the problem of the 'sacralization of cultural identity', which amounts to 'captivity to our own culture, coupled so often with blind self-righteousness' (37). When churches give ultimate allegiance to their cultures this leads to an incorrect dynamic between culture and self (1996:37). When culture undermines faith, Christians lose the place from which to judge their own culture (1996:53) and find themselves unable to act on the gospel call to the ministry of reconciliation because their commitments are not ordered correctly. Volf argues, 'The universal claims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are subordinated to the claims of the particular social groups they inhabit instead of the claims of particular social groups being subordinated to the universal claims of the Gospel' (1999:8).

Volf suggests the need for developing the proper relation between 'distance from the culture and belonging to it' (1996:37), for Christians need to 'depart' from their

particular culture and give complete loyalty to the God of all cultures, to switch ‘from the particularity of “peoplehood” to the universality of multiculturalism, from the locality of a land to the globality of the world’ (1996:43). Volf argues the distancing from a culture and belonging to it, when the self is situated ‘with one foot planted in their own culture and the other in God’s future’ (53), will serve the self in two ways: (1) in creating space to receive ‘the other’, and (2) in providing a vantage point to perceive and judge the self and the other in the light of God’s new world (1996:53), knowing there is an ultimate reality more important than their culture.

To avoid the risk that a local culture may lose its specificity for the sake of ‘universality’, Volf draws upon the Pauline argument concerning the relation between various group identities within the Christian faith (Jew and Gentile, female and male, slave and free) (48). He explains, ‘The Pauline move is not from the particularity of the body to the universality of the spirit, but from separated bodies to the community of interrelated bodies – the one *body in the Spirit with many discrete members*’ (1996:48, italics his), where cultural specificity can be approved and yet at the same time each culture has to forsake its own ‘tribal deities’.¹ Volf confirms that distance and belonging are necessary, expressing that ‘Belonging without distance destroys and distance without belonging isolates’ (50).

Volf uses the doctrine of the Trinity and the creation activity in order to explain the construction of identity. He argues the doctrine of the Trinity offers a paradigm concerning how Christians ought to think about identity – adjusted for the difference between God and the world. According to him, as human beings are created in God’s image they should seek to imitate God in their relationships. He concludes with two characteristics: (1) identity is ‘non-reducible’ and here is the importance of keeping

¹ According to Volf, ‘Each culture can retain its own cultural specificities ... at the same time, no culture can retain its own tribal deities; religion must be de-ethnicized so that ethnicity can be desacralized. Paul deprived each culture of ultimacy in order to give them all legitimacy in the wider family of cultures’ (49).

boundaries; and (2) identity is ‘not self-enclosed’ as the self always contains ‘the other’ within itself (1998a:11).

Volf uses the term ‘differentiation’ to describe the creative activity of ‘separating-*and-binding*’ that results in patterns of interdependence (65, italics his). While separation alone would result in self-enclosed, isolated and self-identical beings (65), Volf suggests that identity is a result of distinction from the other and internalization of relationships with the other. We are who we are not because we are distinct from others, but because we are both distinct and related we are separate and connected to others (66). ‘Differentiation’ is the complex process by which the self and the other negotiate their identities in interaction with one another – it is not based on opposition to and negation of the other – but rather a resourceful ‘taking in’ and ‘keeping out’ (66).

According to this definition of identity, Volf concludes that both cutting off the bonds that connect and removing separation lead to *exclusion*. Stated differently, exclusion occurs when the construction of one’s identity is seen as ‘pure’, without ‘the other’. ‘Exclusion takes place when the violence of expulsion, assimilation, or subjugation and the indifference of abandonment replace the dynamics of taking in and keeping out as well as the mutuality of giving and receiving’ (67).

9.1.2 The self and its centre

After discussing the construction of identity, Volf discusses which kind of self is capable of making a ‘non-exclusionary judgment’ between *legitimate* differentiation and *illegitimate* exclusion, and what kind of centre such a self must have (1996:68).

Volf argues that in Galatians 2:19-20, Paul de-centres his self when he states ‘I have been crucified with Christ’; at the same time he re-centres his self around Christ when he states ‘It is Christ who lives in me’ (69). ‘Paul presumes a centred self ... a *wrongly* centred self that needs to be de-centred by being nailed to the cross’ (69, italic his). Paul’s new identity is based on Christ’s self-giving love shown on the cross. This

kind of 'de-centred centre' is the 'doorkeeper deciding about the fate of otherness ... from this centre judgment about exclusion must be made and battles against exclusion fought' (71). Volf argues that judgments must not be made between 'innocent' and 'non-innocent' as long as the practice of evil keeps re-creating a world without innocence. However, he adds, universality of sin does not mean equality of sins (82).²

Volf explains that the human tendency towards exclusion is connected to the tendency to found and support 'exclusive moral polarities', which do not acknowledge this world as one in which 'justice and injustice, goodness and evil, innocence and guilt, purity and corruption, truth and deception crisscross and intersect' (84-85). Volf states a social reality based on moral polarities which assert 'Here, on our side, "the just," "the pure," "the innocent," "the true," "the good," and there, on the other side, "the unjust," "the corrupt," "the guilty," "the liars," "the evil" ' (84-85), must be denounced as *sinful*.

Volf concludes that since no one is innocent in a world where everyone falls captive to the inescapable system of evil and exclusion, '*No one should ever be excluded from the will to embrace*' (85, italics his). Volf clarifies 'At the core of the Christian faith lies the persuasion that 'others' need not be perceived as innocent in order to be loved, but ought to be embraced *even when they are perceived as wrongdoers*' (85 italics his). But what exactly will enable one to make the choice of a 'will to embrace'? Volf suggests it is the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit enters the citadel of the self, de-centres the self by fashioning it in the image of the self-giving Christ, and frees its will so it can resist the power of exclusion in the power of the Spirit of embrace. It is in the citadel of the fragile self that the new world of embrace is first created... It is by this seemingly powerless power of the Spirit ... that selves are freed from powerlessness in order to fight the system of exclusion everywhere – in the structures, in the culture, and in the self (92).

² Volf suggests that there is interdependence between the 'universality of sin' and the 'primacy of grace': 'Solidarity in sin underscores that no salvation can be expected from an approach that rests fundamentally on the moral assignment of blame and innocence ... The question cannot be how to locate 'innocence'... Rather, the question is how to live with integrity and bring healing to a world of inescapable non-innocence... The answer: in the name of the only innocent victim and what he stood for, the crucified Messiah of God, we should de mask as inescapably sinful the world constructed around exclusive moral polarities' (84).

9.1.3 Embrace

Volf builds his argument around the notion of ‘embrace’.³ According to him the basic argument is based on the story of the prodigal son and the Apostle Paul’s command to the Romans (15:7), ‘Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you’ (1996:28-29).⁴ Volf suggests that his thesis will enable life under conditions of enmity. He states, God’s welcoming of hostile humanity into divine communion is an example for how human beings should relate to the other (1996:100). He argues, ‘Reconciliation with the other will succeed only if the self, guided by the narrative of the triune God, is ready to receive the other into itself and undertake a re-adjustment of its identity in light of the other’s alterity’ (1996:110). We should embrace the other because others are part of our own true identity, we cannot live authentically without welcoming the other for we are created to reflect, in a creaturely way, the personality of the triune God.⁵

To describe the process of ‘welcoming’ Volf employs the metaphor of ‘embrace’. The metaphor symbolizes four requirements of reconciled life after a conflict:

- a) *Opening arms*: a sign of creating space in oneself for the other and an invitation to enter.
- b) *Waiting*: waiting for the other to come (an indicator of differentiation).
- c) *Closing of arms*: when the reciprocity of ‘giving’ and ‘receiving’ is achieved (a symbol of unity).

³ The notion of embrace brings together three theological themes: the mutuality of self-giving love in the Trinity; the outstretched arms of Christ on the cross for the ‘godless’; and the open arms of the ‘father’ receiving the ‘prodigal’ (29).

⁴ For Volf, the metaphor is helpful but not essential; ‘The most basic thought that it seeks to express is important: the will to give ourselves to others and ‘welcome’ them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any “truth” about others and any construction of their ‘justice.’ This will is absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable; it transcends the moral mapping of the social world into “good” and “evil”’ (28-29).

⁵ Gundry-Volf and Volf, 1997:59.

b) *Opening of arms again*: affirmation of each person's discrete identity (a symbol of differentiation).

The embrace represents bilateral forgiveness. Movement is required on the part of the offender. For many settings, a handshake, connecting people while they are at a safe distance, is a form of embrace. Such an embrace will never be perfect, but partial and tension-filled yet it will open possibilities of mutual cooperation and enrichment (2015).

Forgiveness is essential to the theme of embrace.⁶ Volf understands forgiveness as the boundary between exclusion and embrace and thus the lattice which holds an interdependent world in place. He explains that forgiveness falters when one excludes the enemy from the community of humanity and excludes the self from the community of sinners.⁷ It is only through faith and repentance that one is freed to rediscover the wrongdoer's humanity and imitate God's love for that person.⁸

In sum, while 'the will to embrace' is unilateral, unconditional, and free, 'the embrace' is a mutual and conditional process that requires repentance, confession, reparation. Volf's basic thesis is 'there can be no justice without the will to embrace... no genuine and lasting embrace without justice' (1996:216).

An area of criticism targets the practical level of Volf's theory. In the act of 'opening arms' for the wrongdoer to come, how do we name the wrongs committed? Can the 'will to embrace' be initiated, maintained, and developed outside of a 'community of embrace'? (Corneliu 2013).

The TRC might resonate with Volf's theme of embrace, as Peter Storey (1997) argues in his article, 'A Different Kind of Justice: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa', that the experiences of the TRC point 'beyond conventional retribution into a

⁶ Volf implies that there is a mystery in the act of forgiveness which indicates an instinctive awareness of interdependence, 'When forgiveness happens, there is always a strange, almost irrational, otherness at its very heart ... Could it be that the word of forgiveness that must be uttered in the depths of our being, if it is uttered at all, is an echo of Another's voice?' (Gundry-Volf and Volf 1997:57).

⁷ Gundry-Volf and Volf 1997.

⁸ Gundry-Volf and Volf 1997.

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' (793). Tutu also affirms the fundamental importance of relationship, using the word *ubuntu*, meaning 'The essence of being human... It speaks about humaneness, gentleness, hospitality, putting yourself out on behalf of others, being vulnerable. It embraces compassion and toughness. It recognizes that my humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together' (Tutu and Tutu 1989:49). *Sulha* also resonates with embrace and its goal in achieving peace and coexistence.

9.2 Theology of Embrace in the Case-Studies

I argue Palestinian Baptists in the three cases experience a shift from conditional embrace or embrace lacking 'differentiation' (as identified in hierarchical, alternative-legalistic and *sulha* approaches) to an embrace including a process of 'differentiation', which although partial, nonetheless leads to reintegration (as seen in the Western-Baptist approach in case-C).

I will explain how each approach relates to Volf's theme of embrace. These are rough guidelines which do not necessarily describe the embrace of an individual using the relevant approach.

9.2.1 Hierarchical approach

In this approach I find that pastors *conditioned their embrace by repentance* of the 'rebellious-group'. In terms of Volf's theme, although pastors declared 'opening arms' (step 1) conditioned by the repentance of the 'rebellious-groups', it was not clear if they were truly waiting for their repentance (step 2) in order to close arms and finally welcome them back at church.

a) Opening arms. Interviewees from the 'rebellious-groups' felt rejected by their pastors when they insisted on taking part in church leadership. Pastors viewed this

desire for change as rebellion and a 'sin' against the pastor and the church. They also experienced dignity violation as a result of the behaviour of the 'rebellious-groups'. For the pastors, opening arms for these groups required extra carefulness. They wanted to be sure the group repented and apologized before welcoming them back. In case-A, apparently Pastor-A felt that opening arms during joint church services was enough. He did not want them back to share the space of the church building, which was a factor in causing conflict.

b) Waiting. Pastors might be in the stage of waiting for the 'rebellious-group' to repent publicly to come in, but for Volf waiting does not mean waiting for the other person to start the process of reconciliation. Pastor-A might want a renewed relationship, but it could be seen that he would rather go his own way even after an apology, reparation, and forgiveness. Reintegration is not an option for him as mentioned above. Pastor-B insisted he would welcome them back after repentance, but without leadership positions.

c, d) Closing of arms and opening arms again: Pastors viewed the difference in ministry philosophies (individual leadership versus council-led church) between them and the 'rebellious-group' as unsubmissiveness and rejection.

In this approach there was no process of 'differentiation' by which pastors negotiated their identities in interaction with the younger generation. They perceived the younger generation's education and enthusiasm as a threat to their power. Thus there was no resourceful 'taking in' and 'keeping out' but rather only keeping 'the other' out by not allowing the younger generation to participate in church in their own style of leadership, and accepting them only if they worked under their pastoral authority and style. Pastors evaluated the conflict as a spiritual problem of the 'rebellious-groups': they as pastors were right and good and the 'rebellious-groups' were wrong and unrighteous. Some members from the three cases claimed pastors could not separate the

people from the problem and tended to view members who did not agree with them as against them personally. For example, one pastor said, 'Either me or them – you cannot accept both.'⁹ In Volf's terms, this way was more an exclusion, as pastors decided to cut the bonds connecting them with the younger generation, preferring divorce as a way to solve conflicts. Their *embrace* of the opposing group was conditioned by repentance; they are excluded until they repent, and pastors have power to exclude.

Volf bases his suggestion on how identities should be understood, in order to restore and embrace broken relationships, on the story of the prodigal son.¹⁰ Volf argues relationships have priority over rules:

For the father, the priority of the relationships means not only a refusal to let moral rules be the final authority regulating 'exclusion' and 'embrace' but also a refusal to construct his own identity in isolation from the sons. He readjusts his identity along with the changing identities of his sons and thereby reconstructs their broken identities and relationships (1996:165).

According to Volf, the father suffers being 'un-fathered' by his two sons, so through this suffering he may regain them both as his sons and help them rediscover each other as brothers (1996:165).

The pastors *struggled* in the tension between rules (requiring repentance or punishment) and relationships (they *suffered* the broken relationship with their church members); what they needed was public apology which could restore their dignity. Theologically, it is likely the pastors understood that the father's embrace was conditioned by the prodigal son's repentance. Since pastors saw the 'rebellious-group' as an *unrepentant* prodigal son who came to be embraced, they did not welcome them.

The pastors seemed to act as the older brother, who refused to celebrate the prodigal's return. The older brother's response is a metaphor for refused and therefore unrealized forgiveness (Augsburger 1996:13). The father has clearly communicated his forgiveness with the embrace before knowing his son repented. He felt the need for

⁹ Pastor-B in his letter to the ABC.

¹⁰ In Luke 15:11-32.

having his son in his life/identity. He had waited long for him to come back. His motivation was his deep desire to embrace and honour his son.

Although the father reminded his elder son that the younger son would not reinstate his former privileges (this was the condition of some pastors- if the ‘rebellious-group’ come back), the elder son could not accept the father’s embrace and did not even sit at the same table. Yet what if the prodigal was out raping and robbing? Is the warm, individual relationship between father and son all that matters? What about the victims of the prodigal son? Rules and moral structures matter for relationships too. I think if the pastors wanted to follow the father in his attitude they should at least not have rejected private apology by the ‘rebellious-group’.

9.2.2 *Sulha* approach

My results show that *sulha* seems to resonate most with the theme of embrace, because of the way in which it prioritizes the relationships. Nonetheless, it is an *embrace lacking ‘differentiation’*, since the older generation (mainly deacons) embraced the younger generation without ‘allowing’ the process of ‘differentiation’. They required the younger group to forsake their modern identity for the sake of deference to clergy and maintaining the social order.

a, b) Opening arms and waiting. *Sulha’s* communal approach to conflict is based on the view that hurting an individual means hurting the entire community. This emphasizes the interrelationships and connections between people. In a sense this approach does not exclude, it welcomes everybody. However, this approach does not welcome a change of power, rather it prefers keeping the status quo, even if this results in compromising the other group’s rights – such as seen in case-A where the deacons compromised their rights and convinced the younger generation to forsake their rights in the church buildings. In Volf’s terms this approach did not exclude others, for them

there is no right and wrong, good and evil, for them there is a desired outcome at church, namely social order.

c) Closing of arms. There were no processes of ‘differentiation’ by which older and younger generations negotiated their identities. Although they did not oppose or negate the other, there was no resourceful ‘taking in’ or ‘keeping out’ as Volf suggested. For *sulha* we are who we are not because we are ‘distinct and related, separate and connected’, but because we are interrelated; as such the younger generation, in a patriarchal-traditional community, are expected to compromise for the sake of clergy and social order. Since divorce was not an option in this approach, the splits by the ‘rebellious-groups’ were perceived by the community as a poor decision resulting in their boycott by several pastors.

d) Opening arms again. There was no opening of arms again. There was no affirmation of the younger generation’s distinct identity as mentioned above. This is a kind of exclusion, because exclusion happens when there is a removal of the boundaries in such a way that the identity of the other cannot be recognized in a relationship.¹¹

9.2.3 Alternative-legalistic approach

Results indicate that in this approach *embrace lacks ‘differentiation’*.

a) Opening arms. One can argue the participation of the ‘rebellious groups’ in joint church services in case-A and their initiative in case-B (although were not welcomed by the pastor) were examples of opening arms as an invitation to pastors to restore relationships.

b) Waiting. It started with opening arms and was stopped at the second step of waiting. In case-A, Pastor-A responded to joint services which were initiated by joint missionary friends, however, these initiatives did not develop any further interaction. In

¹¹ Volf 1996.

fact, these joint services took place several times and then stopped. In case-B the ‘rebellious-groups’ are left waiting for the pastor to respond.

c,d) Closing of arms and opening arms again. They started with the process of ‘differentiation’ because they were ready to negotiate with the pastors, as they realized they were distinct from the older generation. They were ready to compromise to keep related. This negotiation failed because pastors saw themselves as ‘pure’ without the ‘rebellious-groups’, and as a result, the ‘rebellious-groups’ saw themselves as ‘pure’ without the pastors when they decided to split the church. We can conclude both the ‘rebellious-groups’ and the pastors excluded one another.

9.2.4 Western-Baptist approach

I focus only on case-C since this approach was mostly seen there. Embrace in case-C went through a *shift from conditional to a welcoming* embrace. I identified two different stages of embrace between the two conferences: first, ‘forced’ or rushed ‘differentiation’ (leading to reintegration after the reconciliation-retreat conference), and second, welcoming embrace (leading to the beginning of reconciliation after the Canadian pastor’s conference).

9.2.4.1 ‘Forced’ ‘differentiation’ embrace

a, b) Opening arms and waiting. After the reconciliation-retreat and the reintegration, church-C2 struggled with having Pastor-C as their pastor again. As a result, they approached the ABC to agree that his return with church-C3 would be conditional, and not as the church pastor. Influenced by the Canadian pastor and the ABC-committee, they gave him a chance. Although church-C2 had conditions, we can conclude it opened arms and waited to see Pastor-C change once back in the church. This was a conditional embrace but it also included a ‘forced’ ‘differentiation’ process as I will explain in the next step. How genuine are open arms with conditions? Looking

back at the father's attitude in the prodigal son parable, he lovingly embraced his son before hearing any confession.

c) Closing of arms. Pastor-C, who was embraced by a few leaders during the conflict, insisted on returning to church-C2 as a pastor. Obviously, Pastor-C and the ABC-Committee 'forced' or rushed a process of 'differentiation' between Pastor-C (church-C3) and church-C2. Church-C2 did not fight this process, but they did not cooperate. Some church-C2's members did not participate in programmes Pastor-C initiated in the church, such as baptisms, trips and conferences; they were reluctant to have Pastor-C back and found it hard to trust him. They were passive and waited to see Pastor-C fail. Shirin a church-C2 leader said, 'After the reintegration we felt we were a church inside a church ... we did not feel we belonged.'¹² Both groups opened arms partly, not wide, and waited. They were suspicious, afraid and not ready to take the third step of *closing arms*.

This embrace lacks 'differentiation' (step 4); no negotiation took place between the two groups.

9.2.4.2 Welcoming embrace

c) Closing of arms. After the Canadian pastor's conference, a resourceful 'taking in' and 'keeping out' started between church-C2 and Pastor-C (and church C3), as some leaders from church-C2 started to cooperate again with Pastor-C and became more confident to take the step of closing arms as their trust in him increased. However, this was not the attitude of the whole church.

¹² Shirin, 2016.

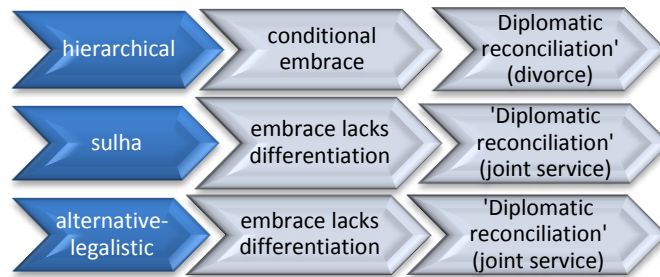
d) *Opening arms again.* Church-C2 and Pastor-C began this process; a transformation started to take place in the attitudes of Pastor-C and some leaders from church-C2.¹³

Two important elements contributed to this successful embrace: (1) *The Spirit* played a role during the two ‘divine presence’ conferences, which caused the change in the attitude of embrace as participants felt its presence in different ways. This element is critical also since church-C2 is a charismatic church. (2) An *identity grounded in Christ*, which was seen in Pastor-C’s repentance and apology, and in members who were reminded (by ABC-Committee and the Canadian pastor) how they should act as Christians whose identity is centred in Christ. Members of the ABC-Committee told me church-C2 was taught to take the approach of interpreting everything out of love for Pastor-C, taking the example of self-giving love of Christ. The Canadian pastor kept reminding them not to judge Pastor-C but rather pray, love and forgive him. Similar to Volf’s model, the Canadian Pastor mentored church-C2 to embrace Pastor-C even when he was perceived as a wrongdoer. These mentors were aware of the role of the Spirit in helping them to resist the power of exclusion and replacing it with embrace.

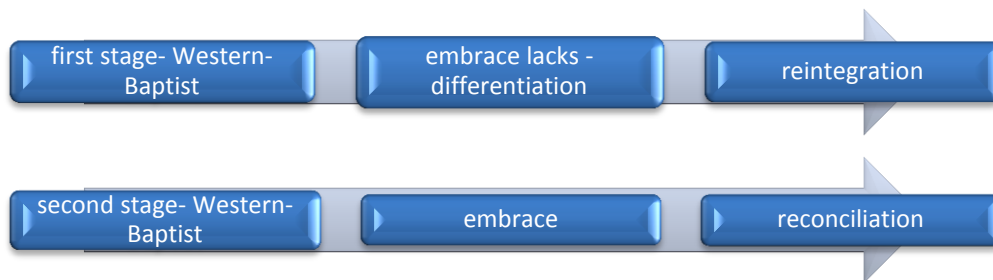
In sum, between case-A (1995) and case-C (2016), embrace shifted from conditional (as in hierarchical) or lacking ‘differentiation’ (as in *sulha* and alternative-legalistic) to an embrace which took the form of reintegration and afterwards reconciliation. Although this embrace was imperfect, the reintegration ‘rushed’ the process of ‘differentiation’ and then embrace.

¹³ Case-C confirms Volf’s point, as he argues, ‘If we are able to exit a relationship, the pressure to reconcile lessens... we can walk away from them. But if we must live with those who have wronged us, we are pushed to reconcile. If we don’t reconcile, we risk being either crippled by resentment or consumed by a cycle of revenge, and in either case being unable to cooperate with them’ (2015:9).

Figure C: embrace in the case-studies



In case-C two stages of embrace, reintegration and beginning of reconciliation:



9.3 Challenges and Recommendations

The cases provide an interesting insight into the relation between forgiveness and embrace. When forgiveness is conditional, as seen in the hierarchical approach, then embrace is also conditional. When forgiveness is external, as in *sulha* and alternative-legalistic approaches, then embrace lacks ‘differentiation’. In the Western-Baptist approach of case-C, forgiveness was viewed as internal (first stage) and divine (second stage), and embrace in its first stage took the form of reintegration while in the second stage reconciliation started to take place.

Conditional forgiveness → conditional embrace, ‘diplomatic reconciliation’

External forgiveness → embrace lacks ‘differentiation’, ‘diplomatic reconciliation’

Internal forgiveness → reintegration

Divine forgiveness → reconciliation

Volf argues there is a tight unity between forgiveness and embrace, ‘God forgives by indwelling us and indwells us by forgiving us’ (2005:189). In answering the question of

whether to first forgive or embrace, Volf states that what is important is only to insist on the unbreakable unity of forgiveness and embrace. There can be no embrace of the former enemy without forgiveness, and forgiveness should lead beyond itself to embrace. The same love which motivates forgiveness pushes forgiveness from exclusion to embrace.

According to Volf it is the responsibility of the church to create practical steps to live out the theme of embrace. However, it is not clear how this ‘will to embrace’ is to be implemented in churches. How are pastors or church members to choose to embrace and not exclude? Volf suggests the use of a confession text to endorse embrace, to be committed to ‘double vision’ and to be prepared to make changes. Churches could develop a similar confession. Nonetheless, although the ‘will to embrace’ is decisional, there are no practical indications of a process that may lead one to make the choice of the ‘will to embrace.’ Additionally how do we name the wrongdoings, in the act of ‘opening arms’ for the wrongdoer to come?

Besides adding the ‘community’ to remembrance, forgiveness, and justice,¹⁴ I suggest adding it to Volf’s theology of embrace. Individuals who act from within a group do not stand alone as individuals, but as group members; though in all groups there is a distribution of power and authority that makes some members more persuasive or responsible than the others (Shriver 1995). Groups make decisions and act on them, empowering their members to collective actions. This was demonstrated in case-C where several key leaders influenced the overall attitude of church-C2 and contributed to reconciliation (embrace).

Another suggestion is church practices. Long-term divorce (as in cases A and B) would not have provided a space for bilateral forgiveness or reconciliation. For both forgiveness and reconciliation to happen there must be some kind of interaction that can

¹⁴ See also Sections 6.4, 7.3, 8.3.
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encourage the move beyond offence to the metaphorical embrace of forgiveness. This is evident in case-C where reconciliation took place less than two years after the rushed reintegration. As mentioned in Chapter Six,¹⁵ church practices played an important role in contributing to the transformation of attitudes and feelings.

Case-C demonstrates that the process of reconciliation is not linear. Embrace took place (when the ABC rushed reintegration) before remembering rightly and forgiveness. In other words, in this case the community had the power to force embrace, despite unforgiveness and not remembering rightly, which eventually encouraged the process of forgiveness and remembering rightly.

9.4 Personal Agency

If all approaches struggled in remembering rightly, forgiving, seeking justice and embrace, how could the Western-Baptist approach in its second phase lead to reconciliation whereas the other approaches could not?

Even when a refined contextualized model of reconciliation is in place and is known by all parties, reconciliation is not guaranteed. The parties involved will have to make a personal choice to effect reconciliation. Even in the absence of a refined model of reconciliation (as in many cases), personal agencies and good choices can facilitate the journey towards reconciliation. The ideal case is when a good model of reconciliation is understood by all who act personally in the way of *integrity, humility, courage* and *love*. I have identified the following examples of personal agency that seemed to contribute to the reconciliation in case-C.

First, *Pastor-C's repentance* and his persistence in reconciling influenced the result of reconciliation as mentioned above. Pastor-C's attitude was influenced by several events. (1) the death of his former pastor (church-C), (2) the 'prophetic dream' his guest had in his sleep, (3) being embraced by a few leaders who allowed/accepted

¹⁵ See Section 6.4.

his *venting* process, such as David, Rami and the Canadian pastor who did not cease loving and encouraging him, (4) the prayers and fasting of some members from both church-C2 and church-C3, led by pastor-C's wife.

Second, *coaching by a third-party*, the mentoring of the Canadian pastor given to some laity in church-C2, and his guidance to Pastor-C nurtured the seeds of forgiveness and love. As Shirin put it, 'Without his [Canadian pastor's] guidance we would have lots of bitterness.'¹⁶ Additionally the intervention by members of the ABC-Committee involved personal agency, such as David, George and another pastor who played a role in coaching church-C2 post-split.

Third, the *attitude of some church-C2 leaders* was towards restoring the relationship they were missing.¹⁷ Shirin stated, 'The pain of the members was connected to the brokenness of relationships ... church members who loved Pastor-C were hurt and wondered, "Why did this happen to us?" We had had great times as a church, we missed the past'¹⁸ and she concluded that restoration of the broken relationship brought healing. Concerning trusting Pastor-C again, some members remembered Pastor-C's past good deeds but church-C2 needed to see proof of his repentance. Pastor-C's transformation encouraged church-C2 to trust and accept him again. Seemingly, if Pastor-C had not changed, church-C2 would have continued to struggle to accept and trust him, causing the conflict to escalate again.¹⁹

Fourth, a few members from both church-C2 and church-C3, were separately committed to praying for reconciliation.

¹⁶ Shirin, 2016.

¹⁷ This is the only factor that was seen also in case-B, where church members loved Pastor-B; interviewees said that they missed the past relationship and wished they could restore it.

¹⁸ Shirin, Jan 2017.

¹⁹ Apparently, it is easier to deal with forgetting after a divorce (split) as in case-A and B than after reintegration as in case-C. The main difference here is the issue of trust. After a divorce, trust is no longer relevant; however, after reintegration, trust becomes the main struggle, as well as remembering therapeutically. The issue of trust was mentioned by some members from church-C2 post-reintegration. They said they forgave and wanted reconciliation but trusting Pastor-C again was a different issue. As Boulus, the interim pastor at church-C2 explained, 'What church-C2 needed was to gain trust and to see a real change in Pastor-C's behaviour' (Boulus, Aug 2015).

Another important element that influenced reconciliation in case-C was the *charismatic* influence on members of church-C2, Pastor-C, the Canadian pastor and the ABC-Committee.²⁰ This is an important factor in that it influenced the way they perceived the two conferences, where they referred to experiencing ‘divine presence’: first, the reconciliation-retreat conference, which was followed by reintegration, and second the Canadian Pastor’s conference, which took place a year after the reintegration. In comparing the two conferences, Shirin explained:

In the reconciliation-retreat we experienced the beginning of forgiveness but there was no trust yet [in Pastor-C]. The second conference was the continuation of the forgiveness and trust-building. Suddenly I could see that Pastor-C had changed; now when I look at him I see the pastor that everyone loved prior to the conflict. In this conference another barrier fell down. Today when I remember the conflict, I see human weakness and God’s grace lifting up the church again.²¹

Shirin mentioned several *practices* that showed continuation of the work of reconciliation in church-C2 post-conferences. First, worship flows smoothly and members participate in worship. Second, after the service members of church-C2 and C3 have fellowship together at church and sometimes Pastor-C invites the church for coffee at his house. Third, generally church matters are flowing.

Another fundamental component to the reconciliation success was *humility*. Without the humility of the key actors mentioned above, especially Pastor-C’s public apology, no reconciliation could have happened. Given the fact that the local culture is patriarchal-hierarchical, it is *shameful* for a clergy to confess his wrongdoings as this might be an indication of deficient spirituality. Georges and Baker (2016) suggest that Christians should feel broken and *unworthy* before God, *ashamed* of sin (because our involvement in it was dishonouring God) and *humble* towards others. Humility towards others is another way Christians should think lowly of themselves. Jesus calls his

²⁰ This element was discussed in Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.4.

²¹ Shirin, Jan 2017.

followers to be servants of all (Luke 14:7-11). This heart of service grows out of humility. In comparing between shame and humility they state:

Humility is the righteous counterpart to shame. Humility flows from a heart filled with divine honour, whereas shame is the absence of any honour. In one sense humility involves purposely taking on unearned shame for a righteous purpose or willingly setting aside one's honour for a greater good, such as Jesus did in his incarnation, life and crucifixion. Shame, on the other hand, perverts humility, as it hardly leads to serving others (125)

Differentiation between honour and pride can further align our hearts with God's values.

Pride is a feeling of delight derived from one's own achievements and is self-declared.

Honour is recognition from others and is granted. The world equates shame with humility and honour with pride, however, in the kingdom of God pride produces shame and humility leads to honour (Georges and Baker 2016).

9.5 Summary Analysis of the Four Approaches in Light of Volf's Model (Table)

Table 9.1 The results of the analysis of the four approaches in light of Volf's model

Approach	Remembrance	Forgiveness	Justice	Embrace	Outcome
Hierarchical	Didn't remember rightly. Struggled in: Truthfully Therapeutically Responsibly In reconciling ways	Conditioned by repentance	Restoration of honour publicly	Conditioned by public repentance	'Diplomatic reconciliation' (divorce)
<i>Sulha</i>	Partly remembered rightly. Struggled in: Therapeutically Responsibly	External, decisional, public	Re-establishment of social order	Embrace lacks differentiation	'Diplomatic reconciliation' (joint service)
Alternative-legalistic	Partly remembered rightly. Struggled in: Therapeutically Responsibly	External, private apology	Rights	Embrace lacks differentiation	'Diplomatic reconciliation' (joint service)
Western-Baptist (before reintegration)	Remembered rightly. Struggled in: Therapeutically In reconciling ways	Internal, public/private apology	Rights and restoration of relationships	Embrace lacks differentiation	Reintegration
Western-Baptist (after reintegration)	Remembered rightly. Struggled in: Therapeutically	Divine, internal, collective-public	Right order at church/good witness	Embrace	Reconciliation

Chapter Ten

10. Recommendations and Conclusion

10.1 Findings and Recommendations

This research has investigated the environment, nature, causes and management of the Palestinian Baptist intra-church conflict in Israel between 1990 and 2016, and evaluated Miroslav Volf's theology of reconciliation in light of it. My basic argument was that the clash between the pastors and laity, which led to the church splits, was in fact a clash between each side's strong combination of its *theology and culture* working against the other side. This same clash was seen in the conflict management practices and contributed to the failure to bring any effective conflict resolution. Palestinian Baptists have also been experiencing a shift from traditional-patriarchal to modern culture, a shift in the position and influence of women, and a shift in their theology of reconciliation from 'diplomatic reconciliation' (a form of pacification that seeks social order and status quo) to reconciliation. I also argued that Volf's theory needs cultural translation in order to be applicable in this context.

It is noteworthy that my goal in this research was not to judge the attitudes of the pastors or the laity as right or wrong, but to draw out some practical conclusions and recommendation as follows.

I showed that the departure of the missionaries in the early 1990s, along with other generational, cultural, social, theological, structural and economic factors, led to divisions among Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel. The splits within Palestinian Baptist churches in Israel are caused by the various unique characteristics that define these churches, and can be summarized in the following points: (1) members of the church are a threefold minority with an identity crisis, who experience life as second class citizens living within a legally uncertain environment that mirrors the insecurity they feel in their church life; (2) despite the community being patriarchal, the church

structure is flat and lacks a patriarch figure; (3) the churches do not constitute an organic community, instead there are a variety of very small churches, and each consisting of different and distinct generations; (4) there is a low level of institutionalization in these churches; (5) the high view of ordination held by the pastors is constantly threatened by young laity, causing a struggle for the pastors over livelihood and power; (6) it is unusual for churches to have their own buildings due to the lack of economic capital; (7) there has been an influx of highly educated young leaders who are committed to individual rights, individualistic-oriented competitiveness, and hold an attitude of 'rebellion' against traditional, patriarchal leadership while still holding on to some aspects of their patriarchal culture; (8) most importantly there is no clear Christian model for these believers on how to deal with church conflict.

My analysis of the nature and causes of intra-church conflict in three cases of church split indicates that the *primary* cause is the clash between pastors' strong combination of theology and culture working against the laity's strong combination of theology and culture. Since the pastor's authoritarian manner, derived theologically (they understand their position as a lifelong sacrament- hierarchical approach), is also encouraged in the culture (patriarchal approach), their authoritarian stance is entrenched *theologically and culturally*. This 'hierarchical-patriarchal' approach combined powerfully to strengthen pastors desire to keep their position and power at church. On the other hand, the younger generation's 'Congregationalist-democratic' approach was influenced culturally by Western-secular ideas of individual rights and democracy (democratic approach), in which they justified their demands to share power theologically in terms of the 'priesthood of all believers' (Congregationalist approach). Since their claim for power, derived theologically, is also encouraged by their modern cultural components, their claim is also entrenched *theologically and culturally*. The

clash between the pastors and laity reflects a deep generational clash between older and younger generations in worldviews that encompasses theology, cultural values, and social relations.

Secondary causes for church splits are church buildings, women's informal power and economic factors. The symbolic meaning of church buildings (power and its theological commitments) and its location grant the pastors honour and respect in the broader community. The informal power of women extended throughout the conflict and process in the three cases. The economic factors also influenced the way conflict was handled.

I also found that these same main factors of *theology and culture* contributed to the ways the conflicts were dealt with from the perspective of the pastor and the perspective of the laity. Again, because of the clash of those factors from each side, the conflicts were not resolved effectively. In managing church conflict, Palestinian Baptists engage in four different practices, all operating in the field, each with a distinct perception, tradition and approach to conflict resolution. My research identified and explored two *cultural* approaches: (1) Palestinian traditional *sulha* approach and (2) alternative-legalistic approach; and two *theological* approaches: (1) hierarchical Palestinian traditional church approach and (2) Western-Baptist approach. The pastors' cultural-theological approach is a combination of *sulha* and hierarchical traditional church ('patriarchal-hierarchical'). The laity's cultural-theological approach is a combination of alternative-legalistic and Western-Baptist approaches ('democratic-Congregationalist'). These conflict management practices are complex and dynamic, involving an internal dialogue between the traditional practices (*sulha* and traditional churches) and innovative practices (alternative-legalistic and Western-Baptist theology). In the case-studies a shift can be seen from the first-generation, desiring to maintain status quo and power, to the younger generation, seeking change and power.

The research revealed that pastors and laity held different implicit theologies of reconciliation, which were all imperfect. *Sulha* lacks internal forgiveness and justice which kept the conflict unresolved. The alternative-legalistic approach prioritizes justice over relationships which led to splits. In the hierarchical model the pastor is the one who implements justice and offers forgiveness and the laity has to obey which led to unsatisfied laity to leave church. Western-Baptist theology is more individualistic and lacks some aspects of Palestinian culture such as family and emotions. This called for a more comprehensive theology of reconciliation, such as Volf's theory. Volf's reconciliation theology was developed in the Balkan context; it is culturally American-Croatian and theologically an evangelical perspective.

In the theological discussion I showed that the combination of *theology and culture* was fundamental to provide the solution. I theologically evaluated the four conflict management approaches used by Palestinian Baptists in terms of Volf's four themes (remembrance, forgiveness, justice and embrace). I found that Palestinian Baptists in Israel are in the process of conceptualizing and integrating new meanings into their theology of reconciliation. They are also experiencing a shift from 'diplomatic reconciliation', to the beginning of reconciliation taking the form of reintegration of churches that split.

I found that Palestinian Baptists in the cases developed what I called a 'diplomatic reconciliation'; an ethical response which echoed some of the major concerns of Palestinian Baptists, notably living in a relational, closely intertwined community and in an unforgiving environment within the framework of Congregationalist churches in a patriarchal-hierarchical tradition. By walking a fine line between conflicting demands and possibilities, this 'diplomatic reconciliation' allowed them to cooperate and live together in some kind of social order but lacking genuine internal and interpersonal forgiveness. Ceasefire, shaking hands, joint church services,

and cooperation based on mutual gain were external expressions of their *forgiveness* that is conditional, external and incomplete. They partly *remembered* rightly and struggled to forget the wrongdoings, and thus they struggled in remembering therapeutically and responsibly. They had different understandings of *justice* and struggled in the tension between seeking justice and offering forgiveness, which left conflicts unresolved. Their *embrace* was conditional and lacked ‘differentiation’ (a process by which the self and the other negotiate their identities).

Between case-A (in 1995) and case-C (in 2016) Palestinian Baptists experienced a shift in their theology of reconciliation, in terms of Volf’s four themes as follows:

Conditional/external forgiveness → to internal/divine/collective-public forgiveness.

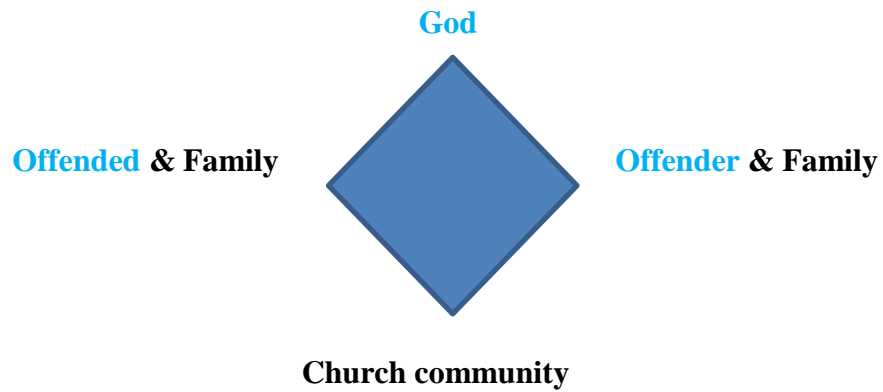
Partly remember rightly → to remember rightly (partly remember therapeutically).

Justice as rights or social order → to justice as right order at church/good witness.

Conditional or lacks ‘differentiation’ embrace → to embrace.

I also examined the relevance of Volf’s theological themes within the Palestinian Baptist context and found Volf’s *theological* model is indeed pertinent to Palestinian Baptists. Yet, in order to be applicable to this context it requires *cultural* translation. I found that there are some principles from *sulha* which can be embraced to modify Volf’s model:

1) *Community*. Although for Volf the community is important to make the practice of forgiveness meaningful, it is not an essential participant in achieving reconciliation as in *sulha*. The findings showed that we need a more collective and public reconciliation involving a whole church community. I suggested combining Volf’s triangle of God, offender and offended in which forgiveness takes place, with the *sulha* triangle of the offender’s family, the offended’s family and the community. The outcome will be that forgiveness takes place not in a triangle but in a rhombus as follow:



I found several advantages to adding the community as a fundamental participant in the process of reconciliation. First, the community can offer support to its members, both offended and offender, through bearing the burden of the wrongs done together in the process of redeeming the past wrongdoings, remembering rightly, forgiving, repairing and restoring relationships. Second, the use of inclusive language such as ‘we’ may help forgiveness interpersonally and in the collective, when community members encourage one another to forgive and remember rightly. Third, this will support the victim in the process of healing and in practising the will to embrace, as s/he will be embraced by the community throughout the whole process. Fourth, the community can put pressure on the offender to encourage him/her to repent and repair the damage. Fifth, the community can be the best guardian to sustain justice and ensure the durability of the agreement post-conflict as well as becomes the witness in which reconciliation take place. Finally, the community can contribute to heal the shame of both offender and offended by welcoming them back.

2) *Formality*. Another fundamental element of reconciliation in *sulha*, which is missing in Volf’s theory, is formality. I suggested framing reconciliation and declaration of forgiveness by ritualized formal public action, culminating with the Lord’s Supper followed by a common meal. The Aramaic word for forgiveness has the root ‘table’; Christ transformed the sharing of a meal (table) into a metaphor for realized forgiveness (Augsburger 1996). This is also an actual symbol of forgiveness and

reconciliation in the Palestinian culture (*sulha* ceremony). Both internal and external resources and expressions can lead the disputants to realize forgiveness even though imperfect. Formality and *sulha* rituals create the space for restoring dignity lost as a result of the offence. This would transform forgiveness and reconciliation from a private affair to a public, formal and binding one, involving the church community and multiple witnesses. Another important ritual could be the creating and authorizing of a third-party, such as in *jaha*, who has the role to act as anger-absorber, bring ceasefire, transform revenge into forgiveness, sustain justice, and mend relationships.

3) *Venting*. Volf's theory does not offer practical suggestions as to how resentment shifts to compassion towards the offender. I suggested adding venting to Volf's theory as in *sulha*. First, venting names and condemns the wrongs. Second, it allows the expression of negative feelings, such as hatred, resentment and pain, in order to transform them into tolerance and compassion. Third, venting is an essential factor in redeeming the past sorrow. It provides the place where anger will be publicly expressed, which will enable the reversal of dignity violation through a public acknowledgement of the moral standing of the offended, a form of symbolically restoring the offended back to the status from which the offence has humiliated and shamed them in the eyes of the community. This then makes the future possible, as the offended is freed from fear and from being shaped by the wrongdoing suffered and humiliation. These elements are essential in achieving forgiveness.

4) *Dignity restoration* is another public expression of reconciliation that I suggested should be added to Volf's theory. Dignity restoration acts as a tool to achieve forgiveness. The process of *musayara* refers to the practice whereby the *jaha* treat the victim's family, from the beginning to the end of the *sulha* process, with the great respect normally given to high status persons. The *jaha* temporarily places the family in

a position of ‘patronage’ over the most respected men in the community (*jaha*). This process is vital in helping to further calm the feelings of humiliation, in contributing to the restoration of dignity, and in *healing shame* by embracing the offended back into right relationship and community and finally transforming revenge to forgiveness.

5) *Nonlinear structure*. For Volf reconciliation takes place in a linear structure, in a trajectory of a cycle: remember rightly, forgive, reconcile and then let go of the memory of the offence. Reconciliation in the Palestinian context does not necessarily have a linear structure; sometimes ‘diplomatic reconciliation’ occurs before or without forgiveness and remembering rightly. The community has the power to ‘force’ ‘embrace’ despite unforgiveness and not remembering rightly, which might in some cases (as in case-C) encourage the process of forgiveness and genuine reconciliation, but in other cases (as in case-A) forgiveness stay external with ‘diplomatic reconciliation’.

6) *Conditional forgiveness*. Volf and Tutu in the Balkan and South African contexts respectively advocate unconditional forgiveness. Biggar, in a Northern Ireland context among others, advocates conditional forgiveness. Palestinian theology is also diverse. Nonetheless given their unforgiving environment politically, socio-culturally and religiously, practising unconditional forgiveness might be challenging for Palestinian Baptists. I suggest following Nelson in that since conditional and unconditional forgiveness have much in common and differ in the way reconciliation is realized, it might be more beneficial to focus on achieving reconciliation rather than focusing on whether forgiveness is conditional or unconditional.

7) *Church practices*. Volf’s theory does not suggest concrete practical actions for how past sorrow is to be remembered in a redeemed way. I suggested that repeated church practices (such as communion, foot washing, worship, prayer meetings, studying

scriptures) are helpful for several reasons. First, it gains the community involvement. Second, it provides a space for interaction that can encourage the move beyond offence to bilateral forgiveness and reconciliation to take place. Third, the participation in church practices also enables church members to partly experience redemption of past sorrow/wrongdoing as these practices contribute to the transformation and reshaping of memories of offended/victims as they happen repeatedly and continually. Additionally, studying Scripture allow the word of God to work in their minds and hearts in reshaping their memory and in communion they remember the promise of redemption as an eschatological reality and the recognition of partial redemption now.

8) *Divine justice*. I agree with Marshal (2005) that divine justice should be seen as compatible with divine love, rather than seeing justice as of primary importance, like DeGruchy and Ateek, or seeing it as subordinate to love, like Volf, El-Assal, Younan, Massad and Tutu. Divine justice and grace should not be treated as separate elements with one being focussed on at the expense of the other, and thus should not be separated during conflict. Those who bear God's image must also be agents of justice, since justice is a divine attribute. Therefore, I suggest that Palestinian Baptists view justice not only in terms of its socio-political understanding (rights) but also, as compatible with their own cultural model of *sulha*, in its biblical perspective in terms of restoration of relationships.

Additionally, at a practical level several issues in Volf's theory are not clear. First, it is not clear how we can evaluate the truthfulness of one's narrative regarding the conflict in which this 'truth' is influenced by religious beliefs, culture and emotions. This is important especially if the narrator was engaged in a past trauma that became an integral part of their identity. Second, although the 'will to embrace' is decisional, there are no practical indications of a process that may lead one to make the choice of the 'will to embrace'. In addition how do we name the wrongs committed, in the act of

‘opening arms’ for the wrongdoer to come? Third, in which way are offenders called to justice within the framework of the ‘will to embrace’? Fourth, after achieving justice how can it be sustained? Finally, repairing damage and restitution may take care of guilt, but what is the kind of justice that deals with shame?

Since there were no splits before the departure of the missionaries, does this mean that some entity should replace them to prevent and manage conflicts? What does this say about the role of the missionaries? Were they external peacekeepers, with authority from another culture who were treated with respect as founders and outsiders? Who might take on this role now? Does this mean a stronger ABC is required? Or is there an inherent weakness in Baptist Congregationalist polity which leads to church splits in general? If so, should not Baptist Congregationalist polity and its underpinning theology be questioned and revised according to context? Implicit in these questions is the question of the use and balance of power.

10.2 Contribution to Existing Body of Knowledge

This empirical study was conducted in the midst of ongoing conflict; the findings of such research are useful for conflict prevention and resolution and will add knowledge about the nature and sources of conflict in conflict zones in general and in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.²²

This study is an original contribution to academic study on four levels:

- 1) On the *concrete level* this study is the first not only to analyse conflict among Palestinian Baptist in Israel, but also, as far as I can discern, it is the first to critically evaluate their implied theologies and make a constructive theological

²² There is currently growing interest in developing academic and professional expertise in the field of conflict resolution and research projects have become common in institutions located in conflict zones.

proposal in the Palestinian context,²³ which is contextually and biblically appropriate. I hope my research will contribute to the process of contextualization and institutionalization that Palestinian Baptists are experiencing in the last two decades.

- 2) On a broader *regional level* this study provides a Palestinian Christian perspective on the professional discipline now being developed in Israel. The need for such an approach is increasing as the Israeli-Palestinian turmoil continues and tensions increase in the Middle East.
- 3) Concerning the *religious level* the recent decline of Arab nationalism and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism have emphasized religious identity in the Middle East. The need for addressing conflict within religious communities from a religious perspective is escalating.
- 4) On a broader *theological level* my research contributes to the theological discussion of theology of reconciliation by *presenting a Palestinian perspective* to the body of knowledge in this field. I have examined the Palestinian theology of reconciliation in three cases, evaluated the applicability of Volf's theory in the Palestinian context and presented a proposal to adjust Volf's theory as stated in Section 10.1.

It is my hope that this research will assist Arab churches to develop a greater *cultural* and *theological* awareness in order to resolve their conflicts in a more profound and lasting manner.

10.3 Limitation and Scope for Further Research

There is no doubt that there are some issues that I have not tackled adequately, where further research will be required. It follows that research of this sort, which

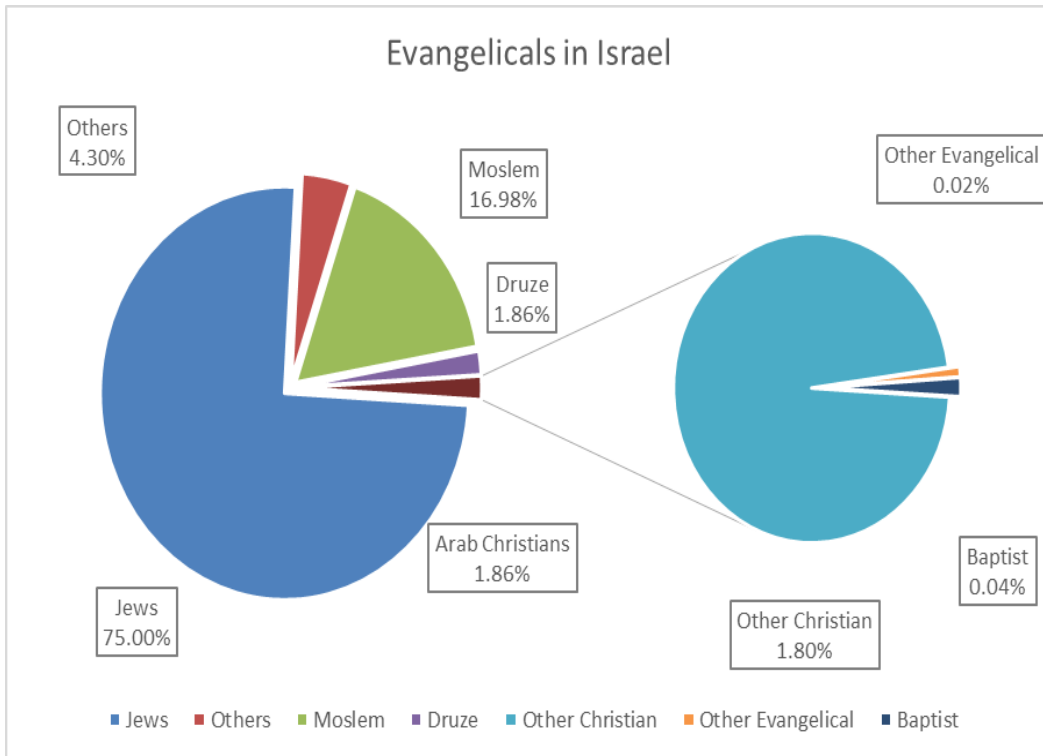
²³ In the field of church conflict the literature does not fully examine the nature of conflict, especially in non-Western contexts and its focus is on Western cultural patterns of conflict management. There is therefore a need for research into the nature of church conflict conducted in an Arab context, especially with regard to Palestinian evangelical churches in Israel.

focuses only on three case-studies, calls for further research to expand on my own work. Further, given that the research is limited to a single country, I will be interested to follow subsequent research in other countries and regions and what that might reveal. Nonetheless, my work represents a significant contribution upon which other scholars may build upon as they look at different contexts and types of conflict.

The study investigates the phenomenon of church splits between 1990 and 2016. This phenomenon is *dynamic*, since Palestinian Baptists constitute a new denomination in Israel and are working on the issue of institutionalization of conflict management practices and conceptualizing a theology of reconciliation.

With regard to a theology of reconciliation, it was neither my intention to survey all contributions to this field nor explore its biblical and historical roots. Rather, I focused on Volf's theology of reconciliation as the theoretical model to be used to both evaluate the cases studies and to be evaluated by them. This choice also implies that the analysis has been undertaken from a Protestant perspective only. A further research could address church conflict in local Palestinian traditional churches.

Appendix 1- Arab Palestinian Christian Evangelicals in Israel: a threefold minority



Appendix 2- Para-church members in the Convention of Evangelical Churches in Israel (CECI) established since 1985

1. Nazareth Evangelical College (NEC)
2. House of Light
3. LINGA - Christian Services - Light in the Galilee.
4. Fellowship of Christian Students in Israel (FCSI)
5. Light for all Nations
6. Life Agape - Cru
7. Grace Ministry - Christian Holy Land Foundation (CHLF)
8. The Harvest
9. Back to Jerusalem
10. House of Prayer and Exploits (HOPE)

Appendix 3- List of interviewees (in-depth interviews)

Names have been changed to protect identities.

	ID	Church	Date
Pastor	Pastor-A	Church A	Apr 2014
Pastor	Samir	Church A	Apr 2014
Pastor	Mark	Church A	Aug 2014
Pastor	Majd	Church A	Mar 2014
Pastor	Amir	Church A2	Apr 2014
Pastor	Nizar	Church A	June 2014
Pastor	Adam	Church A2	Apr 2014
Pastor	George	Church A2	Mar 2014
Pastor	Jonathan	Church A	Apr 2014
Pastor	Victor	Church A	Dec 2014
Member	Suhad	Church A	Apr 2014
Member	Nora	Church A2	Mar 2014
Member	Rima	Church A2	Mar 2014
Member	Emily	Church A2	Mar 2014
Member	Mary	Church A2	Apr 2014
Member	Amal	Church A2	Mar 2014
Member	Hiyam	Church A2	Mar 2014
Member	Sally	Church A2	Mar 2014
Member	Mira	Church A	Apr 2014
Deacon	Jack	Church A2	Apr 2014
Deacon	Ramiz	Church A2	Mar 2014
Deacon	Dan	Church A2	Mar 2014
Deacon	Tamer	Church A2	Mar 2014
Leader	Waleed	Church A	June 2014
Leader	Nabil	Church A2	Mar 2014
Leader	Sami	Church A2	Feb 2014 Aug 2015
Leader	Yosef	Home group	April 2014
Leader	Bilal	Open interview	Nov 2014
Missionary	Ron	Church A	June 2014 July 2014

Missionary	Marcus	Church A	Aug 2014
Missionary	Paul	Church A	Aug 2014
Pastor	Chris	Lebanese	Sep 2014
Leader	William	Lebanese	July 2014
Pastor	Greg	Jordanian	Apr 2014
Leader		Egyptian	Mar 2015
Pastor	Pastor-B	Church B	Aug 2015
Member	Pastor-B's son	Church B	Aug 2015
Member	Lina	Church B	Aug 2015
Member	Rana	Church B2	Aug 2015
Member	Anita	Church B2	Aug 2015
Leader	Yasmin	Church B2	22 Sep 2016
Leader	Nadia	Church B2	Aug 2015
Pastor	Robert	Church B	Open interview 2013
Leader	Elias	Church B2	Aug 2015
Leader	Michel	Church B2	Aug 2015
Leader	Albert	Church C2	Aug 2015 May 2016 Oct 2016
Leader	Bishara	Church C2	Aug 2015
Pastor	Pastor-C	Church C3	July 2015
Member	Susan	Church C3	July 2015
Pastor	Boulus	ABC	Aug 2015
Leader	Shirin	Church C2	Aug 2015 Dec 2015 7 Jul 2016 Aug 2016 Sep 2016 12 Jan2017
Third-party	David	ABC	4 May 2015 10 May 2015 26 May 2015 3 Aug 2015
Third-party	Bryan	Church A2	Mar 2013

Third party	Rami	ABC	Open interviews 16 Mar 2014 18 Mar 2014 26 Mar 2014
Third-party	George	ABC	Aug 2015
Third-party	Peter	Bible college	May 2014
Third-party	Phil	Evangelical church	July 2104
Third-party	John	Evangelical church	Apr 2014
Third-party	Jack	ABC	August 2014
Third-party	Dave	ABC	June 2016
Third-party	Paul	Mission	Aug 2014

Appendix 4- Constitution (2007)

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES IN ISRAEL (ABC)

Registered Friendly Society (Amuta) No: 58-007-615-6

6.6. Pastors and Elders.

The Church Meeting shall appoint an Eldership (of males only) consisting of at least one person to be the Pastor, who shall thereby be the teaching elder and president of the Church. The Elders shall be mature believers in character, spirituality and biblical understanding, gifted to lead the Church and to explain the Christian faith either in private or public. They shall be responsible under God to the Church Meeting, to govern the Church's spiritual and practical life, to ensure that biblical standards are met in the Church's life and fellowship, to give pastoral care to the congregation, and to maintain the spiritual vision of the Church. In matters for which they have the authority of Scripture or the authority of the Church, Elders are to be given willing submission. Such matters will mainly concern acceptance of the Church's agreed doctrinal basis, or its rules and policies, or the moral standards required by Scripture. They shall not include matters of private judgment, in which a believer must make his or her own conscientious decision before God unless he or she freely agrees to limit that freedom, such as in a commitment to keep church rules.

6.7. Deacons

The Church Meeting shall appoint a Diaconate (open to all) to assist the Eldership as the need arises or as the Church Meeting decides in agreement with the Eldership.

6.8. Officers

The Church Meeting shall appoint a Church Secretary to head the church's administration, a Church Treasurer to head the Church's finance. They shall, for the

time they hold office, become either a Deacon or an Elder as the Church Meeting may decide. The Church Meeting may appoint other Officers to do such work on such conditions as it may deem appropriate.

6.9 The Church Council

The Elders, Deacons and such other officers as the Church Meeting may decide, shall form a Church Council, which shall be responsible to the Church Meeting for the general conduct of Church business between Church Meetings, and shall refer appropriate business to it as set out above in Section 6.4. for its approval or otherwise.

6.10. The Church shall maintain involvement in local and world mission, through prayer, giving and action according to its ability, so that the Church possesses a larger vision than its own existence and ministry.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF ABC

The ABC seeks to be a spiritual fellowship united in Christ and expressing spiritual attitudes, values and goals. What follows is necessarily legalistic as a careful statement of essentials, but the spiritual nature of fellowship and co-operation remains the ultimate desire of the ABC.

9. THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE

9.1. The Ministry Committee, elected by the Annual General Assembly, shall consist of three recognized Pastors of the ABC, and four others in membership of an ABC Church, one of whom shall be the wife of a recognized Pastor of the ABC. Service shall be for three years, after which members may be re-elected once and be ineligible for further re-election for one year.

9.1.1. The Ministry Committee shall be responsible to deal with all matters pertaining to the recognition of Pastors and the exercise of their

ministry within the ABC, in accordance with the provisions of the Ministerial Scheme (hereafter stated in The bylaws).

- 9.2. The Ministry Committee shall be responsible, and are hereby entitled, to intervene in any disputes within member Churches, between member Churches or between member Churches and their Pastors that are not previously resolved to the satisfaction of the Ministry Committee, as set out in the Ministerial Policy of the ABC.
- 9.3. The Ministry Committee shall advise the Executive Committee annually as to a *minimum recommended stipend* for full-time ministry in a local Church. The stipend shall be equivalent to a middle-range graduate teacher's stipend and shall include similar benefits such as in-service training and pension allowance. It shall be understood that this is a *minimum*, not a maximum, amount; and that part-time employment should be paid pro rata. The Executive Committee shall consider this and make its recommendation to the Council, who shall decide the annual amount.

BYLAW TWO:

MINISTERIAL SCHEME

(DRAFTED MAY 2007)

1. THE NATURE OF THE OFFICE OF MINISTER OR PASTOR

1.1. Definition

Baptist Churches recognize two internal offices in the leadership and government of the local Church: Elders who direct the affairs of the local Church and provide its spiritual leadership (Gk: presbuteros or episkopos, having substantially the same meaning); and Deacons (Gk. Diakonos and diakona), who are assistants to the Elders in their work.

A Pastor holds

1.1.1 the office of Elder in the local Church (restricted to males only), which may be one of several;

1.1.2. the office within the Eldership of teaching Elder, that is, someone gifted to expound the Word of God to the Church and to the world;

1.1.3. the office within the Eldership of presiding Elder over the congregation and officers of the Church, the shepherd (hence Pastor) of the flock

1.1.4. the office of representing his local Church to the wider Christian Church, especially fellow Baptists.

1.2. Authority

The authority of a Baptist Pastor is derived from his calling from God, recognized in his formal appointment by a local Church, which thereby authorizes him to fulfil his calling among them. Within this calling, a Pastor has the following authority to which the Church that has called him must give willing submission:

1.2.1 To have the right, or to delegate that right to a fellow Church member of his choice, to preside over his congregation, or any group within the congregation, whenever it meets, or to invite a visiting preacher to minister to the congregation.

1.2.2 To command obedience within the Church to the Word of God in all matters of faith and practice, on pain of God's displeasure and, if biblically necessary of Church discipline. In extreme cases disciplinary action may be taken before the formal proceedings (for example, to preclude someone from the Lord's Table), but such decisions shall be subject to confirmation by the disciplinary procedure established in the Church.

1.2.3. To exhort, rebuke, correct and encourage those under his Pastoral care so that he fulfils his calling to be a servant of Jesus Christ, a servant of the gospel, and a servant of the Church.

1.2.4. To approve the nomination of fellow officers (whether Elders, Deacons or other forms of leadership) of the Church before they are put to the vote of the Church Meeting.

1.2.5. To advise his Church on any matter before it is put to a vote in any meeting within the Church over which he presides by right.

1.2.6. To be acknowledged and honoured in all the Churches of the ABC as a recognized Pastor, but not to be given the function of Pastor or Elder in any congregation except by a proper Church decision, such as an invitation to give ministry, or some temporary advice, or a regular election to some office in the Church.

1.2.7. To claim recognition as a true minister of the Christian religion from the wider Christian community, other faith traditions and society at large.

1.2.8. A Pastor cannot exercise absolute authority over areas properly to be controlled by the Church Meeting or its other elected officers, such as Elders and Deacons and Church councils. Such areas include: the inclusion or exclusion of members, exclusive control of the Church's finances, requiring obedience of members in matters of private judgement. A Pastor may, however, act in accordance with a Church decision or policy previously recorded as agreed by the Church council or Church Meeting.

1.3. Responsibilities

1.3.1. To exercise leadership and to maintain vision and direction within the Church, including chairing meetings of the Church, and its various organizations (unless agreeing to a representative of his choice).

1.3.2. To ensure the Pastoral care of each Church member, including personal Pastoral ministry as far as is practicable.

1.3.3. To equip and release members of the Church to discover and use their personal spiritual gifting for the good of the Church.

1.3.4. To teach and preach at the Church's services, or to ensure a representative of his choice does so.

1.3.5. to ensure that his ministry is enhanced by further study and spiritual development.

1.3.6. to represent the Church to the wider Christian Church and the community, including attendance at ABC and other inter Church Meetings.

2. QUALIFICATIONS

2.1. Gifting

A Pastor requires spiritual and natural gifts in three essential areas before holding a formal position: to be an effective and respected leader, to be a thoughtful and able communicator and preacher of God's Word, and to be a loving and wise Councillor to his people.

2.2. Calling

A person considering the Pastoral office must have a sense of God's calling in his heart, the substantial agreement to this of his wife if married, and thereafter must obtain the formal written agreement of his Pastor and any other Church Elders, and a vote of approval by secret ballot in his local Church's membership meeting.

2.3. Character

A person considering the Pastoral office must be stable in his emotional life, and have a developed character in which the fruit of the Spirit is manifestly present: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. He must have, in addition, a humble spirit and servant heart like that of his Master, who came not to be served but to serve. Like Moses, he needs a meek spirit but still be someone who is looked to as a leader. No Pastor is perfect, however, and an essential quality of character is his openness to a lifetime of personal and spiritual growth as a man of God.

2.4. Training

Gifts and calling are not sufficient in themselves for the exercise of the Pastoral ministry. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave three years of training to His disciples after He had chosen and called into His circle the apostles. In like manner, Pastors (and all other leaders) need to be improved by sufficient study and training for the work they are called to do. Each Church, when considering a person for Pastoral ministry, is therefore advised to consider seriously and carefully, in consultation with the ABC Ministry Committee, the following areas at least.

2.4.1. a demonstrable level of informal or formal theological development, including

of Baptist History and Principles;

2.4.2. the work of preaching and teaching;

2.4.3. the work of Pastoral ministry;

2.4.4. personal formation as a spiritual leader.

The ABC Ministry Committee shall consider these areas, and any others it believes appropriate, before giving formal recognition to a Pastor. The Ministry Committee shall require such measures as it deems appropriate for a Pastor to achieve those standards either before or after formal recognition. The Ministry Committee shall invite the Director, or his representative, of the NCCS to interview candidates for ministerial recognition and advise the Committee accordingly on matters of qualifications and training.

2.5. Beliefs

No person should be considered by the local Church for its Pastorate unless he sincerely affirms the doctrinal basis of the local Church, of the ABC, and also the principles and practices of Baptist Church life. Those who cease to do so shall be

removed from the ABC list of recognized Pastors, and the local Church is advised to end the Pastorate of such people.

2.6. Ordination

Ordination to the Christian ministry is the act of laying on of hands upon a candidate, by authorized persons of the local and wider church, to recognize in him God's calling, set him apart to the Christian ministry, and to convey to him, his church, the wider Christian Church, and society, the authority and recognition of the churches of the same faith and order of his right and duty to fulfil the work of the Christian ministry.

Ordination should normally take place within the context of an appointment to service either in a local church or a specific wider ministry such as evangelism or chaplaincy, recognized by churches of the same faith and order (in this case, the ABC).

Ordination is an action of the local church, which should not, however, take place without the agreement of the wider fellowship of churches of the same faith and order (in this case, the ABC). Therefore, candidates for ordination must be acceptable to both bodies. Ordination shall be by the laying on of hands by representatives of the local and wider Church, not to convey grace, but to convey authority and recognition.

2.7. ABC recognition

The ABC shall maintain a list of recognized Pastors and lay Pastors, and establish such conditions for recognition as it sees fit. Recognition shall be given on the basis of the preceding sections, together with a reasonable affirmation of the moral and spiritual maturity and integrity of the candidate.

2.8. Probation

The first three years of ministry shall be a probationary period, during which the ordinand must confirm to the local and wider Church his fitness and calling. During this time, the ABC may require further studies both to develop the gifting of the ordinand

and to enable him to establish good patterns of study for the future. Probation shall be ended and ordination permanently confirmed by a decision of the Ministry Committee.

2.9. Disqualification

A name shall be removed from the recognized list, and the fact shall immediately be reported to that person's local Church as well as to the next ABC Council, (and, if necessary, to the authorities) if, in the opinion of the Ministry Committee upon fair examination of the facts (including all the relevant procedures set out in this bye-law):

2.9.1. A Pastor commits a serious moral offence such that his character as a Christian and his work as a Pastor is seriously undermined. This shall certainly include instances of sexual immorality, criminal behaviour unless upholding the law of God above the laws of men, financial impropriety relating to Church funds, or the habitual verbal, physical or psychological abuse of those under his Pastoral care.

2.9.2. A Pastor ceases to uphold the doctrines stated in the ABC Basis of Faith.

2.9.3. A Pastor brings into serious and repeated public disrepute the life and witness of his Church.

2.10. Reinstatement

2.10.1. It shall not be guaranteed that a Pastor may gain reinstatement as a recognized Pastor.

2.10.2. The Ministry Committee may, at its discretion, consider a course of action to rehabilitate and reinstate a Pastor who has been disqualified. This may include a set period out of Pastorate or other spiritual service, a course of counselling, a course of study or training to deal with identified areas of need, and acts of reconciliation.

2.11. Lay Pastors

2.11.1. A member church may appoint a lay person to fulfil the role of Pastor, but that person shall not identify himself to the local or wider church, or to the community, as an ordained Baptist Pastor.

2.11.2. The lay Pastor of a member church shall, on appointment, apply to the Ministry Committee for recognition by the ABC who shall determine any course of study or training it may deem appropriate for the better performance of his ministry. Failure to fulfil such conditions may result in his recognition being withdrawn and this fact being reported to his church and to the General Assembly.

2.11.3. A lay Pastoral appointment shall not be used to avoid the standards set out in this scheme for the proper training and recognition of the ordained ministry, or to avoid proper support by a church for a Pastor. If, in the considered opinion of the Ministry Committee, this becomes the case, recognition may be withdrawn of the lay Pastor or member church, as the case may be.

2.11.4. The lay Pastor of a member church shall, after two consecutive years' service, refer his ministry to the Ministry Committee for consideration of ordination and such training for that as the Committee may deem appropriate.

3. CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR PASTORS

3.1. It is the duty of a Church to provide as adequate support as possible for the Pastor in accordance to the full or part-time nature of his appointment. A Church should not ask a Pastor to live on less than the recommended rate established each year by the Ministry Committee and confirmed by the ABC Council.

3.2. There should be a fair exchange of work commitment for stipend between Pastor and Church. A full stipend should be in exchange for a full working week, which shall consist of serving the Church five days a week, including Sunday; with one further day being devoted to relevant private study to better equip the Pastor for his public ministry, and one day completely free of Church duties. Full-time service may be understood as serving the local Church in attending and leading meetings, giving Pastoral care individuals as required, and being the main preacher at services and other teaching events. In addition, every Pastor has a calling to the wider Church and a

reasonable amount of time is needed to attend such things as inter-Church events, ABC meetings, preaching for other Churches, etc. Both the Church and the Pastor need to be responsible in their attitude to this, so that the Church is not neglected but the Pastor has time to benefit from outside influences as well as exercise a wider ministry.

3.3. The Ministry Committee shall provide advice to the ABC annually, in accordance with the constitution, as to a minimum recommended stipend for full-time ministry in a local Church, and a list of recommended expenses, equivalent to the stipend, pension, training budget, etc., of a middle-range teaching appointment. Larger or more affluent churches should consider a greater amount than the minimum recommendation.

3.4. A full-time Pastor should receive at least the recommended minimum stipend, the repayment of agreed expenses, (including telephone calls, mileage or public transport on official business, postage, etc) and contributions to a pension scheme. In proportion to the reduction of this package due to the Church's inability, the Church should reduce the nature of the appointment to an appropriate part-time one, so that the Pastor is free to seek other employment or income to meet his needs. Such employment shall be notified to the Church Council as to the hours involved.

3.5. The Pastor shall have the right to be provided by the Church with a suitable room and facilities for an office/study, free of cost to himself; or to receive an amount agreed between the Pastor and the Church, to use a room in his home.

3.6. If the Church provides living accommodation free of charge, the stipend may be reduced by an amount to be agreed between the Pastor and the Church. In the event of a dispute, the matter shall be referred to the Finance Committee of the ABC, whose decision shall be final.

3.6. The duty of support for a Pastor lies with the employing Church, which should call upon its members to give whatever stipend and other financial provision is

agreed with the Pastor. Tithing should be encouraged as the norm among the members, who should give sacrificially and in acknowledgement that the Pastor is being sacrificial in return by his acceptance of less affluence than he might achieve in another profession, and by his willingness to serve the Church sacrificially in working long hours. If the Church is unable to provide at least the recommended minimum stipend, it should regard the Pastor as free from scrutiny as to his additional employment or income.

3.7. The ABC acknowledges that churches and Pastors are blessed by receiving gifts for the furtherance of their life and ministry. Pastors and member churches must act with transparent honesty and integrity in the manner in which such gifts are received, recorded and used, both in terms of Christian standards and the requirements of law. The ABC reserves its right and duty to refer churches and individuals to the Ministry Committee when a lack of integrity is discovered.

1. PASTORS' FELLOWSHIP

4.1. There shall be a Pastors' Fellowship, open to any serving Pastor in the ABC, lay or ordained. This Fellowship shall meet together for the purpose of mutual support and encouragement, prayer and conference once in every two calendar months at least. The Fellowship shall elect a Chairman and Secretary, who shall together administer any necessary business for the Fellowship.

4.2. The Pastors' Fellowship shall have the right to place on the agenda of the Executive Committee, Council, or General Assembly, any one item in each year it deems appropriate for the doctrinal faithfulness, spiritual vitality or effective mission to society of the ABC. The Fellowship chairman or, in his place, another Pastor chosen by the Fellowship, shall have the right to address that agenda item. Unless otherwise provided within this constitution, that spokesman shall not have voting rights. The purpose of this provision is to better ensure that the ABC is open to God's constant

calling to be reformed according to God's Word, renewed by His Holy Spirit, and relevant to society in the defence and proclamation of the gospel.

Appendix 5- Glossary

amutot- non-profit organizations (Hebrew)

atwa- payment of good faith

edah moqeret- recognized community (Hebrew)

ghofran- forgiveness

hodna- ceasefire

intifada- uprising

jaha- notably elderly third party

millet- The word *millet* comes from the Arabic word *millah* which means ‘nation’. It refers to the separate court of ‘personal law’ pertaining to under which a confessional community was allowed to rule itself under its own laws, during the Ottoman period.

motajadideen- renewed

mumalaha- a ceremonial meal

musafaha- handshake

musamaha- tolerance

musayara- social etiquette and ingratiation

nakba- Catastrophe

qawiyi- strong female

shalom- peace (Hebrew)

shamas- deacon

sharaf- honour

sheikh- elder

sulha- reconciliation

taawid- compensation

taffwid- written authorization

wasta- the middle, the verb *yatawassat*, means to direct parties towards a middle point or to mediate between them.

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