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# How Can Religion Contribute to Peace in the Holy Land?

*A Study of Religious Peacework in Jerusalem*

University of Oslo

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*This work is dedicated to the memory of Sheikh Bukhari and Daniel Rossing*



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## Preface

In the summer of 1999 I was granted a Johan Jorgen Holst scholarship which gave me the possibility to study at the Hebrew University. During this summer the international students were given evening seminars on interreligious dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem, in addition to field trips to the religious communities in Jerusalem. The memories of these seminars might have faded somewhat –nevertheless they became the starting point for an interest and curiosity in how these religious peace activists thought they could promote peace from below. As the years went by, this interest continued and developed into an understanding of the imperative of peace initiatives coming from the people themselves and not by foreign intervention alone. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has received great international attention compared to other conflicts, and while this conflict also has established religious people internationally – mainly in support of one side only – interreligious dialogue seemed like a refreshing approach where the local people themselves from different religious dominations could meet and seek out new peace efforts needed on the ground. Local people share the unique strength of understanding the challenges and the obstacles on the road to peace in ways outsiders can only imagine. Based on this interest I would like to thank Volda University College for giving me the opportunity to do empirical research on religious peacework in Jerusalem 2007-2010. I would like to thank my colleagues for their interest in my project and belief in this work.

I would like to thank my supervisor, professor Sigurd Hjelde, at the University of Oslo for reading through the manuscript as it developed and giving helpful advice along the way. I would also like to thank my mentor and colleague at Volda University College, professor Arne Redse, for technical assistance behind the framing of this monograph, and for reading through the manuscript at the beginning of its formation. I would also like to thank Torstein Dale-Akerlund at Bjørknes College for introducing me to their studies in peace and conflict and for bibliographical advice and resources. A special thank must also be given to Marc Gopin for lectures and conversations during my study of religion and conflict resolution at the Hebrew University. I should also like to thank professor Ben Mollov at Bar Illan University in Israel for his advice when reading through the manuscript at the beginning of this project. My

gratitude is also due to Howard John Medland for helping out in the final proofreading of this manuscript.

This work could never have been accomplished without the willingness and cooperation of the organizations in this dissertation. I would like to thank each one who has been willing to be interviewed- either in Jerusalem or on the telephone- and who has corresponded with me on email during this research period.

Finally, I should like to thank my family for supporting me in this project. To my lovely children who remind me that life is much more than work, and to my husband for believing in me and encouraging me to complete this dissertation.





## Introduction

### *1 The Theme of the Study – and Its Delimitations*

The theme of this study is organized religious peacework conducted by a selected number of Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem. In the following I would like to introduce some of the background for contemporary religious peace activism in this region. When the Oslo Agreement was signed by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on September 13, 1993 it was to end decades of mutual rejection of *the other's right* to exist as a people within its own geographical borders. The Oslo Agreement was not signed after a long process of formalized dialogue and cooperation between the Palestinian and Israeli elite, but was rather a signature marking the start of such formalized meetings. It was an official agreement to recognize each other and start the process towards peace<sup>1</sup>. Difficult issues - such as the question of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees – were postponed until later. The process towards peaceful coexistence between the mainstream Israelis and Palestinians at the grassroots level had not yet started. However, it should be mentioned that the interim agreement in 1995 emphasized the need to support NGOs, institutions and individuals who worked for peace among people at the grassroots, and several programs were supported by the US and European countries<sup>2</sup>.

The Oslo Agreement was later criticized by several religious leaders and academics, in both Palestine and Israel, because they felt it ignored the religious dimension of the conflict. The orthodox Jewish peace activist Yehezkel Landau wrote in 2004:

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<sup>1</sup> The process behind the Oslo Agreement and the fact that it was never meant to be anything else but the starting point of a process towards peace is well documented. See for example Waage, Hilde Henriksen: *Norwegians? Who needs Norwegians? Explaining the Oslo Back Channel*. Evaluation Report 9/2000: 40, and Bar-On, Mordechai: *In Pursuit of Peace*. Washington, United States Institute for Peace, 1996: 291-313.

<sup>2</sup> Following the interim agreement in 1995, Norway was assigned responsibility for a new 'people to people program' (P2P) which was initiated to increase support and interest for the peace process among people at the grassroots. But P2P programs were not the only peacebuilding projects among the grass roots; also US organizations and many European countries founded different programs. See Waage, Hilde Henriksen: *Peacemaking is a risky business. Norway's role in the Peace Process*, Oslo, International Peace Research Institute, 2004:207-211. See also Berg, Kjersti Gravelsæter: *Fredsbygging i krigstid: Palestinske erfaringer med bistandsprogrammet people to people 1995-2002*, Master's degree in History, University of Bergen, 2002. (Norwegian only).

As the fate of the Oslo process shows, peacemaking that prescribes only political, military, and economic arrangements is doomed to fail; leaders on both sides must take into account the feelings, attitudes, yearnings, and symbolic images that Israelis and Palestinians harbor<sup>3</sup>.

Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty express similar criticism: “By failing to integrate the religious dimensions of the conflict, these political agreements and processes have alienated significant segments of both Palestinian and Israeli society”<sup>4</sup>. Landau, Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty argue for a so-called “bottom-up model”<sup>5</sup> for the peace process, which means that the final peace agreement should come as a result of the experience and desire of the common people. They criticize the Oslo Agreement for being secular, and thus only addressing a certain group of people. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty argue that the neglect of the religious dimension of the conflict is rooted in Western political philosophy:

The need to separate the discussion and exploration of religious beliefs from national and political dynamics is rooted in a Western political philosophy of secular liberalism that separates religion from politics. It associates religion with the private rather than collective public sphere<sup>6</sup>.

During the late 80s and early 90s several religious organizations were established to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians<sup>7</sup>. Some organizations used interfaith dialogue as a method to develop good relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims and Christians, though most of the organizations excluded the political dimension of the conflict during the encounters. After the second intifada 2001-2005 some religious peace activists started to argue for the need to include the political dimension in interfaith dialogue. According to the Israeli-Jewish peace activist Daniel Rossing, who worked<sup>8</sup> to improve relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Christians, the political dimension must be a part of the interfaith dialogue to have a peace-building effect:

<sup>3</sup> Landau, Yehezkel: *Healing the Holy Land. Interreligious Peace building in Israel/Palestine*. USA, United States Institute for Peace, 2003. Online: <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/pwks51.pdf> Retrieved November 10, 2008. See also the same arguments made by Adam B. Seligam in: “Religious Roots of Tolerance with Special Reference to Judaism and Islam” in Bunzl. John(ed.): *Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East*. USA, University Press of Florida, 2004: 118-132.

<sup>4</sup> Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, Welty, Emily and Khoury, Amal.: *Unity in Diversity. Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*. USA, United States Institute for Peace, 2007: 45.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Ramsbotham, Oliver, Miall, Hugh and Woodhouse, Tom: *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: the prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005:23.

<sup>6</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 66. The critique against western conflict resolution methods from a non-western perspective is also launched by Paul Salem. See Salem, Paul (ed.): *Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: Selected Essays*, Beirut, Lebanon, American University of Beirut, 1997. His critique is further discussed in Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 7-8, and 302-331. The main argument of Salem is that methods rooted in old Middle Eastern tradition of conflict resolution might be better than western conflict resolution methods in the specific context of that region.

<sup>7</sup> The development of organized religious peacework will be described in 1.2.2.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Rossing died November 3, 2010. Online: [http://www.jcjr.org/about\\_staff.php](http://www.jcjr.org/about_staff.php) Retrieved March 14, 2011.

... purely “religious” dialogue that fails to treat the pain of past trauma – of both Jews and Christians – and the suffering caused by current political realities will be largely irrelevant in a region where the distinction between God and government is often blurred and in a land that is a spiritually loaded symbol and spirituality expresses itself mainly in aspirations, ambiguities, fears, suspicions, and ideas surrounding political realities<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, several religious peace workers started to include issues related to the political conflict in their interfaith dialogue. But there are exceptions. According to the Palestinian religious peace activist Sheikh Bukhari, there are two different views on the role the political conflict should have in interfaith dialogue:

Behind the scenes some clerics expressed disappointment because this first public gathering strayed deep into political theory instead of focusing only on issues of religion. This division reflects two schools of thought in the religious peace camp: some want a role in political peace negotiations; others believe solutions cannot be political<sup>10</sup>.

It is these differing opinions among religious peace activists which this dissertation seeks to explore.

This study is delimited to an interest in the relationship between Israeli and Palestinian religious peace workers from the three Abrahamic traditions. The present study does not explore internal relationships between religious communities in the state of Israel nor internal relations between religious communities in the Palestinian territories, although these internal relations will be mentioned when this is seen as relevant for understanding the organizations. Neither does this study explore the role of religion in the political sphere - concerning for example Hamas or the Jewish settlement - although this is mentioned if it can help to explain the organizations mentioned in this dissertation. The present study is delimited to an interest in contemporary organized religious peacework in Jerusalem, where research was conducted between 2007 and 2010.

## ***2 The Research Issues and Questions***

This dissertation is an empirical study of the discourses of peace underlying the programs and literatures of organized religious peacework in Jerusalem. The main research issue is to

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<sup>9</sup> Rossing, Daniel: “Preparing the way for a new Jewish-Christian relation in the Holy Land”, in Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, strategy plan 2004. Online: <http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/uf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20JJCJR%20Strategic%20Plan2.pdf> Retrieved November 11, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> See the official website of Jerusalem Peacemakers, “Interfaith work, towards building peace in the Holy Land”. Online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/bukhari/bukhari-peacework.html> Retrieved October 8, 2008. See also the position of Yehuda Stolov, who is the director of Interfaith Encounter Association, in chapter 9.

understand how religion can contribute to peace in a conflict area. In this dissertation the conflict is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the religions are Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The uniqueness of this conflict is that the area is considered as sacred space – or part of the Holy Land among the believers. I am interested in how religion has been implemented as part of the organized peacework among different Israeli and Palestinian actors in Jerusalem. I seek to understand how this work is organized and why the actors think religion can contribute to peace in the Holy Land. I also seek to understand what challenges the peace workers face and how they try to deal with these challenges in order to promote peace. An underlying interest is also to understand whether these peace workers are capable of forming a counter-discourse of peace against those discourses which legitimate exclusive identities and the continuation of the conflict.

The main research question is: *How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land?* I will try to find an answer to this question by posing two analytical questions, and two critical questions:

1. *What kind of organization is this?*
2. *How does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework?*
3. *How does it deal with the issue of asymmetry?*
4. *Is it capable of formulating a discourse on peace?*

By introducing these four questions I seek to understand the main research question – *How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land?*

### ***3 Selected Organizations – and the Criteria for Selection of Source Material***

I have selected eight different organizations which implement religion as a vital part of their peacework. Two of these organizations are Palestinian – the first is an organization, while the other is a religious studies unit of an academic institution. Sabeel is a Palestinian Christian NGO which basically seeks to develop a Palestinian Christian liberation theology. The Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs (PASSIA) is an independent academic institution which founded a religious studies unit in 1998. Four of the organizations are Israeli: Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI), Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA) and Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR). The last two are Israeli-Palestinian, one which works on the grassroots and one



which works on the elite level: Jerusalem Peacemakers (JP) and the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL). While JP is an NGO working on the grassroots level, CRIHL represents the highest religious authority among Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank. CRIHL is not an organization but rather a consultative body. Nevertheless, the term *organizations* will be used when I make reference to CRHIL and the other selected organizations in this dissertation.

These organizations were selected because they represent both Israelis and Palestinians, and because each of the organizations has its unique approach to the religious traditions in their peacework. They were also chosen because they are active today and represent the plurality among peace workers who implement religion in their work.

The data has mainly been sampled from three different sources: 1) the official webpages of the organizations, 2) publications and 3) interviews with staff members of these organizations. In addition I have made three visits to Jerusalem in 2008, 2009 and 2010. In June 2008 I attended an international conference in Jerusalem held by the International Council of Christian and Jews (ICCJ) and arranged by one of the organizations in this dissertation – ICCI. Five organizations in this dissertation held courses and gave workshops during this conference<sup>11</sup>. The title of the conference was “The Contribution of Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue to Peace-Building in the Middle East”<sup>12</sup>. In January 2009 I attended a two-week course on “Conflict resolution from religious traditions” in Jerusalem, organized in cooperation with the Hamline University Law School and the Hebrew University. The course included lectures and visits to four of the organizations in this dissertation – ICCI, JCJCR, CRIHL and JP. In April 2010 I visited the leaders of five of the organizations in this dissertation in their offices in Jerusalem and made interviews. Staff members from two other organizations were interviewed on the telephone in October 2010<sup>13</sup>. The interviews were conducted in English. Most of the material has been available in English, while only a few texts have been available only in Hebrew.

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<sup>11</sup> The five organizations presented were the Interreligious Coordinating Council, Rabbis for Human Rights, Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land and Jerusalem Peacemakers, the latter only during the post-conference tour. The Interreligious Coordination Council was the host of the conference in Jerusalem.

<sup>12</sup> Information on the Conference is available online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=111&Itemid=156](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=111&Itemid=156) Retrieved March 23, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> The director of Sabeel Naim Ateek has not been interviewed, mainly because I was unable to reach him during my visits. Since Ateek has published several books about his work, I found the information on Sabeel to be sufficient for this dissertation. The publications by Ateek are presented in chapter 6.

The present dissertation is a qualitative study which seeks to understand the main mission and motivation behind the selected organizations, and give an insight into some of their activities and cooperating partners.

#### ***4 Previous Research***

Little empirical research has been conducted directly on religious peacework in Israel and Palestine, although some research is available. In 2003 the Israeli Jewish orthodox religious peace activist Yehezkel Landau published a report about Israeli and Palestinian peace activists who considered religion a central part of their peacework. The report is called “Healing the Holy Land, Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine”<sup>14</sup>, and is based on a series of interviews with thirty Israeli and Palestinian peace activists. The report consists of about fifty pages, and gives recommendations and bibliographical resources for further studies. Another piece of empirical research was published in 2007 called *Unity in Diversity - Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*<sup>15</sup>, where interfaith dialogue in Israel and Palestine is one study of three other studies on interfaith dialogue in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. The research was conducted by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Emily Welty and Amal I. Khoury and is mainly based on interviews.

On the other hand, empirical research on peace activism in general - where the religious actors are only a minor part of the larger studies of secular peace actors- has been conducted. These studies can be divided between those that focus on the Israeli peace movement, and those that are interested in contemporary Israeli and Palestinian NGOs. Mordechai Bar-On`s study *In Pursuit of Peace*<sup>16</sup> was published in 1996 and documents the activities of the Israeli peace movement since its inception in the early 70s and up until the Oslo Agreement in 1993. Bar-On`s study also gives information about early organized religious peace activities in the early 70s. Another study on the Israeli peace movement which also mentions the religious actors is *The politics of protest: the Israeli peace movement and the Palestinian intifada* published in 1996 by Reuven Kaminer<sup>17</sup>. These two studies give valuable background information about religion and peace activism prior to the Oslo Agreement. Two empirical studies which are interested in contemporary Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, and which also

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<sup>14</sup> Landau: 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Bar-On, Mordechai: *In pursuit of peace: a history of the Israeli peace movement*, Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Kaminer, Reuven: *The politics of protest: the Israeli peace movement and the Palestinian intifada*, Brighton : Sussex Academic Press, 1996.

give some information about religion and peacework, are two Israeli- Palestinian publications, one based on a conference and the other on a research project. The Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) published *The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Peace Building between Israelis and Palestinians* in 2000 based on a conference held in 1999<sup>18</sup>. The other publication is *Bridging the Divide – Peacebuilding in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* from 2006<sup>19</sup>. Although the main interest of these two publications is secular peacework among Israelis and Palestinians, they also give some information on organizations which use religion in their peacework.

Thus, some empirical research has been conducted on religious peacework in Israel and Palestine, although mainly based on interviews. As yet no empirical research exists on the different organizational implications of religion in peacework, and which examines the different publications and programs these Israeli and Palestinian organizations conduct. The present study is an attempt to fill this vacuum by presenting empirical research on eight different organizations.

### ***5 Theories, and Basic Concepts – Introduction***

The present dissertation is an interdisciplinary study between the study of religion and conflict resolution theories. Through qualitative empirical research it seeks to understand how religion can contribute to peace in the Holy Land. This study will implement several theoretical perspectives from the study of religion and conflict resolution, in order to analyze the work of the organizations in this dissertation and critically examine how they deal with the issue of asymmetry in their peacework and whether they are capable of forming a discourse on peace.

Four concepts are central in the analytical framework of this study. These are *religious peacebuilding*, *peacebuilding*, *contested sacred space* and *sacred space*.

David Little and Scott Appleby conceptualize *religious peacebuilding* as a term used to: “describe the range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political

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<sup>18</sup> Adwan, Sami & Bar-On, Dan (eds.): *The Role of non-governmental organizations in peace-building between Palestinians and Israelis: conference proceedings*, Beit Jala: Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Edy Kaufman, Walid Salem and Juliette Verhoeven: *Bridging the divide: peacebuilding in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner, 2006.

institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence”<sup>20</sup>. Within contemporary conflict resolution theory it is common to distinguish between three types of *conflict*: direct violence (people are murdered), structural violence (people die through poverty) and cultural violence (whatever blinds us to this or seeks to justify it). According to Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse direct - , structural - and cultural violence require different strategies of *peacebuilding*: “We end direct violence by changing conflict behavior, structural violence by removing structural contradictions and injustices, and cultural violence by changing attitudes”<sup>21</sup>. Paul Lederach (1997) uses another division, when he speaks about high- level approach to peacebuilding (top leaders), mid-level (religious leaders, teachers) and grassroots (local peace commissions).<sup>22</sup> Lederach emphasizes that for peacebuilding to be effective these three levels must cooperate, or function as a *multi-track* conflict resolution<sup>23</sup>. Several peace activists are organized in a non-governmental organization (NGO). According to Peter Willetts, NGOs work on different levels of society – both locally, nationally, regionally and internationally<sup>24</sup>. In this way the concept *peacebuilding* includes several activities and networking which need to be explored. In relation to the concept *peacebuilding*, *religious peacebuilding* will be understood as part of structural and cultural peacebuilding.

The two other central concepts are also partly interconnected – *contested sacred space* and *sacred space*. The concept called *contested sacred space* is related to the study by Chidester and Linenthal, which says that the Holiness of sacred space becomes more dominant when a specific sacred space is contested and stands in a power relation<sup>25</sup>. In the present dissertation I will use the term *sacred space* as done by Mircea Eliade, where holy sites are understood as a religious symbol for the believers. By using both these concepts in the analysis it will be easier to understand the specific context of doing religious peacework in a land considered Holy in the three Monotheistic traditions.

This study will also bring forth different theories which can be helpful in understanding the potential in the religious traditions for peacework – both in relation to each individual religious tradition and in relation to the specific interreligious setting where peacework can be

<sup>20</sup> Little, D. and Appleby, S.: *A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict*”, in Coward, H. & Smith, S., (eds.): “Religion and Peacebuilding”, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004:10.

<sup>21</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 24.

<sup>23</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 26.

<sup>24</sup> Willetts, Peter: “What is an NGO?”, online: <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/CS-NTWKS/NGO-ART.HTM#Part10> Retrieved November 14, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Chidester, David & Linenthal, Edward Tabor: *American sacred space*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995.

conducted. First of all, David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Geraldine Burr are the editors of *Understanding World Religions: A Road Map for Justice and Peace* published in 2007<sup>26</sup>. This study explores the potential for peacework within the world religions through a focus on the seven dimensions of religion by Ninian Smart<sup>27</sup>. Of special interest are the chapters on Judaism, Islam and Christianity, where emphasis is given to the images of God, the call for social deeds, justice and peace inherent in these Monotheistic traditions. In addition I would like to introduce three academics who can be helpful in understanding the specific context of religious peacework in Israel and Palestine. Marc Gopin is a Jewish professor in conflict resolution, but also a rabbi. Gopin has written several books and chapters on the relationship between Judaism and conflict resolution. Mohammed Abu-Nimer is a Palestinian academic who has not only studied interfaith dialogue in Israel and Palestine, but who has also written *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam*<sup>28</sup>. In addition I would like to introduce an approach to the study of liberation theology presented by Jan Ove Ulstein, which emphasizes specific characteristics of liberation theology that explain the relationship between theology and social action, and theology and context<sup>29</sup>. Secondly, theories which can explain the religious potential in an interfaith dialogue setting need to be adopted too. In this context I would like to introduce several academics. First of all, the study of interfaith dialogue in Israel and Palestine by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty concludes by developing different models of interfaith dialogue in the Middle East, which will be used in this study as a starting point for understanding what kind of interfaith dialogue the organizations of this dissertation conduct<sup>30</sup>. Secondly, Marc Gopin has also made several suggestions on issues needed to be brought up in an interfaith dialogue setting in relation to the specific context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Finally, David E. Guinn puts forward suggestions for how to deal with the question of Jerusalem in a religious setting in his study *Protecting Jerusalem`s holy sites – a strategy*

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<sup>26</sup> David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Geraldine Burr (eds.): *Understanding World Religions: A Road Map for Justice and Peace*, New York, Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Smart, Ninian: *Dimensions of the sacred: an anatomy of the world`s belief*, London, Fontana Press, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Abu-Nimer, Mohammed: *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam*, University Press of Florida, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> See Ulstein, Jan Ove: "Hermeneutikk til frigjering: Tolking av tekst og kontekst i frigjeringsteologien", in Henriksen, Jan-Olav (ed.): *Tegn, tekst og tolk. Teologisk hermeneutikk i fortid og nåtid*, Universitetsforlaget, 1994 : 237-239. Jan Ove Ulstein presents a paradigm for liberation theology, based on the study by Per Frostin: *Liberation theology in Tanzania and South Africa. A First World Interpretation*, Malmö 1998. See also Boff, Clodovis and Boff, Leonardo: *Introducing liberation theology*, Turnbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1987. Other relevant studies are Scott, Peter: *Theology, ideology and liberation: towards a liberative theology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, and Leirvik, Oddbjørn: "Interfaith dialogue and liberation theology: between liberal multiculturalism and interreligious activism", in Sturla J. Stålsett, Oddbjørn Leirvik and Peter Beyer (eds.): *The Power of faiths in global politics*, Oslo, Novus, 2004:129-142.

<sup>30</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007.

for negotiating sacred peace<sup>31</sup>, which can be relevant in understanding how religious peacemaking could be conducted on a high level.

In addition to these basic concepts and theories, this study will also apply a critical approach to the material and the analytical findings. The critical approach will first of all clarify the concept of asymmetry or different power relations in a conflict and in the organizational peacemaking. Asymmetry is a central concept in contemporary conflict resolution theories in general and in religious peacemaking more specifically<sup>32</sup>.

Through a critical approach this research seeks to understand whether the organizations are capable of formulating a discourse on peace, or a counter-discourse against those exclusive discourses which legitimate the conflict. The critical approach chosen here has been inspired by conflict analysts who since the 1990s and onwards have taken part in the development of an emerging literature on how social categories such as *us* versus *them* are created within conflicts<sup>33</sup>. In this dissertation I will use the model developed by Vivien Jabri<sup>34</sup>, which suggests that researchers should use a threefold strategy to evaluate the ability of conflict resolution theories or peace movements to promote peace: The first strategy is to analyze what Jabri calls 'discourse on violence', second, to identify an independent locus of a transformative 'discourse of peace', and third, to invoke a Habermasian discourse ethics<sup>35</sup>.

Jabri emphasizes how conflict is a product of social interaction and violent conflict is fuelled by the institutionalization of differences. Social conflict at both micro and macro level can be constitutively defined in terms of exclusion and inclusion. According to Jabri, every individual always stands in some relation to the following components: histories, memories, ideologies, symbolic systems, and languages. When these components are constructed around the dichotomy *friends* versus *enemies*, the development of what Jabri calls 'discourses on violence' begins. This process can result in the institutionalization of difference, like different access to military service or the organization of militant groups, the development of school systems which institutionalize differences or lack of freedom of movement for one group. The ability of peace movements or conflict resolution theories to promote peace are, according to Jabri, related to their understanding of the 'discourses on violence'. Only by understanding

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<sup>31</sup> Guinn, David E.: *Protecting Jerusalem's holy sites- A strategy for negotiating sacred peace*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> See 3.1.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Jabri, Vivien: *Discourses on violence. Conflict analysis reconsidered*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996. See also Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall: 2005. Or Rothman, Jay: *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict*, Jossey. Bass, A Wiley Company, 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Jabri: 1996.

<sup>35</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005:296.

what causes the conflict and the obstacles to its resolution can they construct a counter-discourse, or what Jabri calls a `discourse on peace`:

A discourse on peace assumes a basis for the transformation of symbolic and institutional orders which underpins violent human conflict. A discourse on peace is necessarily a counter-discourse which seeks to understand the structured legitimation of violence and challenge the militarist order and exclusionist identities which encompass it<sup>36</sup>.

In this way the first and second strategy are interdependent strategies. Or to put it simply – you cannot construct a `discourse on peace` (or a counter-discourse) unless you understand what the content of the `discourse on violence` is. After such an investigation has been accomplished, Jabri suggests a third strategy – a critical approach where the investigation seeks “to locate the construct of peace within a wider conception of communicative action and utilizes as baseline a Habermasian conception of dialogic relations emerging through discourse”<sup>37</sup>. This requires a focus on the relationship between Israeli and Palestinian religious peace workers in Jerusalem, and questions their capacity to construct a common counter-discourse or new discourse on peace. Another issue central to Jabri`s critical approach is to investigate whether the peacebuilders are capable of reaching the public sphere with their counter-discourse or `discourse on peace`. This means that if the organizations in this dissertation are to contribute to peace in the Holy Land, they have to be capable of challenging the dominant discourses which legitimate the conflict.

On the other hand, the strategy Jabri suggests is related to evaluating dialogues, but religious peacebuilding does not always mean dialogue between the two parties in conflict. As we will see, two of the organizations in this dissertation are not mainly engaged in dialogue, but in human rights violation or in developing a liberation theology. The Norwegian theologian Oddbjørn Leirvik points out how dialogue and liberation theology differ. The main argument of Leirvik is that while interfaith dialogue is connected to a multiculturalism which seeks to expand the space for legitimate disagreement, liberation theology seeks to define the limits of acceptable disagreements<sup>38</sup>. Thus, the religious potential in peacework can be activated both through dialogue between the parties in conflict and through criticism from a minority perpetuated through a liberation theology.

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<sup>36</sup> Jabri: 1996:146.

<sup>37</sup> Jabri: 1996:146.

<sup>38</sup> Leirvik, Oddbjørn: «Interfaith dialogue and liberation theology: between liberal multiculturalism and interreligious activism», in Sturla J. Stålsett, Oddbjørn Leirvik and Peter Beyer(eds.) : *The Power of faiths in global politics*, Oslo: Novus, 2004:129.

## ***6 The Outline of the Study***

This monograph consists of 15 chapters. It is divided into three parts. In part one (chapters 1-4), previous research, background material, theories and methods will be presented; in part two (chapters 5-12), each of the eight organizations will be presented. In part three, (chapters 13-15) the organizations are analyzed, evaluated and compared according to the four research questions. The main research question - *Can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land* - will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 1 seeks to give the main background information for this dissertation. Firstly, it will introduce some of the basic challenges facing religious peace workers in the Holy Land, in relation to the significance of Holy Land in the three Monotheistic traditions and the contest of political power of holy sites, and in relation to the dominant social exclusive discourses between Israelis and Palestinians. Secondly, previous research on religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine will be presented and a historical review of the development of religious peace activism in Israel and Palestine since the late 70s will be outlined, based on previous research.

In chapter 2 basic concepts and the analytical framework of this dissertation will be presented. Four basic concepts are introduced – *religious peacebuilding*, *peacebuilding*, *contested sacred space* and *sacred space*. In addition, different theories of the religious potential for peacework in the three Monotheistic traditions and in the context of an interfaith dialogue will be presented.

In chapter 3 the critical approach of this study will be presented. The conceptualization of asymmetrical conflicts and asymmetry in peacework will be discussed. Next the discussions within the field of conflict resolution about dialogue will be briefly presented, before the social theory of Vivienne Jabri is outlined and her suggestions on how to critically approach conflict resolution theories and peacework is presented. A central interest is how Jabri argues that dialogues need to take radical disagreement seriously. Finally, this chapter will discuss the relationship between liberation theology and dialogue, and how to approach liberation theology critically in this dissertation.

Chapter 4 presents the qualitative methods I have used to approach the organizational material. In the first section of this chapter I will discuss some methodological considerations behind the choice of method. In the second section, I will present the analytical considerations behind this dissertation.



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Part two presents the eight organizations in this dissertation in separate chapters. Each chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the organization, their mission and motivations. The second presents their activities and cooperation.

Chapter 5 presents the Israeli organization Rabbis for Human Rights. Chapter 6 presents the Palestinian Christian organization Sabeel. In chapter 7 the Israeli organization Interreligious Coordinating Council is presented, while chapter 8 is devoted to the Palestinian organization PASSIA – the religious studies unit. Chapter 9 presents the Israeli organization Interfaith Encounter Association. Chapter 10 presents the Israeli organization Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations. In chapter 11, the Israeli-Palestinian organization Jerusalem Peacemakers is presented, while chapter 12 is devoted to the Israeli-Palestinian Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

In part three the analysis and evaluation is conducted, followed by a concluding chapter. In chapter 13 the organizations are analyzed according to the two analytical questions: 1) What kind of organization is this? and 2) how does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework? After the analyses of the individual organizations, the findings are compared.

I will evaluate the organizations in chapter 14, through the two critical questions: 1) how does it deal with the issue of asymmetry? and 2) is it capable of formulating a discourse on peace? The evaluation of each organization will also be compared.

Chapter 15 is the concluding chapter of this dissertation, where I discuss the main question of this research project: *How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land?* I will argue how this dissertation has given new scientific knowledge to the field, by using different theories and methods than previous research has done, and by exploring a series of different organizations located in Jerusalem which belong to two different nations and three different religious traditions. I will also discuss the limits of this dissertation and give some recommendations for future research on this theme.



## **Part I: Background Material, Previous Research, Theories and Method**

## 1 Religious Peacebuilding in the Holy Land

*It is unrealistic to deny the significant negative role that religious identities have played in the creation, escalation, and outcomes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at least throughout the last century. Despite the negative role of religion in the conflict, there is an apparent secularization of the peace process. The religious aspects of the conflict – Jewish, Muslim and Christian – have been ignored by politicians and decision makers in all formal and informal negotiations ... This deliberate neglect of the possible positive role that religious identity or affiliation can play in prenegotiation, negotiation, and postagreement processes has been a strong motivating factor for the Palestinians and Israelis who have become active in interfaith peacebuilding.*

Extract from Abu-Nimer, Welty, Khoury: 2007<sup>1</sup>.

The present monograph is an empirical study of eight different Palestinian and Israeli organizations<sup>2</sup> which see religion as a vital part of their peacework. Two of the organizations are Palestinian – the Palestinian Christian organization Sabeel, and the religious studies unit of the Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs. Four of the organizations are Israeli – Rabbis for Human Rights, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, Interfaith Encounter Association and Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations. The latter two are Israeli-Palestinian – Jerusalem Peacemakers and the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. All these organizations were established during the period between 1988 and 2005, are located in Jerusalem and are active today<sup>3</sup>. The religious peacebuilders work on the track two level of peacebuilding and seek to transform relations between the peoples of the conflicting parties<sup>4</sup>.

This opening chapter of the monograph seeks to give some background information behind the organizations in this dissertation. In the first section I should like to present the reasons why some academics believe religious peacebuilding is important in the Holy Land specifically. Firstly, I will give a brief overview of the significance of the Holy Land for Jews, Christians and Muslims before I present some studies which argue for the influence of

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<sup>1</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:45.

<sup>2</sup> It should be pointed out that the term “organization” might not be accurate in every case. Six of them are clearly organizations, but the other two are an academic institution and a consultative body of the religious authorities. Nevertheless, when referring to all I will use the term “organizations”.

<sup>3</sup> Time of writing: 2010.

<sup>4</sup> The different levels religious peacebuilders work on will be further outlined in chapter 2. See 2.1.1.

religion on issues related to the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. Secondly, I would like to present a study which shows how stereotypes and prejudices have been prominent in the Israeli and Palestinian societies which the religious communities are part of too. The aim of this section is to give a brief background to the special context of doing religious peacebuilding in the Holy Land. In the second part of this opening chapter I would like to present previous empirical research on religious peacebuilding<sup>5</sup> between Israelis and Palestinians and construct a historical review of the development of organized religious peacework since the 70s. The chronological presentation will build on the previous empirical research that has been presented and the webpages of the organizations and is meant to function as a historical background to the organizations in this dissertation.

### **1.1 Why Religious Peacebuilding in the Holy Land?**

In the opening of this chapter Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty point out how religion has had a negative role in the conflict. Although there seems to be general agreement among scholars that religion is not the main part of this conflict, there seems to be an equal agreement that the religious communities have been divided between two national groups in conflict and that holy sites play a negative role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict<sup>6</sup>. In the following I would like to give some background information which explains parts of the reason why the religious communities are divided in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although there are Jews, Muslims and Christians in Israel, the main focus in this dissertation is the relationship between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian Christians<sup>7</sup> on a social level.

#### **1.1.1 The Holy Land and the three Monotheistic Faiths**

As a starting point I would like to present Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty's explanation of the Israeli and Palestinian claim to ownership of the land. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty relate their arguments to three issues: religion, history and security. Concerning religion, Zionism connects a religious lineage to the land and the concept of *promised land* is often used. For

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<sup>5</sup> The concept *religious peacebuilding* will be further explained in chapter 2. See 2.1.1.

<sup>6</sup> See for example the introduction of Marshall J. Breger, Yitzhak Reiter and Leonard Hammer (eds.): *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, London and New York, Rutledge, 2010. See also Herbert C. Kelman: "National Identity and the Role of the "Other" in Existential Conflicts", in Bunzl, John (ed.): *Islam, Judaism and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East*, University Press of Florida: 2004:61-73. See also chapter 2 in this Monograph.

<sup>7</sup> This means that I am not interested mainly in the political elite level of the conflict. This will be further explained in 2.1.1.

Palestinians, however, religion is essential in their claim to the land because they argue that Palestinian Christians have lived there since the beginning of Christianity and Muslims have been there since the time of the Caliphate. History is relevant; as Zionism claims historical continuity between ancient Jews who lived there and modern time, while Palestinians claim they have lived there continuously the last 1400 years. Security is central in Zionism in relation to establishing a safe haven for Jews after Holocaust, while for Palestinians security is related to their claim that it is the only place for Palestinian refugees to live<sup>8</sup>.

The term *the Holy Land* is used to describe the sacred areas or sites in Israel and Palestine, as it is often used in contemporary writings<sup>9</sup>. However it should be pointed out that the use of this term in relation to Judaism, Islam and Christianity has distinctive religious connotations.

In Judaism, the Holy Land is the place promised to Abraham and his lineage, where the Israelis were led during the Exodus from Egypt, and the place where the Torah was to be implemented and lived by, it was the place the Jews longed for during the Babylonian Exile, and the place where Ezra read out the Torah after the Exile. The Babylonian Exile became a paradigm of the conception of Exile in Rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of the Second Temple by Romans in 70 C.E. and the establishment of a Jewish leadership in Babylonia in the fourth century<sup>10</sup>. In the centuries that followed from the fourth century until modern time, the Jews lived under either Muslim or Christian rule, while the *Holy land* was basically linked to the visions of the future and the Messianic Area where a Messiah would lead the Jewish people back to the *promised land*. Thus, the conception of the *Holy Land* is central in the sacred scriptures of Judaism, both in the Hebrew Bible where the sacred narratives of its existence under Jewish rule are described, as in the literature of the exile and longed for redemption in the *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, *Midrashim* and the many Codes of laws<sup>11</sup>. Eventually, the conception of the *Holy Land* became the center of the Jewish nationalist movement, Zionism<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:44.

<sup>9</sup> I will not create a long list of references for this statement. Surf on the internet testifies how the term *Holy Land* is frequently used in relation to Israelis and Palestinians from all the three Monotheistic faiths. Although it should be pointed out that the term Holy Land (*Al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*) is only mentioned once in the Qur'an. See Abu-Sway, Mustafa: "The Holy Land, Jerusalem, and the Aqsa Mosque in Islamic Sources", in Grabar, Oleg and Kedar, Benjamin Z.: *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, Israel, Yad Ben Zvi-Press, 2009: 336.

<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew term for exile, *galut* – expresses the Jewish conception of the feeling of a nation uprooted from its homeland. This concept has played different roles in the history of Judaism. See Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson: "Galut" in *Encyclopedia Judaica CD-ROM edition*, Judaica Multimedia, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Wygoda explains: "The three kinds of holy places in Jewish Law" in Breger, Reiter and Hammer (eds.): *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, London and New York: Rutledge, 2010: 92-100.

<sup>12</sup> The strong relationship between Zionism and the Judaic conception of the Holy Land has been pointed out by many scholars. See for example Ravitzky, Aviezer: *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*,

For Muslims the *Holy Land* has been part of most of the great Muslim empires of history, from the Caliphate in 637 until the Ottoman Empire which lasted until the end of the First World War 1914 - except only for the century of Crusaders rule in 1099-1187. During all these centuries, Muslim communities have lived within this region and had their own Muslim courts and jurisdiction<sup>13</sup>. Although the term “Holy Land” (*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*) is only mentioned once in the Quran, Muslims often refer to the land as the land of the prophets<sup>14</sup>.

Christians stand in a special relationship with Judaism, basically because they share a common sacred scripture – the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Since the concept of the *Holy Land* is rooted in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament<sup>15</sup>, Christian thought has naturally developed around this issue. Although the *holy land* is basically deterritorialized in Christian theology<sup>16</sup>, Christianity celebrates history. According to the Christian faith, God was present in the historical and the concrete in the person of Jesus. As Ellen Ross points out, this:

... salvation enabling event of God’s presence in the historical specificity of Christ radically transforms Christian experience of the world and of space, which becomes bearer of the sacred not just in a general sense, as all creation bears the mark of its Creator, but now in all of its particularity as it shows forth the history of the Divine’s continuing and active relationship with the world. This sacralizing of historically determined place characterizes Christianity so that tangible, physical, and individualized geographical places associated with salvation history are perceived as potent mediators of divine presence<sup>17</sup>.

This sanctification of places in Christian thought might best be illustrated through the building of Churches on places where Jesus was believed to have been – a process which started out specifically during the Byzantine reign in the fourth century. According to O’Mahony, the relationship between the Christian communities and politics was closely linked to the sanctity of the Churches which had been built since the fourth century in every

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Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 1993:1-19. See also Gordon, A.D. :“The Religion of Labor” in Goldberg, David J. (ed.): *To the promised land, a history of Zionist thought*, England: Penguins Books, 1996:137-157.

<sup>13</sup> See Krämer, Gudrun: *A history of Palestine from the Ottoman conquest to the founding of the state of Israel*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 2008. Yitzhak Reiter has also conducted a research on the Palestinian Muslim *Waaqf* in Israel since 1965, where he documents how a great number of these *Waaqf* areas where considered as “absentee property” in Israel and therefore transferred to a government custodian. See Reiter, Yitzhak: “The *Waaqf* in Israel since 1965”, in Breger, Reiter and Hammer (eds.): 2010:104-127.

<sup>14</sup> Abu Sway: 2009: 335.

<sup>15</sup> Wang, Yvonne M.: *De jødiske utsendingene fra Palestina 200-429 e.v.t.: forholdet mellom det rabbiniske miljø i Eretz Israel og den jødiske diaspora*. Post-graduate thesis in study of religion, University of Bergen: 2001: 14-17.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Werblowsky: “Jerusalems betydning for jøder, kristne og muslimer” in Aarflot, Helge (ed.) *Fred for Jerusalem*, Oslo: Luther Forlag: 1996:18-24, or Wilken, Robert Louis: *The land called holy: Palestine in Christian history and thought*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Ross, Ellen: «Diversities of Divine Presence: Women’s Geography in the Christian tradition”, in Scott, Jamie & Simpson-Housley, Paul: *Sacred Places and Profane spaces. Essays in the geographies of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Westport, Greenwood Press, 1991:98.

spot believed to be the place of one incident in the life of Jesus<sup>18</sup>. O'Mahony further emphasizes that for the Christian communities in Palestine, The Church of The Nativity in Bethlehem, churches and holy places in Nazareth and specifically the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, became symbols of Christian presence and custodianship in this region<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the communities in Palestine develop a monastic order from the third century across the hills and plains of the Judean desert, which also became a center for pilgrimage<sup>20</sup>.

In addition it should be mentioned that the area included in the term *Holy Land* also includes holy sites dedicated to the memories of common religious characters in the three Monotheistic traditions<sup>21</sup>, as well as distinctive religious persons in the history of the individual traditions<sup>22</sup>.

At the center of *the Holy Land* stands Jerusalem. In Jewish thought, Jerusalem is the place where Abraham bound his son Isaac for sacrifice, where David and Solomon constructed the first Temple, where the second Temple was reconstructed again after the Babylonian Exile, and finally destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. The sacrificial ritual of the Temple preserved the order of the cosmos and bound heaven and earth<sup>23</sup>. Even though the Temple was destroyed and Jews were pushed from Jerusalem, they maintained spiritual citizenship in this city. They built its sanctity into the structure of their prayers, in their rituals marking life's transitions, in the architecture of the synagogues, in their vision of the messianic end time, and eventually into the center of their nationalist movement<sup>24</sup>. The idea of redemption

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<sup>18</sup> O'Mahony, Anthony: "The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land: A Historical and Political Survey", in O'Mahony, Anthony (ed.): *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land*, Cardiff, University of Wales press, 2003:1.

<sup>19</sup> The Palestinian Christian communities are perhaps the most complex and diverse group with an historical attachment going back to the first century of common area. The Palestinian Christian communities in this area can be divided into four main dominations: The orthodox, the Catholic, the Oriental and the Protestant. Among each of these four dominations one can find several religious societies. Each religious community has their own historical origin in the area, their own liturgy, their own sacred language and customs, some are foreigners from either Western or Eastern countries, but most are Palestinian Christians. And each of the religious communities have a special connection to the Old City and Bethlehem, either through responsibility over one of the many Churches, or through the religious sites connected to the stories of Jesus. Most of the communities were represented from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Only the Orthodox millet, the Armenians, the Ethiopians and the Latinos had any real standing in Jerusalem before the nineteenth century. See for example O'Mahony: 2003:3-10.

<sup>20</sup> O'Mahony; 2003:2.

<sup>21</sup> Yitzhak Reiter has written a chapter called "Contest or cohabitation in shared holy places? The Cave of the Patriarchs and Samuel's Tomb", in Breger, Reiter & Hammer: 2010:158-175, where he argues that sharing holy places in an area which is not a part of political negotiation is rather unproblematic, while sharing holy places that are also under political negotiations is problematic.

<sup>22</sup> See for example J.W. Meri: *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Wang, 2001:9-11. See also Jacob Neusner: *Messiah in context*. Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984, and Jafee, Martin S.: *Early Judaism*. Upper Saddle River, Prentice Hall, 1997:174.

<sup>24</sup> This process is described by Neusner, Jacob: *The Mishnah, An Introduction*, London, Jason Aronson Inc. 1989:44-45, Wang; 2001:12-14, and Ravitzky: 1993:10-39.



connected to this city also explains why so many Jews decided to be buried outside Jerusalem waiting for the arrival of a Messiah or a Messianic Age<sup>25</sup>.

Jerusalem is a sacred city in Islam. In the following I would like to present five dimensions to characterize the Holiness of Jerusalem in Islamic thought and literature<sup>26</sup>. The first dimension is connected to holy mosques. The *al-Aqsa* mosque is considered the third holiest mosque in Islam, after the mosque of *al-Haram* in Mecca and *al-Nabawi* in Medina. The Islamic professor Abu-Sway explains how several *hadiths* give Muslims everywhere a special responsibility for both the physical and spiritual maintenance of *the al-Aqsa* mosque<sup>27</sup>. Secondly, the city is also connected to Islam's relationship with Judaism and Christianity. Jerusalem symbolizes the cradle of the religions, where all the Muslim prophets came and lived – many prophets whom they have in common with Judaism and Christianity. Thirdly, it was the first *qibla* (direction of prayer) in Islam, before the Kaaba in Mecca. A fourth religious dimension is connected to the narrative of Muhammad's nightly journey, *miraj*, where Mohammed was brought by a flying horse called *al-Buraqi al-Sharif* from Mecca to Jerusalem, and further up to Heaven. For centuries the area where the *al-Aqsa* mosque stands was called *Masjid-al-Aqsa*, which can be translated from Arabic to English as "the farthest mosque"<sup>28</sup>. Jerusalem is not directly mentioned in the Quran; however most Muslims interpret the telling of Muhammad's nightly journey in Quran 17:1 and "the farthest mosque" as meaning Jerusalem<sup>29</sup>. The fifth dimension is connected to the *fadha'il al-kuds* literature. Jerusalem was under Islamic rule from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, but when the Crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1099-1187, a kind of Islamic literature flourished which, according to Werblowsky, resembles Zionist literature<sup>30</sup>. It was called *fadha'il al-Kuds* or "Praise-of-Jerusalem-Traditions", which dates back to the first half of the twelfth century<sup>31</sup>.

In Christianity, Jerusalem is the historical religious site of several incidents in the life of Jesus, specifically the story where Jesus carried the cross on the way to Golgotha. But the psychical significance of Jerusalem was early understood as the *Heavenly Jerusalem* - as described in Revelation<sup>32</sup>. According to Werblowsky, Jerusalem was in its eschatological and

<sup>25</sup> Wang: 2001:93-94.

<sup>26</sup> The following presentation is based on the chapter by Abu-Sway: 2009:335-343.

<sup>27</sup> Abu-Sway: 2009:338.

<sup>28</sup> Abu-Sway: 2009:335-336.

<sup>29</sup> Abu-Manshar, Maher Y.: *Islamic Jerusalem and its Christians: A History of Tolerance and Tensions*. London, Tauris, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Werblowsky: 1996:17.

<sup>31</sup> Amikam, Elad,: *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*, Leiden: Brill, 1995.

<sup>32</sup> See Revelation chapter 21.

practical dimensions dissociated from its physical presence and placed itself closer to an understanding of Jerusalem as a heavenly sphere<sup>33</sup>. This process occurred – as Werblowsky explains – from its seeds in the Revelation to the theology of Augustine, and is further presented in the writings of Thomas of Aquinas, who wrote the psalm *Lauda Sion Redemption*, where Zion was seen as a symbol of the Church<sup>34</sup>. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the historical religious sites of the narratives of Jesus gave Jerusalem and its Churches a unique status among Christians.

Reuven Firestone writes an article where he compares territoriality and sanctity in Judaism and Islam basically from an Eliadean perspective<sup>35</sup>. In the following I will present two of these parallels which Firestone brings to the fore. The first parallel is related to how both Judaism and Islam manifest “a sense of being either within or outside the borders of a territory”<sup>36</sup>, which in Judaism refers to the *Land of Israel*<sup>37</sup> and in Islam to *dar-al-islam* (the realm of peace)<sup>38</sup>. The second parallel between Islam and Judaism concerning sacred space is what Firestone calls the “covenantal promises”<sup>39</sup> related to the land in Judaism and the “divinely determined conquest”<sup>40</sup> of *dar-al-islam* in Islamic thought. In this way both Judaism and Islam consider the Holy Land as sacred area, although in Judaism the Holy Land is more directly connected to an understanding of a national geographical area, while in Islam it is more related to a specific territory<sup>41</sup>. Werblowsky also compares the sanctity of Jerusalem between the three Monotheistic faiths. According to Werblowsky there is a difference between the Jewish relations with Jerusalem on the one hand, and the Christian and Muslim relation with Jerusalem on the other hand. This difference is related to how both Christians and Muslims consider Jerusalem holy because of its sacred historical events, while in Judaism it is not just the sacred historical events, but the city itself<sup>42</sup>. On the other hand, as Firestone points out, Islam also has a religious and territorial relationship with this area.

<sup>33</sup> Werblowsky: 1996: 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> Werblowsky: 1996:21.

<sup>35</sup> Firestone, Reuven: “Territoriality and Sanctity in Judaism and Islam”. CCAR Journal, A Reform Jewish Quarterly, 2000:6-15. Online: <http://data.ccar.net.org/journal/1100.html> Retrieved March 1, 2010. The concept of *sacred space* in the thinking of Micrae Eliade will be presented in chapter 2. See 2.1.1.

<sup>36</sup> Firestone: 2000:6.

<sup>37</sup> Wang: 2001:14-17.

<sup>38</sup> In Islamic thought it is normal to divide the world into two main categories – *dar-al harb* (the realm of war) and *dar-al-islam* (the realm of peace). The differences between these two realms mainly concern the question of the possibilities for Muslims to practice their faith under a certain rule. See for example Khuri, Fuad, “The Ascent to top office in Arab-Islamic culture: a challenge to democracy”, in Salem, Paul (ed.): *Conflict resolution in the arab world: selected essays*, Lebanon, American University of Beirut, 1997:121-139.

<sup>39</sup> Firestone: 2000:8.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> See Werblowsky`s argument of how the Holy Land is part of the Islamic *oikoumene* above.

<sup>42</sup> Werblowsky: 1996: 29.30.

The reviews given above on the significance of the Holy Land and Jerusalem in the three Monotheistic faiths are also the main argument by several academics as to why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a unique religious dimension to it. In addition the study of Breger, Reiter and Hammer argues that holy sites have been integrated into the national ethos:

In constructing a modern national ethos, politicians and intellectuals draw on their framework of popular culture and consciousness, which was mainly religious in the past, and exploit holy sites in order to buttress projects of national or ethnic identity. Religion and holy places are thus an effective cultural element of modern nationalism<sup>43</sup>.

Several academics point out how 1967 and the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank specifically<sup>44</sup> increased the use of religious terminology in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict<sup>45</sup>. The study edited by Breger, Reiter and Hammer- *Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*<sup>46</sup>- shows the complexity of how *Holy Places* have infused the conflict and political discourses among the parties. While both the *Holy land* generally and Jerusalem specifically hold a genuine religious symbolic position for the three Monotheistic faiths, several academics have pointed out that holy sites have had a negative impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict<sup>47</sup>. Concerning Zionism, they argue that this national movement “required a religious identity as a common denomination for the unification of the people”<sup>48</sup> where “Jerusalem and the Temple served as a resource of national inspiration”<sup>49</sup>. Concerning the Palestinian national movement they argue that after the fall of the Ottoman empire Islam and pan-Arabism became the first source of identity – but “ Amin al-Husseini became the first to recognize the power of religion and politics as a unifying resource “<sup>50</sup>. Although the influence of religion on the formation of national identities is easily recognized in the utterance by Hamas<sup>51</sup> or by Jewish settlers<sup>52</sup>, a central argument of Breger, Reiter and Hammer is that religion has had a central role in the construction of national identities in relation to holy places, among both religious and secular.

<sup>43</sup> Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010: 5.

<sup>44</sup> In addition to Gaza and the Golan Heights.

<sup>45</sup> Wasserstein, Bernard: *Divided Jerusalem. The Struggle for the Holy City*. New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2008: 208. Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010:85.

<sup>46</sup> Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010 and Kelman: 2004:61-73.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. The strong relationship between Holy places and Zionism has also been pointed out by Ravitzky: 1993:1. See also the conclusion in Moshe Halbertal` study: *People of the Book*, Harvard University Press, 1997:129-134, where Halbertal argues that the Zionists preferred the Bible to the Talmud as the national literature.

<sup>50</sup> Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010:5. The rise of the mufti is also described by Wasserstein: 2008:100-108.

<sup>51</sup> See for example the insightful book *Hamas – The Islamic Resistance Movement*, written by Beverly Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, UK, Polity Press, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> See for example Ravitzky: 1993.

The above mentioned study by Breger, Reiter and Hammer addresses themes such as the legal regulation of holy sites, nationalization and reproduction of holy space, sharing and contesting holy places and popular legends of holy sites. The discussion of legal regulation of holy sites<sup>53</sup> documents how various definitions of holy places have been put forward by the parties and that the number of holy places in Israel and Palestine has increased in recent years. The legal regulation of holy sites has in recent years limited the Palestinian access to their holy sites based on Israeli security regulations. In one chapter of the study Leonard Hammer<sup>54</sup> argues why holy places should be protected by international law and human rights, to help moving forward and “away from a state-centric understanding and application of designating holy places”<sup>55</sup> which also protected the rights of the minority.

Another study conducted by Doron Bar is on the influence of the 1948 War on sacred space in the state of Israel<sup>56</sup>. Bar argues that the war in 1948 had far-reaching consequences for sacred space in the Holy Land. According to Bar the 1948 war “led to a reshaping of sacred space within the State of Israel and to the creation of an alternative map of Jewish holy sites, most of which had not existed before the land was divided”<sup>57</sup>. Bar further argues that the 1967 war nineteen years later led to a new reshaping of sacred space, where holy sites that were central in 1948-1967 “lost its uniqueness and became again just one of a long list of sites sacred in Judaism”<sup>58</sup>. The new attention was now given to the historical sacred sites in the West Bank and East Jerusalem<sup>59</sup>. According to Reiter, Hammer and Breger, Jerusalem has a specific status in the conflict as a sacred city in an ongoing unresolved political position. They exemplify this by referring to three clashes related to Jerusalem. The first violent clash in 1929 was related to Jerusalem, when Jews sought to extend their access to the Western Wall and Arabs sought to prevent this<sup>60</sup>. And in modern time the second intifada was triggered by Ariel Sharon and his public visit to the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000. The third example is how Sheikh Ra`id Salah, the leader of the Northern Islamic movement, has introduced his famous slogan to Palestinians and the Arab world saying that al-Aqsa in danger<sup>61</sup>. Thus they conclude:

<sup>53</sup> Breger and Hammer: «The legal regulation of holy sites», in Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010: 20-49.

<sup>54</sup> Hammer: ”Protection of holy places in international law”, in Breger, Reiter and Hammer:2010:50-65

<sup>55</sup> Hammer: 2010:58.

<sup>56</sup> Bar, Doron: “Wars and sacred space: the influence of the 1948 War on Sacred space in the state of Israel”, in Berger, Reiter and Hammer, 2010:67-91.

<sup>57</sup> Bar: 2010:67.

<sup>58</sup> Bar:2010:85.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010:6.

<sup>61</sup> Breger, Reiter, Hammer: 2010:6. A number of researchers have also pointed out specifically how the sacredness of Jerusalem for the three Semitic faiths must be considered before a final political status of

Yet it is abundantly clear that holy places in Israel and Palestine have political ramifications ... As we have seen the situation of holy places in Israel and Palestine is especially complex. One city, Jerusalem, contains space sacred to the narrative of each of the three Abrahamic religions... The competing religious narratives have in many ways shaped the political conflict<sup>62</sup>.

One suggestion of how to deal constructively with this strong relationship between national identity, politics and religion is made in the fascinating volume edited by John Bunzl on *Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religion in the Middle East*, where Bunzl describes the intention behind the writings as follows:

We hope to contribute to a reduction of violence and potential violence in a region where the religious overdetermination of conflicts is a concrete, seemingly insuperable political problem. To achieve this goal it is necessary to analyze the role and function of religious discourse in its own context. Initially, we proceed from two theses. First, there is no necessary connection between the politicizing of religion, the sacralization of politics, and the quest for coexistence and peace in the Middle East. And second, the politicization of religion and sacralization of politics unavoidably tends to heighten conflict. Consequently, ways have to be found to uncouple politics from religion, religion from politics<sup>63</sup>.

In this way Bunzl argues that the way to end the exploitations of religion in the political conflict is to uncouple this relationship. Another perspective on this issue is given by three Israeli professors Ben Mollov, Ephraim Meir and Chaim Lavie, who suggest that it is exactly because the sacred narratives are so interconnected with the national identities of Israelis specifically and Palestinians generally, that interreligious dialogue can have a constructive role:

From a Jewish perspective though, inter-religious dialogue is important as it combines deeper underpinnings of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which, it has been argued elsewhere, is fundamentally anchored in religious identity among both Jews and Arabs in the Middle East ... Therefore, social psychological perspectives which focus almost solely on transforming interpersonal perceptions divorced from the religiously based national narratives are not likely to be effective for conflict management in the Arab-Israeli conflict<sup>64</sup>.

The interest in how religion can contribute constructively in peacework has also been pointed out by several academics in recent times<sup>65</sup>.

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Jerusalem is given. See for example Guinn: 2006. See also Burgess, J. Peter. "The Religious Site in Civil Space: Meaning and Function of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif", in *Social Identities* 3/2004: 311-323.

<sup>62</sup> Breger, Reiter and Hammer: 2010:7.

<sup>63</sup> Bunzl, John (ed.): "Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East", University Press of Florida, 2004:2.

<sup>64</sup> Mollov, Ben, Meir, Ephraim and Lavie, Chaim: *An Integrated Strategy for Peace Building: Judaic Approach*. The German Journal Die Friedens-Warte, 2007.

<sup>65</sup> This will be described in detail in the next chapter 2.

### 1.1.2 Stereotypes and Prejudices in the Social Sphere

Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims and Christians are naturally also part of the larger Israeli and Palestinian societies and equally affected by dominant stereotypes and prejudices in the public sphere as anyone else<sup>66</sup>. For this reason I would like to present two studies which clarify some dominant stereotypes and prejudices in Israel and the mutually exclusive national identities of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman at the Tel Aviv University made a study in 2005<sup>67</sup> called *Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict - Representations of Arabs in Israeli Jewish Society*. This study is a systematic analysis of the developments, institutionalization and functions of stereotypes of Arabs generally and Palestinians particularly in the Israeli-Jewish public sphere from the 1930s and until the beginning of this millennium – which also marked the beginning of the second intifada. This study seeks to explain how stereotypes and prejudice emerged, and how they were transmitted by social political channels of communication such as the public discourses in the media, school textbooks, cultural products such as Hebrew literature, plays and films – followed by an empirical research on attitudes among preschool children. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to give detailed information about their findings, but for this dissertation it is relevant to present the conclusion of this study concerning how Arabs were represented in the media, school textbooks and cultural products after the Oslo Agreement. This study documents how Arabs were either ignored or represented negatively from the 1930s and until the Oslo Agreement. But according to this study changes occurred after the Oslo Agreement: “After the Oslo Agreement in 1993 a dramatic change was detectable in the media, as the Palestinians began to be personalized and humanized<sup>68</sup>. Bar-Tal and Teichman see this change in relation to how the feeling of threats to liquidation of Israel were declining during the first years after the Oslo Agreement, and then shows how this feeling was crushed through the outbreak of the second intifada: “But since September 2000, with the beginning of violent uprising by the Palestinians, the context of violent conflict is again the overarching backdrop for Arab-Israeli relations. There are indications that this course of events is leading to renewed Palestinian delegitimization<sup>69</sup>”. The study exemplifies this with statements made by the Israeli Chief of Staff in 2001 which

<sup>66</sup> This is also pointed out by Marc Gopin. See Gopin: *Holy War, Holy Peace, How Religion Can bring Peace to the Middle East*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002:3-6.

<sup>67</sup> Bar-Tal, D. & Teichman, Y.: *Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict. Representations of Arabs in Israeli Jewish Society*. United States of America: Cambridge University Press: 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Bar-Tal & Teichman: 2005:155.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

called the Palestinian Authority a “terrorist entity”<sup>70</sup>, and the then President of Israel Moshe Katzav which proclaimed that there was an “immense difference between us and our enemies, not only in capabilities, but also in morality, culture, sanctity of life and consciousness”<sup>71</sup>. Unfortunately, the study was written before the election of Hamas and the discourse on security connected to Gaza in recent years. The conclusion of the next issue, how Arabs (Palestinians) were represented in the Israeli school textbooks – specifically in the Subject of History (as “an example of institutionalized societal beliefs”<sup>72</sup>), showed the same tendencies. While the school textbooks represented the Arabs in a negative way, they thus “provided Jews with a foundation for explaining the continuous conflict with the Arabs and their resistance to the Zionist endeavor, while at the same time maintaining a positive image for the Jews as victims in the conflict and justifying Jewish behavior and deeds”<sup>73</sup>. Although the study reveals changes in the 1980s and 1990s, the conclusion of their study on the school textbooks is that it will take years to rewrite into school textbooks “a balanced presentation”<sup>74</sup>. On the other hand, the study of cultural products such as films, plays and Hebrew literature showed a positive change as early as in the 70s. Bar-Tal and Teichman argue that this difference might be explained by the fact that members of the Israeli culture elite had been part of the peace camp, and challenged the dominant stereotypes by portraying Arabs “with empathy and understanding their concerns, needs and aspirations”<sup>75</sup>. According to Bar-Tal and Teichman, similar analysis has not yet been conducted by Palestinian academics on these issues<sup>76</sup>, but reports on Palestinian schoolbooks and media in both West Bank and Gaza – on how they describe Israelis and Jews - have been made and document stereotypes of Israelis among Palestinians too<sup>77</sup>.

A study by Professor in Social Ethics at Harvard University, Herbert C. Kelman called *National Identity and the Role of the “Other” in Existential Conflicts – The Israeli-Palestinian Case*<sup>78</sup>, emphasizes the relationship between national and collective identity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Kelman, the core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the common threat that acknowledgement of the other’s claim poses:

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Quotations from Herald Tribune, March 1, 2001.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Statement made in Maariv, May 11, 2001.

<sup>72</sup> Bar-Tal & Teichman: 2005:157.

<sup>73</sup> Bar-Tal & Teichman: 2005:175.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Bar-Tal & Teichman: 2005:206.

<sup>76</sup> Bar-Tal & Teichman: 2005:176.

<sup>77</sup> Palestinian Media Watch, Online: <http://www.palwatch.org/pages/aboutus.aspx> and Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in school education, online <http://www.impact-se.org/> Retrieved May 15, 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Kelman: 2004:61-73.

In conflicts such as that between Israelis and Palestinians, in which the two sides live in the same space and claim ownership of the same territory, it is not only the actions of the other, but the identity and the very existence of the other that are a threat to the group's identity. The other's identity and its associated narratives challenge the group's claims to ownership – at least exclusive ownership – of the land and its resources. The other's presence in the same space, particularly if it is accompanied by demands for a share of power and for recognition of the other culture, religion, and/or language, is perceived as a threat to the integrity and cohesiveness of the group's society and its way of life<sup>79</sup>.

Kelman further argues that the main objective of peacebuilding must be to redefine exclusive identities to identities which both acknowledge the other and one's own collective identity. According to Kelman, history plays a central role in the building up of a national identity. Kelman argues that moving from an exclusive view of history to a redefined common history, requires a change in national narratives which mutually acknowledge each other's view of history<sup>80</sup>. According to the Israeli Historian Bar-On: "Historicity and collective memories are always a central dimension of the conflict. They shape the way the parties perceive not only the conflict, its origins and nature, and enemy but also their own collective identity. Therefore, they are bound to remain alive and kicking even after the political reconciliation has been achieved"<sup>81</sup>.

The starting point for this section was to give sufficient background information on the question of why religious peacebuilding should be conducted in the Holy Land. This section has also brought to light some studies which argue that holy sites and national narratives are interrelated, and therefore add a religious dimension to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this section I have also presented some studies which can explain some of the stereotypes, prejudices and neglect of the other's national claim which exists in the public sphere, and which naturally also affects the religious communities. The intention of this section is not to give detailed information on these issues, but to function as a limited background for understanding the context of religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. The latter is also the topic of the next section in this chapter.

## ***1.2 Previous Empirical Research and Historical Background***

In this section I will firstly presented previous empirical research on religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. Secondly I seek to construct a historical background by presenting the

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<sup>79</sup> Kelman: 2004:62.

<sup>80</sup> Kelman: 2004:71.

<sup>81</sup> Bar-On, M: 2004:27.



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establishment of organized religious peacework in the Holy Land since the 70s, based on previous research and the webpages of the organizations<sup>82</sup>.

### 1.2.1 Previous Empirical Research

Previous empirical research on religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine can be categorized into two main interests. First of all, a few studies have been made directly on religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. Secondly, there exists research in which religious peacebuilding is included as a minor part in the studies of general secular peacework. The second category can be divided into two sub-categories as well. First research on the Israeli peace movement and secondly research on Israeli and Palestinian NGOs working for peace<sup>83</sup>.

Yehezkel Landau conducted a report for the United States Institute for Peace, called *Healing the Holy Land, Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/ Palestine*, published in 2003<sup>84</sup>. The report is based on a series of interviews during the fall 2002 with some thirty Jews, Christians and Muslims in Israel/Palestine. The report includes interviews with religious leaders as well as facilitators of grassroots interfaith dialogues and religious educators who seek to promote peacebuilding activities on the ground. The report does not explore the published material of any organizations, but is based on interviews which explain some of the experiences religious peacebuilders have had. Leading personnel from several organizations in this dissertation are interviewed, such as from the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, Rabbis for Human Rights, Interfaith Encounter Association, Jerusalem Peacemakers and the religious studies unit of PASSIA. Some of the religious leaders who signed the Alexandria Declaration in January 21, 2002<sup>85</sup> – which became the forerunner for the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land – have also been interviewed. The report argues for the inclusion of religious leaders and educators in a long-term peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians. Yehezkel Landau has himself been an active Israeli Jewish orthodox peace activist since the 70s<sup>86</sup> and has personal contacts with religious peace activists in this region. In this way Landau is also an insider who knows the religious peace activists personally and who himself believes in the

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<sup>82</sup> Similar division has been made by Kaufman, Salem & Verhoeven: 2006:6.

<sup>83</sup> The different levels in which religious peacebuilders work will be presented in the next chapter.

<sup>84</sup> Landau: 2003.

<sup>85</sup> See paragraph 1.2.2.

<sup>86</sup> See Bar-On: 1996: 171.

religious significance of this work<sup>87</sup>. The report is only about 50 pages, but gives important information, recommendations and bibliographical resources for further studies on the religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine.

In 2007 the study *Unity in Diversity – Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East* was published by the United Institute of Peace Press. This study is an investigation of interfaith dialogue in five selected countries in this region – Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine conducted by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Emily Welty and Amal I. Khoury. Each researcher gives a brief presentation of the interviews, explore the process which guided their interfaith work, identify the process and obstacles, and make recommendations<sup>88</sup>. The chapter on interfaith dialogue in Israel and Palestine is of special interest in this dissertation<sup>89</sup>, where 34 Israelis and Palestinians are interviewed and research observations are conducted in Jerusalem. In addition one of the researchers, the Palestinian Mohammed Abu-Nimer, conducted two training workshops. The analysis revealed a pattern of distinctions between Arab and Jewish responses, which uncovered how similarities and differences were linked to religious affiliation and minority-majority status<sup>90</sup>. One of the concluding remarks of this study is:

A clear distinction emerges between using a religious approach to deepen one`s faith and to understand other faiths, versus using religious beliefs as an instrument to reduce violence and preach for political coexistence. The analysis that follows shows how all three of the process models described above point to a clash – not of theologies, but of views on the relationship of religion and nationalism, or religion and political justice<sup>91</sup>.

According to this study these distinctions are specifically related to differences between Israeli and Palestinian participants, where Israelis generally see interfaith dialogue as a way of understanding oneself and the other, while Palestinians see interfaith dialogue as a way of combating political injustice<sup>92</sup>. This study includes interviews with leading staff members from several organizations in this dissertation. Among them are Interfaith Encounter Association, Interreligious Coordinating Council, PASSIA, Rabbis for Human Rights and Sabeel. One of the researchers of this study, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, has also done earlier research which can be relevant in our context. In 1999 Abu-Nimer published his research

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<sup>87</sup> Landau: 2003:9.

<sup>88</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:4.

<sup>89</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:43-94.

<sup>90</sup> See 3.1. See also Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:47.

<sup>91</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 66.

<sup>92</sup> Although the Israeli organization Rabbis for Human Rights was an exception. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 224-226.

*Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change. Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel*<sup>93</sup>, where he examines intergroup intervention programs in six of the largest Arab-Jewish encounter programs in Israel, aimed at promoting peace through communication and dialogue in the 90s. The main research question is “how can an intervener be more effective in promoting change processes in a conflict situation?”<sup>94</sup> Abu-Nimer’s conclusion is a hard critique of the dialogue programs in Israel in the 90s:

Regardless whether this role is played consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, by Arab-Jewish encounter programs, it is clear that by raising the Arab and Jewish students’ awareness of their Israeli civic identity only, these programs are contributing to weakening the Palestinian identity of the Arab students and strengthening the Israeli Jewish identity of the Jewish students, the Israeli identity that essentially reflects what the Jewish Zionist movement wishes to transmit to Jewish youth for generations to come<sup>95</sup>.

In this way Abu-Nimer shows how the dialogue programs in the 90s did not lead to any social change for Arabs in Israel. A more contemporary concern in Abu-Nimer’s research is to develop models suitable for the specific local context of Middle Eastern countries, because Abu-Nimer argues that one should not impose Western models in this region<sup>96</sup>.

In addition I would like to mention one empirical case study based on interviews of three individual religious peace workers in Israel and Palestine. This case study is found in *Peacemakers in Action* edited by David Little, which includes a chapter on Israel and Palestine, based on interviews with three religious peace activists – the Palestinian Christian Abuna Elias Chacour, and the two Israeli Jews Rabbi Menachem Frohman and Yehezkel Landau<sup>97</sup>. Rabbi Menachem Frohman is also a religious peacemaker within one of the organizations in this dissertation, Jerusalem Peacemakers<sup>98</sup>.

Thus, there exists empirical research on some of the organizations in this dissertation<sup>99</sup>, although primarily based on interviews and research observation, not on the published materials of these organizations<sup>100</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> Abu-Nimer, Muhammad: *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change. Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> Abu-Nimer: 1999: Introduction.

<sup>95</sup> Abu-Nimer: 1999: 160.

<sup>96</sup> See the Interview with Mohammed Abu-Nimer published at Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs at Georgetown University in June 2010. Online: <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-mohammed-abu-nimer-professor-school-of-international-service-american-university> Retrieved December 1, 2010. This discussion will also be mentioned in chapter 4.

<sup>97</sup> Little, David (ed.): *Peacemakers in Action*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007: 302-381.

<sup>98</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>99</sup> The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land was not founded when this research was conducted.

<sup>100</sup> This will be further discussed in chapter 4.

As mentioned above, there exist two research interests which indirectly also include religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. The first is related to research on the Israeli peace movement, the other to Israeli-Palestinian NGOs for peace. First of all, I should like to present Mordechai Bar-On's study *In Pursuit of Peace* published in 1996. In his study Bar-On documents the activities of the Israeli Peace movement from its roots in the activities of individual peace activists in the 50s and 60s, its development into organizational work from the 70s until the Oslo Agreement in 1993. The structure of this book is mainly chronological, and it is mainly based on primary sources through interviews and documents<sup>101</sup>. The focus of Bar-On's study is to understand the development of the political peace process and negotiation along the development of individual peace activists and organizations the last three decades. Among the organizations in this dissertation Bar-On only mentions one – Rabbis for Human Rights – which was established in 1988<sup>102</sup>. Bar-On also mentions other examples of organized religious peacework in the 70s which will be presented below.

Another study of the Israeli peace movement and the influence of the first Palestinian intifada is done by Reuven Kaminer in *The politics of protest: the Israeli peace movement and the Palestinian intifada*, published in 1996. Kaminer makes references to two religiously based peace organizations, *Oz ve Shalom* and Rabbis for Human Rights<sup>103</sup>, and documents the impact of the first Palestinian intifada (1987) on the development of the Israeli peace movement<sup>104</sup>.

Another kind of studies which include the religious peacebuilders in Israel and Palestine are those which seek to give an overview of peace activities by NGOs in Israel and Palestine. In the following I will briefly present two such attempts, one by the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), the other by the European Center for Conflict Prevention. In addition I would like to present The Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum and some of the information this organization gives, which is relevant as background information.

In 1999 PRIME organized a conference called *The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Peace-Building between Israelis and Palestinians*, which was published in 2000<sup>105</sup>. The participants were Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals who sought to create a platform for cooperation between the two peoples and their NGOs in what they called “a post-

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<sup>101</sup> Bar-On: 1996: xix.

<sup>102</sup> Bar-On: 1996: 238.

<sup>103</sup> Kaminer: 1996: 150-1. *Oz ve Shalom* and Rabbis for Human rights will be presented in the next paragraph.

<sup>104</sup> Kaminer: 1996: 98.

<sup>105</sup> Adwan & Bar-On: 2000.

conflict situation<sup>106</sup>. The publication also gives a list of NGOs which participated in the Conference where one of the organizations in this dissertation is mentioned – Sabeel. Three other organizations which see religion as a vital part of their peacework are also mentioned<sup>107</sup>.

In 2006 the European Centre for Conflict Prevention published a project made in cooperation between the two peace organizations, the Palestinian Panorama Center for Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development<sup>108</sup> and the Israeli Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University<sup>109</sup>. The project was called *Bridging the Divide. Peacebuilding in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*<sup>110</sup>, and documents some of the activities conducted by Israelis and Palestinians since the Oslo Agreement in 1993 until the second intifada broke out. The project also provides a list of 101 Israeli and Palestinian NGOs working in the field<sup>111</sup>.

The Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum was established in 2005 in cooperation with the Peres Center for Peace and the Panorama Center, in order to coordinate and promote contact between Israeli and Palestinian NGOs<sup>112</sup>. The Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum has made a list of 92 Israeli and Palestinian member organizations, where 60 of them have a webpage with information about their activities and year of establishment<sup>113</sup>. Among these 60 organizations, 6 were mainly religious. On the other hand, Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty present a list of 28 organizations behind their study on interfaith dialogue in Israel and Palestine in 2003<sup>114</sup>.

Since no research has yet been done which documents the historical development of religious peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine, the following historical presentation is a construction based on previous empirical research presented above. Thus, the next paragraph

<sup>106</sup> Adwan & Bar-On: 2000:1. The asymmetry of the conflict and how this affects peacework is also discussed in this conference paper, and will be discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>107</sup> Al Liqa is presented at page 34, Bethlehem Bible College at page 39, Sabeel at page 58, and Yakar at page 62, in Adwan & Bar-On: 2000.

<sup>108</sup> See the official webpage of PANORMA, online: <http://www.panoramacenter.org/> Retrieved May 21, 2009.

<sup>109</sup> For more information, see the official webpage of Harry S. Truman Research Institute online: <http://truman.huji.ac.il/> Retrieved May 21, 2009.

<sup>110</sup> Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006.

<sup>111</sup> Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006: 225-302. In addition several case studies of contemporary peacebuilding activities in Israel and Palestine have been done by a number of scholars. But usually the focus is on issues related to conflict and peacebuilding generally, where the activities on the ground among Israelis and Palestinians only work as one of several other examples of international conflicts. One could mention Anthony Oberschall: *Conflict and Peace Building in Divided Societies. Responses to ethnic violence*, London, Rutledge, 2007 or the volume by Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver P. Richmond: *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, Tokyo, United National University Press, 2009.

<sup>112</sup> See the history behind the establishment of the Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum, online: <http://www.peacengo.org/history.asp> . Retrieved August 8, 2010.

<sup>113</sup> See The Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum's webpage, online: <http://peacengo.org> . Retrieved August 8, 2010.

<sup>114</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 251-254.

will make references to the previous empirical research presented, in addition to the official webpages of organizations established in recent decades which see religion as a vital part of their peacework. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the historical presentation that follows is intended to function as an historical background behind the organizations in this dissertation.

### 1.2.2 Historical Background Constructed

Bar On traces the religious Jewish Peace Activism back to 1975<sup>115</sup>. The year before, a group of religious Zionist established themselves in a new organization called *Gush Emunim* (Bloc of the Faithful), who strongly believed that the victory of June 1967 and the conquest of the West Bank and East Jerusalem were signs of divine intervention and the beginning of the Messianic Area<sup>116</sup>. In reaction to the religious interpretation of events made by *Gush Emunim*<sup>117</sup>, a group of orthodox scholars founded an ideological-political forum that they called *Oz veShalom* (Strength and Peace). According to themselves they were founded with the following purpose:

Oz VeShalom-Netivot Shalom was founded in 1975 in order to present an alternative expression of religious Zionism. It is committed to promoting the ideals of tolerance, pluralism, and justice, concepts which have always been central to Jewish tradition and law<sup>118</sup>.

While *Oz veShalom* gained a high level of prestige, its activities were limited to intellectual exercises such as publishing articles and convening conferences. Its message was that genuine Torah values gave precedence to “peace, justice, and the sanctity of every human life”<sup>119</sup>. The secular Israeli peace movement was also represented through the establishment of Peace Now (*Shalom Achshav*) in 1978<sup>120</sup>, which gained a lot more attention and public support than the religious peace activism of *Oz veShalom*<sup>121</sup>.

<sup>115</sup> Bar-On: 1996:170-172.

<sup>116</sup> Ravitzky: 1993:80,115.

<sup>117</sup> Ravitzky explains Gush Emunim as followers of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook who interpret the Zionist enterprise as a messianic process where the state of Israel “was conceived in holiness and is itself an embodiment of redemption”, Ravitzky: 1993:37. This way of interpreting events was further developed after the conquest of the West Bank and East Jerusalem by members of *Gush Emunim*, who saw the further expansion of the state of Israel as part of a redemptive divine process, Ravitzky: 1993: 133.

<sup>118</sup> See *Oz ve Shalom* webpage, online: <http://www.netivot-shalom.org.il/> Retrieved October 23, 2009.

<sup>119</sup> Bar-On: 1996:171. Bar-On also mentions that Yehezkel Landau was a member of this group.

<sup>120</sup> Peace Now’s webpage, online: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=43> Retrieved July 14, 2010.

See also Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006:40-42.

<sup>121</sup> Bar-On: 1996:93-118.

After the invasion of Lebanon and the massacres at Sabra and Shatila (1982) a spontaneous demonstration was conducted where Peace Now was a major initiator<sup>122</sup>. The massacres at Sabra and Shatila also affected the religious peace activists. According to Bar-On, some of the younger members of *Oz veShalom*, and other religious men and women previously active in the peace movement, decided to increase their involvement. They organized public prayers by the Western Wall during the ten-day period between *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) and *Yom Kippur* – the time known in Jewish tradition as the Days of Repentance. Many orthodox soldiers who had fought in Lebanon attended the prayer sessions. In January 1983 they established a group called *Netivot Shalom* (Paths of Peace), to arouse new thoughts concerning issues on the national agenda: “The Land of Israel, peace, the sanctity of life, moral considerations in time of war, and a Jewish critique of the direction of government policy<sup>123</sup>”. The movement remained limited in scope and at its peak claimed some 3,000 supporters<sup>124</sup>. Yet, it became part of a process of the emergent of Israeli Jewish religious organizations working for peace which were to blossom in the late 80s and beginning of the 90s.

The Palestinian side of the religious peace camp in Jerusalem developed simultaneously. In the late 70s and early 80s a number of Palestinian Christians and Muslims tried to find new ways to suppress religious extremism and the use of religious terminology in the conflict. In 1982 they established *Al Liqa* (Encounter) Center<sup>125</sup>. *Al Liqa* Center explains how several factors made them decide to establish the center. First of all, they explain how they thought the civil war in Lebanon which began in 1975 “had an effect on the emergence of religious fanaticism”<sup>126</sup>. They also felt that the Israeli and Western media focused on religious dimensions and thereby created an opinion of the Lebanese war as a war between Christians and Muslims<sup>127</sup>. In addition they thought the Iranian Revolution in 1979 had a negative effect which led to the establishment of Islamic movements which also included “fanatic movements which aroused doubts and questions among a number of Arab Christians in the Arab East”<sup>128</sup>. But also the emergence of Christian Zionists from Western countries who rose funds and donated them “to settlements or the building of settlements”, was an action which

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<sup>122</sup> Bar-On: 1996:155.

<sup>123</sup> Bar-On: 1996: 171.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Al Liqa Center is also mentioned by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 251.

<sup>126</sup> Al Liqa website, History. Online: <http://www.al-liqacenter.org.ps/aboutus/history.php> Retrieved April 24, 2008.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

many Muslims and Christians in the Arab East in general and in the Holy Land in particular, experienced as an ignorance of their pain<sup>129</sup>. According to *Al Liqa* these events and others:

... motivated a number of Christians and Muslims to work together in order to confront what is happening on the Palestinian land, to raise the awareness of the citizens and to alert them to the conspiracies contrived by the occupation and its media and by a large number of Westerners and their media which aimed to create sectarian and divisive conditions with which the Palestinians would get preoccupied with instead of dedicating their time to solving their political, social and economic issues<sup>130</sup>.

The pronounced goal of *Al Liqa* Center today is to foster good relations between Palestinian Muslims and Christians, but also to foster understanding between them and Judaism<sup>131</sup>.

In the late 80s and early 90s a large number of religious organization working for peace emerged. In the period between 1988 until 1992 three of the organizations in this dissertation were established. These were Rabbis for Human Rights (1988)<sup>132</sup>, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel<sup>133</sup> (1991) and Sabeel<sup>134</sup> (1990).

Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) explains its establishment as a reaction against the first Lebanon War in 1982 and the harsh treatment of the Palestinians by the Israeli army during the first Palestinian intifada<sup>135</sup>. The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) was founded to coordinate the activities of organizations in Israel which sought to promote good relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel<sup>136</sup>. The Palestinian Christian organization Sabeel was founded to promote non-violent resistance and develop a new liberation theology for Palestinian Christians. According to the founder and director of Sabeel, Naim Ateek, this was important because of the development of violent resistance based on religious affiliation which occurred in this period<sup>137</sup>. Naim Ateek specifically mentions Hamas, which was founded as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1987, during the first Palestinian intifada<sup>138</sup>.

While a number of religious peace organizations were organized in the 70s, 80s and beginning of the 90s, an even greater number of secular peace organizations were established

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Al Liqa: "History". Online: <http://www.al-liqacenter.org.ps/aboutus/history.php> Retrieved April 24, 2008.

<sup>131</sup> Al Liqa: "Mission". Online: <http://www.al-liqacenter.org.ps/aboutus/mission.php> Retrieved April 24, 2008.

<sup>132</sup> Bar-On: 1996: 238, Kaminer: 1996:150-151, Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 253.

<sup>133</sup> Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006: 247, Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 252.

<sup>134</sup> Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006: 151, 290, Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 252.

<sup>135</sup> Rabbis for Human Rights, "Raphael Lemkin Human Rights Award, A Speech by Rabbi D. Frohman".

Online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=12&language=en> Retrieved December 7, 2009. RHR will be presented in chapter 5.

<sup>136</sup> See chapter 7.

<sup>137</sup> This will be fully explained in the chapter about Sabeel, chapter 6.

<sup>138</sup> See the introduction to chapter 6.



in the same period. One could mention the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) founded in 1988<sup>139</sup>, B`tselem (1989)<sup>140</sup>, The Abraham Fund (1989)<sup>141</sup>, The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) in 1989, The Settlement Watch (1990)<sup>142</sup> and The Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development (PANORAMA) in 1991<sup>143</sup>. Both B`tselem and The Settlement Watch are Israeli organizations which seek to protect the human rights of Palestinians living under occupation. IPCRI was founded to improve cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian intellectuals<sup>144</sup>. Both PANORAMA and PASSIA were founded to prepare the Palestinians for independence<sup>145</sup>.

Without getting into an in-depth discussion on why these secular organizations started, I still think it could be relevant to mention some characteristics of this period and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Bar-On:

Within three months of the Intifada` eruption, there was no doubting that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had entered a new and radically different phase. The traditional concept of “armed struggle” with occasional terror attacks on Israeli or Jewish targets, sporadic strikes, demonstrations, and clashes with the Israeli occupation forces was supplanted by a new mode of resistance. This included a sustained effort to challenge the occupation through daily acts of defiance and disobedience, and by refusing to cooperate in the occupation as docile partners with no control over their destiny<sup>146</sup>.

The significance of this period and the impact of the first Palestinian intifada on the peace movement generally has also been explained through Reuven Kaminer` s study *The Politics of Protest – The Israeli Peace Movement and the Palestinian Intifada*<sup>147</sup>. According to the studies by Bar-On and Kaminer, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the period from 1987 until 1993 was basically characterized by the impact of the first Palestinian intifada (1987), and the growing secret peace talks which eventually developed into the Oslo Agreement in 1993. On the Palestinian side the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s was a period for the

<sup>139</sup> Israel/Palestine Center for research and Information. Online: <http://www.ipcri.org/> Retrieved July 14, 2010.

<sup>140</sup> B`tselem webpage online: [http://www.btselem.org/English/About\\_BTselem/Index.asp](http://www.btselem.org/English/About_BTselem/Index.asp) Retrieved July 14, 2010.

<sup>141</sup> The Abraham Fund, online: <http://www.abrahamfund.org/main/siteNew/index.php?page=38> Retrieved July 14, 2010. This organization works specifically to improve relations between Israeli Jews and Arabs.

<sup>142</sup> In 1990 Peace Now established the settlement Watch, online: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61> Retrieved July 14, 2010.

<sup>143</sup> Panorama, online: <http://www.panoramacenter.org/> Retrieved July 14, 2010. Several other secular NGOs could be mentioned too, see the list of Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006:225-302.

<sup>144</sup> Adwan & Bar-On: 2000: 47.

<sup>145</sup> The establishment of PASSIA will be further explained in chapter 8.

<sup>146</sup> Bar-On: 1996:221-222.

<sup>147</sup> Kaminer, Reuven: *The Politics of Protest – The Israeli Peace Movement and the Palestinian Intifada*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 1996.

awakening of the Palestinian resistance movement, and different forms of organized nonviolent resistance<sup>148</sup>. In addition it should also be mentioned that this period also saw the beginning of an ongoing discourse within the Israeli and Palestinian societies concerning different historical understandings<sup>149</sup>. On the Israeli side these discourses were represented by the so-called *new Historians* in the late 80s and during the 90s, like Benny Morris, Ilan Pappè and Avi Shalim<sup>150</sup>. Thus, prior to the Oslo Agreement, several organizations and discourses had developed with the aim of promoting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, secular and religious. Nevertheless, the peace activists remain a marginalized group<sup>151</sup>.

The period after the Oslo Agreement was signed and up until the present time (2010) covers 17 years. Thus, in the following I will first focus on developments before the second intifada in 2000, and then from 2000 until the present time.

During the period between the Oslo Agreement 1993 and before the outbreak of the second intifada (2000), the religious peace camp expanded its organizations, and even more so did the secular peace camp. According to the Palestinian- Israeli Peace NGO forum, 19 NGOs were established in the period between 1993 and 2000; none of those mentioned on that list were religious<sup>152</sup>. On the other hand Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty mention several religiously based peace organizations in their study of interfaith peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine<sup>153</sup> which were established during these years. One could mention the Israeli organizations *Yesodot* the Center of the Study of Torah and Democracy (1996)<sup>154</sup>, Yakar Centre for Social Concern (1997)<sup>155</sup> and the Elijah Interfaith Institute (1997)<sup>156</sup>. The Palestinian organization PASSIA founded a religious studies unit in 1998<sup>157</sup>. The latter is, as mentioned earlier, one of the organizations in this dissertation.

<sup>148</sup> See Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006:87,136.

<sup>149</sup> See for example Bar-On, Mordechai: "New Historiography and National Identity: Reflections on Changes in the Self-Perception of Israelis and Recent Israeli Revisionist Historiography", in Shapira, Anita (ed.): *Israeli Identity in Transition*, Westport, Praeger Publisher, 2004: 1-29.

<sup>150</sup> Bar-On: 2004:1-29.

<sup>151</sup> See for example Hermann, Tamar S.: *The Israeli Peace Movement. A Shattered Dream*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. See also Tamar Hermann: «Civil Society and NGOs Building Peace in Israel» in Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006: 39-58 and Manuel Hassassian: "Civil Society and NGOs Building Peace in Palestine" in Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven, 2006:59-86.

<sup>152</sup> Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum, "Organization List". Online:

<http://www.peacengo.org/organizations.asp> Retrieved April 12, 2008.

<sup>153</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 251-254.

<sup>154</sup> See description of *Yesodot*, Online

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=57](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=57) Retrieved October 5, 2009.

<sup>155</sup> See Yakar Center for Social Concern, available at <http://www.yakar.org/eng/center.asp?id=19313> 14 October 2009. Yakar is also listed among the NGOs which participated at the Conference held by Peace Research Institute in the Middle East. See Sami & Bar-On, 2000: 62.

<sup>156</sup> See the Elijah Interfaith Institute, available at <http://www.elijah-interfaith.org/about-us.html> Retrieved October 19, 2009.

<sup>157</sup> PASSIA, Religious Study Unit, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved July 14, 2010.

*Yesodot* explains how its establishment in 1996 was related to the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (1995) and its mission to show through education and publications how Orthodox Jewish life is compatible with democratic values<sup>158</sup>. Yakar is an orthodox organization which has conducted dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. In 2005 Yakar published a book called *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue* in cooperation with the Palestinian organization mentioned above PANORAMA, where Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals explain their different historical perceptions of the war in 1948 and the development of the conflict<sup>159</sup>. The Elijah Interfaith Institution is located in Israel, but is really a multinational organization which seeks to foster peace between the world's diverse faith communities through interfaith dialogue, education and research. It conducts interfaith dialogue between religious leaders and renowned scholars the world over<sup>160</sup>. The Palestinian organization PASSIA established a religious studies unit to foster interfaith dialogue between Palestinian Christian and Muslims, as well as between Palestinians and Jews<sup>161</sup>.

As mentioned in the introduction to this monograph, Oslo II (1995) encouraged work towards peace among people on the grassroots level, and several European countries and the US established foundations for this kind of work<sup>162</sup>. Thus, the period between the Oslo Agreement and before the second intifada was also a period where several NGOs were supported by international actors<sup>163</sup>. We have also seen how Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) gathered several NGOs in order to further develop cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian NGOs.

The period after the outbreak of the second intifada and until the present time also saw the development of several new NGOs, although this period also witnessed the escalation of the conflict and the separation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza<sup>164</sup>. Nevertheless, according to the organization list of the Palestinian Israeli peace NGO forum, 33

<sup>158</sup> Yesodot, online: [http://www.yesodot.org.il/Eng/D1\\_Content/MenuID/1134/](http://www.yesodot.org.il/Eng/D1_Content/MenuID/1134/) Retrieved Jul 14, 2010.

<sup>159</sup> Yakar, About the Center, online: <http://www.yakar.org/english/show.asp?id=19313> The book is Paul Scham, Walid Salem, Benjamin Pogrud (ed), *Shared histories: a Palestinian-Israeli dialogue*, Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 2005.

<sup>160</sup> See Elijah Interfaith Institute, online: <http://www.elijah.org.il/> Retrieved May 21, 2009.

<sup>161</sup> This will be further presented in chapter 8.

<sup>162</sup> Norway came to play a role as responsible for 'people to people program' (P2P), and the US and European countries also founded different programs. See for example Waage, Hilde Henriksen: 2004:208-210. See also Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven: 2006: 93-96.

<sup>163</sup> It is beyond the scope of this presentation to discuss the international interests in these NGOs, but some information will be presented in part two.

<sup>164</sup> According to the study of Kaufman, Salem and Verhoeven the decline in peacework started even before the outbreak of the second intifada, see 2006:87.

organizations for peace were established in this period, among them 4 were religious<sup>165</sup>. The list mentions two of the organizations in this dissertation – Jerusalem Peacemakers and Interfaith Encounter Association. In addition the list mentions the Sulha Peace Project (2001), which Jerusalem Peacemakers is a part of<sup>166</sup>, and Trust-Emun (2006), which is an Israeli interfaith organization<sup>167</sup>, which also cooperates with Jerusalem Peacemakers<sup>168</sup>. The organizations in this dissertation which were established in the years after the outbreak of the second intifada are: Interfaith Encounter Association (2001)<sup>169</sup>, Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (2004)<sup>170</sup>, Jerusalem Peacemakers (2004)<sup>171</sup> and the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (2005)<sup>172</sup>.

The Sulha Peace Project and the Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA) were both founded in the beginning of the second intifada. The Sulha Peace Project was initiated by the Israeli musician Gabriel Meyer and the Palestinian peace activist Elias Jabbour. The project was started out as a gathering during Christmas, Ramadan and Chanukah, and then developed into a project which gathered hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians from different religious traditions to seek *sulha* or reconciliation based on the Middle Eastern tradition of negotiation called *sulha*<sup>173</sup>. IEA was established to promote peace through interfaith dialogue and mutual respect based on face-to-face encounters<sup>174</sup>.

During the second intifada another initiative was also taken by Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders from Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt. Landau reports from interviews with some of these leaders, which eventually led to the Alexandria Declaration in 2002<sup>175</sup>. The Alexandria Declaration was a seven-point statement where the religious leaders agreed that their religious traditions encouraged them to support peace and combat violence of any kind. This declaration became the starting point for further

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<sup>165</sup> Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum, Organization List. Online: <http://www.peacengo.org/organizations.asp> Retrieved April 12, 2008. The list mentions two of the organizations of this dissertation – Jerusalem Peacemakers and Interfaith Encounter Association. In addition the list mentions the Sulha Peace Project, which Jerusalem Peacemakers is a part of as described in chapter 11, and Trust-Emun, which is an Israeli interfaith organization also cooperates with Jerusalem Peacemakers, see chapter 11.

<sup>166</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>167</sup> See the official webpage of Trust-Emun, online: <http://www.trust-emun.org/about-trust-emun/> Retrieved July 14, 2010.

<sup>168</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>169</sup> See chapter 9.

<sup>170</sup> See chapter 10.

<sup>171</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>172</sup> See chapter 12.

<sup>173</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>174</sup> This will be further presented in chapter 9.

<sup>175</sup> Landau: 2003:16.

cooperation between the religious leaders among Israelis and Palestinians. This led to the foundation of The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land in 2005<sup>176</sup>.

A special concern for the Palestinian Christians was given by the establishment of the Israeli organization Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR) in 2004. JCJCR is an Israeli organizations established to promote good relations between Israeli Jews and the indigenous Christian population –which includes both Palestinian and Israeli Arab Christians<sup>177</sup>.

Jerusalem Peacemakers is a network of independent spiritual peacemakers, who promote peace through spiritual unity among Israelis and Palestinians – specifically in relation to the mystical traditions of Islam and Judaism – Sufism and Kabala. JP also includes secular peacemakers and participants. It also supports the Sulha Peace Project mentioned above<sup>178</sup>

Trust-Emun is an Israeli non-profit organization based in Jerusalem, which conducts person-to-person programs and activities between Israelis and Palestinians, Christian, Druze, Jews and Muslims<sup>179</sup>. One of the central members of Trust-Emun is Ibtisam Mahamid, who is also one of the peacemakers of JP<sup>180</sup>.

Although several religious organizations working for peace were established in the years after the outbreak of the second intifada, there are also reports of criticism of the possibilities of peace-work among peoples. In the following I would like to mention one such report<sup>181</sup>. In January 24, 2006, the Peres Center for Peace in Tel Aviv - within the framework of the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGOs Forum - invited 10 different leading persons from the Israeli and Palestinian peace camp, both religious and secular, to ask what they thought of P2P programs<sup>182</sup> and what was needed to change the situation. The answers they gave may be categorized within three categories. The first is a genuine belief in the need to establish good relations between Palestinians and Israelis on the grassroots level. In a situation where the political leaders on both sides have failed to reach an agreement, the invited guests believed people needed to show that mutual recognition and peaceful relations could exist<sup>183</sup>. The second category is related to those who are pessimistic to the achievements of any dialogue,

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<sup>176</sup> See chapter 12.

<sup>177</sup> See chapter 10.

<sup>178</sup> More information will be given in chapter 11.

<sup>179</sup> Trust-Emun, About us, online: <http://www.trust-emun.org/about-trust-emun/> Retrieved July 14, 2010.

<sup>180</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>181</sup> This will be further discussed in 3.1.

<sup>182</sup> P2P programs are briefly presented in the introduction of this dissertation.

<sup>183</sup> These answers were prominent among all the interviewed. See "P2P – Where do we go from here?" in Palestine-Israel Journal, vol. 12. No. 4& Vol. 13, no 1. 05/06. Online: <http://pij.org/details.php?id=408> Retrieved February 2, 2009.

because they think dialogue and reconciliation could only occur after an end of occupation<sup>184</sup>. One of the interviewed specifically addressed the media as misguiding opinion as regards the source of the conflict, which she argued was the harsh occupation of the Palestinian people. The following is an extract from her statement:

It is also important to concentrate on the effects of the coverage by both the Israeli and Western media. Rather than reporting the violence against the Palestinians who are living under the harsh conditions of occupation and the myriad non-violent responses of the Palestinians, these media focus on violent responses by a handful of people. By doing that and presenting Israeli violence as a “response”, most media sources ignore the basic nature of the conflict. It is presented rather as a conflict between religions, or as some kind of “primordial ethnic strife” which afflicts the Middle East, or, worst of all, as a “clash of civilizations”<sup>185</sup>.

The third category can be summarized as a more or less common understanding that one of the problems was the asymmetric relationship between Israel and Palestine, which needed to be symmetric if a proper dialogue was to prosper<sup>186</sup>.

The historical presentation above does, of course, not describe the majority of Israelis and Palestinians. Several researchers have pointed out that the peace movement – whether secular or religious – still is a marginalized group<sup>187</sup>. Although several organizations working for peace among Israelis and Palestinians exist, the religious peace camp is still small, and does not include the mainstream Israelis or Palestinians. Nevertheless, they represent an attempt from the religious sphere to promote peace through the potential they find in their religious traditions. This potential within the religious traditions for promoting peace is the topic of the next chapter.

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<sup>184</sup> See footnote above. The answer was given by Jeff Halper, representing the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.

<sup>185</sup> See footnote above. This answer was given by Zahira Khalidi, member of the Editorial Board, the Palestine-Israel Journal.

<sup>186</sup> See chapter 3.1.1.

<sup>187</sup> This has been mentioned above.

## 2 Analytical Framework

*... religions have always interacted in highly dynamic and complex ways with the world around them. If, then, the traditional forms of analysis of religions and of social conflict insist that religions must continue to do violence to democratic culture and to the pursuit of a peaceful civil society, then that is what the scholars will find and what some theologians will create. If, however, the world of thoughtful people is open to the infinite hermeneutic variability of religious traditions, one may discover, in the most surprising places of the religious world, the basis for a future that allows for coexistence between religious and secular people globally and even for a shared vision of civil society.*

Extract from Marc Gopin, 2000<sup>1</sup>.

The focus of this chapter is to present basic concepts and theories which can be helpful in understanding the religious potential in peacework in the Holy Land. The present study is an interdisciplinary study between the study of religion and conflict resolution. The academic interest in the relationship between religion and conflict resolution was established in the 90s<sup>2</sup> – and according to several academics was linked to the new situation after the Cold War<sup>3</sup>. This new interest for the potential of the religious traditions to promote peace was brought forth by academics such as Marc Gopin<sup>4</sup>, Cynthia Sampson<sup>5</sup>, Douglas Johnston<sup>6</sup>, Scott

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<sup>1</sup> Gopin: 2000:5.

<sup>2</sup> The religious traditions have motivated several religious leaders in the past to work for peace, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr and Desmond Tutu, and the interreligious and international organization *Religions for Peace* was founded as early as 1970. See "Our History". Religion for Peace. Online: <http://www.religionsforpeace.org/about/history.html> . Retrieved March 14, 2011. The academic interest for religion and peacebuilding has emerged mainly during the last decade.

<sup>3</sup> Smock, David (ed.): *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*. Washington D.C. United States Institute for Peace Press, 2002: vii and Gopin:2000:3.

<sup>4</sup> In 2000, Marc Gopin published his study *Between Eden and Armageddon*<sup>4</sup>, which in many ways could be said to further build upon the thoughts developed in *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft*. (See Sampson, Cynthia and Johnston, Douglas: *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft*, New York, Oxford University Press: 1994). The main topic of Gopin's book is really to argue for the need of a new field of study where the religious traditions should be explored by conflict resolution theories, in order to expose the potential of religions in peace building. In 2002 Marc Gopin published: *Holy War, Holy Peace*. Auckland, Oxford University Press. 2002.

Appleby<sup>7</sup> and David Smock<sup>8</sup>. In their studies a new interest is developed in the relationship between religious traditions and conflict resolution theories. Their studies in no way neglect the negative impact religion can have in different conflicts, but still argue that this focus alone loses the understanding of the positive impact religion can have.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section I would like to present basic concepts in this dissertation, while the second section presents different theories of the religious potential in peacework.

## 2.1 Basic Concepts

Four basic concepts are central in this dissertation and will be presented in the first section of this chapter. First of all there is a need to conceptualize *peacebuilding* and to situate the religious peace workers in relation to this concept. In order to do so I will present the concept *religious peacebuilding* as it has been developed by David Little and Scott Appleby<sup>9</sup>. Secondly, I will present some common definitions of *peacebuilding* within contemporary conflict resolution theories<sup>10</sup> and specifically in the writings of Paul Lederach<sup>11</sup>. The relationship between these two concepts – *peacebuilding* and *religious peacebuilding* - will also be discussed. Since this dissertation is interested in religious peacework in the specific context of the Holy Land, two other concepts also need to be addressed. First, I will present a

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<sup>5</sup> In 1994 Cynthia Sampson and Douglas Johnston edited the volume *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft*, which sought to highlight how religion and spirituality can play a positive role on the conduct of diplomacy. See footnote above.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> The same year as Gopin published his book *Between Eden and Armageddon*, Scott R. Appleby published *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*. Appleby, Scott, R.: *The Ambivalence of the Sacred. Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*. Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc. 2000. The main argument of this book is that religious acts of compassion and religious acts of terrorism and suicide bombing eventually came from the same religious source.

<sup>8</sup> The years following September 11, 2001 led to an even greater number of academic studies on the relationship between religion and peacebuilding. In 2002 David Smock edited the volume *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, which examines the role of interfaith dialogue specifically. In the first part of the book central academic writers such as Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Marc Gopin and Jacob Cilliers explain different challenges in interfaith dialogue. In the second part, case studies are done in the Middle East, former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland. In the third part of this book two international organizations working with religious peacebuilding, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation (ACF) and the United Religions Initiative (URI) are presented. At the end of the volume Smock identifies some principles which can help determine the quality of the outcome of the dialogue process. See Smock, David (ed.): *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*. Washington D.C. United States Institute of Peace Press. 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Little, D. and Appleby, S., "A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict?", in *Religion and Peacebuilding*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse, 2005

<sup>11</sup> Lederach, Paul: *Building Peace. Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press: 1999. Of special interest in this dissertation is Lederach's emphasis on the potential for cooperation between the different levels of peacebuilding. See Lederach: 1999:37-61.



concept which focuses on the relationship between sacred space and political power—*contested sacred space*, which has been developed by Chidester and Linenthal<sup>12</sup>. Second, I will present the meaning of *sacred place* as it has been developed by Mircea Eliade<sup>13</sup>.

### 2.1.1 Religious Peacebuilding and Peacebuilding

According to David Little and Scott Appleby, *religious peacebuilding* is a term used to: “describe the range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence”<sup>14</sup>. As the definition clearly explains, the concept of *religious peacebuilding* infuses the religious sphere with the political sphere. According to Little and Appleby this process is meant to lead to a *structural reform* – where efforts are made to build institutions and foster civic leadership that will address the root cause of the conflict and develop long-term practices and institutions conducive to peaceful, non-violent relations in the society. According to Little and Appleby, religious actors can serve in the post-conflict phase of the process, among others, as educators and institution builders. As educators they: “... have a role to play during each of the stages of conflict transformation, whether it be to sensitize a society to inequities in the system; to foster the understanding and build the skills of advocacy, conflict resolution, democracy or living with diversity”<sup>15</sup>. And as institution builders the religious leaders can develop strategies for opposing political and social injustice non-violently, by drawing upon their religious tradition<sup>16</sup>. Little and Appleby conclude that religious mediators can be successful if they:

... (1) exhibit an intimate knowledge of the language and culture of the peoples in conflict, (2) enjoy access to firsthand information about the conflict as it evolves; (3) possess or draw upon political expertise, and (4) help to develop and embrace a long-term vision of peace for the conflicted society. These four characteristics of effective religious peacebuilders may help religious leaders to bridge the gap that is frequently the most relevant obstacle to a peace process; the hermeneutical gap<sup>17</sup>.

In this way *religious peacebuilding* can promote peace specifically on the social level of a conflict.

<sup>12</sup> Chidester, D. and Linenthal E.T. (eds.): *American Sacred Space*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University press.1995.

<sup>13</sup> Eliade, M.: *The Myth of the Eternal Return. Or, Cosmos and History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991 (1954).

<sup>14</sup> Little and Appleby: 2004:5.

<sup>15</sup> Little and Appleby: 2004:10.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Little and Appleby: 2004:11.

*Peacebuilding* is a concept which can be understood from several different perspectives<sup>18</sup>, but for the purpose of this dissertation I think three perspectives are most relevant. First of all, one can distinguish between cultural peacebuilding, structural peacebuilding and elite peacebuilding<sup>19</sup>. A central person in the development of this understanding of peacebuilding is Johan Galtung, who sees conflict as a dynamic process in which “structure, attitudes, and behavior are constantly changing and influencing one another.”<sup>20</sup> Cultural peacebuilding is interested in the social relationships within a given society. Structural peacebuilding is interested in changing the structures – or institutions – in a conflict area which legitimate the conflict. Elite peacebuilding is mainly conducted by the decision makers or political authorities. In this connection, Galtung also writes about three different kinds of violence: direct violence (where people are killed), structural violence (where structures within the society are the main reason for violence) and cultural violence (where dominant attitudes legitimate violence perpetuated against another part)<sup>21</sup>. Following this division of peacebuilding, the main goal is nevertheless *conflict transformation*. Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse define *conflict transformation* as the deepest level of peacebuilding: “... it implies a deep transformation in the institutions and discourse that reproduce violence, as well as in the conflict parties themselves and their relationship. It corresponds to the underlying tasks of structural and cultural peacebuilding”<sup>22</sup>. Several academics have also pointed out how conflicts are social phenomena<sup>23</sup>, which means that there is a dialectic relationship between humans and the institutions or dominant discourses which legitimate the conflict. This can be explained as a “cause-and-effect relationship which goes both ways- from the people and the relationships to the conflict and back to the people and relationships”<sup>24</sup>. In this way *peacebuilding* as conflict transformation can be understood as a process-oriented concept, where attitudes are both constructed by the dominant discourses in society and hopefully changed through peacebuilding initiatives.

Secondly, peacebuilding occurs on many different levels of society. One way of understanding peacebuilding within contemporary conflict resolution is to differentiate

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<sup>18</sup> A critical approach to dialogue and peacebuilding – both conflict resolution theories and peace movements – will be presented in the next chapter, based on the social theory of Vivienne Jabri.

<sup>19</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005:41.

<sup>20</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 10.

<sup>21</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 10.

<sup>22</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005:29.

<sup>23</sup> This will be discussed further in 3.2.1.

<sup>24</sup> The excerpt is from Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, directed by Heidi and Guy Burgess, “Conflict Transformation”, online: <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/transform/jplall.htm> Retrieved October 3, 2010.

between first track and second track diplomacy. While first track diplomacy is related to direct and formal contact between states, second track diplomacy is related to contact between civilians, organizations (NGOs), groups or activists. According to John Davies and Edward Kaufman:

... the first track diplomatic system has the legitimacy and resources necessary for completing the peacemaking process. A peace agreement must ultimately be negotiated, approved and implemented at the official level. Second track diplomacy is not an alternative but a complementary system that takes advantage of resources and opportunities unavailable at the official spectrum of civil society, as needed also to translate any official agreement into a sustainable reality<sup>25</sup>.

In this way, second track diplomacy can be understood in a large context, including all the initiatives for peace within civil society among NGOs, business, education, media, religious and funding organizations, as well as among individual peace activists and private citizens.

In recent decades a greater interest has been given to peacebuilding from below. According to Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse, the climate for conflict resolution changed radically after the Cold War<sup>26</sup>, from an interest in power relations and negotiation between states, to an interest in new internal conflicts, ethnic conflicts, conflicts over session, and power struggles within countries.<sup>27</sup> In the 90s the idea of peacebuilding from below was introduced by several scholars, among them Paul Lederach<sup>28</sup>, Elise Boulding<sup>29</sup> and Adam Curle<sup>30</sup>, which transformed the way a conflict was viewed in the field of conflict resolution, where the people in the conflict areas were seen as the main resource for peacebuilding, not just the decision makers<sup>31</sup>. As conflict resolution theories engage themselves in peacebuilding on all levels of society, this developed an interest for how to develop reconciliation,<sup>32</sup> the influence of

<sup>25</sup> Davies, J. and Kaufman, E.: *Second track/citizens` diplomacy: concepts and techniques for conflict transformation*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002:4-5.

<sup>26</sup> This also influenced religious peacebuilding, as described in the introduction to this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 4.

<sup>28</sup> Lederach, Paul: *Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. Lederach, Paul: *Preparing for peace: conflict transformation across cultures*, Syracuse, N.Y., Syracuse University Press, 1995.

<sup>29</sup> Boulding, Elise: *Education for world citizenship: peace learning, empowerment into action, and transnational networks*, Malmö, School of education, 1991. Boulding, Elise (ed.): *New agendas for peace research: conflict and security reexamined*, Boulder Colo., Lynne Rienner, 1992. Boulding, Elise & Boulding, Kenneth E.: *The future: images and processes*, Thousan Oaks Calif., Sage, 1995.

<sup>30</sup> Curle, Adam: *Another way: positive response to contemporary violence*, Oxford, Jon Carpenter, 1995. Curle, Deborah (ed.): *Testimonies to Adam Curle: 4<sup>th</sup> July 1916- 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006*, Norwich, Watershed, 2007. The significance of the work of Lederach, Boulding and Curle has also been pointed out in Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 217.

<sup>31</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 222. The social theory and critical approach developed by Vivien Jabri can be viewed as part of this tradition when she wrote in 1994. The theory of Jabri will be presented in 3.2.1.

<sup>32</sup> See below.

different historical understandings among the parties in a conflict,<sup>33</sup> the role of the media,<sup>34</sup> the influence of past traumas,<sup>35</sup> the role of culture and religion<sup>36</sup> and communication and dialogue<sup>37</sup>. Paul Lederach (1997) uses another division, when he writes about a high-level approach to peacebuilding (top leaders), mid-level leaders and grassroots level (local peace commissions).<sup>38</sup> Lederach emphasizes that for peacebuilding to be effective; these three levels must cooperate, or function as a *multi-track* conflict resolution. Lederach suggests that the midlevel serve as the link between the elite and the grassroots<sup>39</sup>. By understanding peacebuilding as a multi-track process this includes all different groups and levels of a society as potential peacebuilders.

A third and final perspective on peacebuilding in this dissertation is connected to the relationship between local, national and international actors in peacebuilding. This interest is limited to two perspectives. First of all, the international engagement can often take place through a third party intervention:

Where two parties are reacting to each other's actions, it is easy for a spiral of Hostility and escalation to develop ... The entry of a third party may change the conflict structure and allow a different pattern of communication, enabling the third party to filter or reflect back the messages, attitudes and behavior of the conflictants. This intervention may dampen the feedback spiral<sup>40</sup>.

A third-party intervention is thus the presence of a neutral part or a mediator who seeks to improve communication between the parties in conflict. In first track diplomacy this can be connected to, for example, the role of international actors, like the president of the USA, or other formal politicians from foreign countries can act as a third party. It can also illustrate the potential role of international organizations like the UN<sup>41</sup>.

The second perspective is an interest in the relationship between local NGOs and the international NGOs. According to Peter Willetts, an organization can be recognized as an

<sup>33</sup> Barsalou, Judy and Cole, Elisabeth: "Unity or Divided? The Challenge of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from violent conflicts", Washington D.C: USIP Special Report 163, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Howard, Ross (et.al): *The Power of the Media. A handbook for Peacebuilders*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 2003: Introduction.

<sup>35</sup> Barsalou, Judy/Baxter, Victoria: "The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice", Washington D.C: USIP Stabilization and Reconstruction Series, No. 5, 2007. See also See for example Bloomfield, David/Barnes, Teresa/Huysse, Luc (eds.): *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict. A Handbook*, Stockholm: IDEA Handbook Series, 2003. See also Howard, Ross (et.al): *The Power of the Media. A handbook for Peacebuilders*. Utrecht, The Netherlands, European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005:302-315.

<sup>37</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 288-301.

<sup>38</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 24.

<sup>39</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 26. See also John W. McDonald: "The Need for Multi-Track Diplomacy", in Davies, J. and Kaufman, E.: *Second track/citizens' diplomacy: concepts and techniques for conflict transformation*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002: 49-60.

<sup>40</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005:18.

<sup>41</sup> Davies & Kaufman: 2002: 4, see also Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 18-20.

NGO by the UN only if they are “independent from government control, not seeking to challenge governments either as a political party or by a narrow focus on human rights, non-profit-making and non-criminal”<sup>42</sup>. NGOs can be hierarchical or have a flat structure. According to Willets, “NGOs are components of social movements”<sup>43</sup>, with a variety of networking and cooperation. Willets explains how NGOs work on different levels of society – both locally, nationally, regionally and internationally<sup>44</sup>. Often local NGOs are members of some other international or regional NGOs<sup>45</sup>. Willets also points out how local NGOs have been capable of global communication via the Internet, which has increased their ability of global networking as well. There are a great number of different NGOs which all have their special concern and interest.

How are religious peacebuilders to be understood in relation to these different perspectives of *peacebuilding*? In the following I would like to discuss the relationship between *peacebuilding* and *religious peacebuilding* in relation to the role of religious peacebuilding concerning cultural, structural and elite peacebuilding, what level the organizations work at and finally in relation to the international actors.

What is the relationship between *religious peacebuilding*, cultural peacebuilding, structural peacebuilding and elite peacebuilding? *Religious peacebuilding* can play a role in both cultural peacebuilding and structural peacebuilding – in the way it seeks to establish good relations (cultural peacebuilding) and change political institutions (structural peacebuilding)<sup>46</sup>. The relationship between *religious peacebuilding* and cultural and structural peacebuilding can be further understood in relationship to the term conflict transformation, which Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse describe as the main goal of cultural and structural peacebuilding. *Conflict transformation* is a concept used by World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP)<sup>47</sup>. WCRP explains its initiatives through four main aims: to transform violent conflict, promote just and harmonious societies, advance human development and protect the earth<sup>48</sup>. In this way *conflict transformation*<sup>49</sup> becomes a central concept for *religious peacebuilding*. As was pointed out above, conflict

<sup>42</sup> Willets, Peter: “What is an NGO?”, online: <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willets/CS-NTWKS/NGO-ART.HTM#Part10> Retrieved November 4, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Willets: 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Willets: 2010.

<sup>45</sup> This will be exemplified below in this section, in relation to *religious peacebuilding*.

<sup>46</sup> See above in this section.

<sup>47</sup> A central concept among Religion for Peace, is “conflict transformation”, online: <http://religionsforpeace.org/initiatives/violent-conflict/conflict-transformation/> . Retrieved March 14, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> See WCRP: “Conflict transformation”, online: <http://religionsforpeace.org/initiatives/violent-conflict/conflict-transformation/> Retrieved October 2, 2010.

resolution theories see *conflict transformation* as the underlying goal of cultural and structural peacebuilding. If we understand *religious peacebuilding* as one part of cultural and structural peacebuilding then *religious peacebuilding* is also part of conflict transformation<sup>50</sup>.

*Religious peacebuilding* occurs at several levels of society, just as contemporary peacebuilding does. In this connection I would like to present Renee Garfinkel's article "What works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs"<sup>51</sup>. According to Garfinkel, interfaith dialogue<sup>52</sup> programs can be categorized along the dimension of the participants' occupation:

*Elites* are people in top-level positions in politics, religion, academia, and other fields who have the potential to influence widely the group's ideas, practice and values. Mid-level people whose occupations are thought to have an influence over smaller groups of people, in a more personal way. *Mid-level* programs might be aimed at teachers, for example, or local clergy. *Grassroots* participants or activists are individual citizens. Their experience is more intimate, having an impact on their families, friends, customers, and others with whom they have personal relationships<sup>53</sup>.

According to Renee Garfinkel, each of the three levels have a different impact on the people in a conflict area. While high-level religious leaders can speak for their whole communities and have a long-term impact, the lower levels can have a more direct impact but this is basically limited to individual change<sup>54</sup>. Although religious peacebuilding occurs on several levels of society, it is common to place religious peacebuilding on second track level of diplomacy. Some scholars use the concept *faith-based* diplomacy for *religious peacebuilding*<sup>55</sup>. According to Douglas Johnston and Brian Cox, *faith-based diplomacy* "is a form of second track (unofficial) diplomacy that integrates the dynamics of religious faith with the conduct of international peacemaking"<sup>56</sup>. Johnston and Cox further outline characteristics of *faith based diplomacy*. The first characteristic is "a conscious dependency on spiritual principles and resources in the conduct of peacemaking<sup>57</sup>". In this way *faith-based diplomacy* is different from secular diplomacy in the way religious values and concepts plays a significant role in how to seek reconciliation. The second characteristic is that they "operate

<sup>50</sup> In this way it is a part of cultural and structural peacebuilding among secular peacebuilding generally. See "Culture, Religion and Conflict Resolution" in Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 302-315.

<sup>51</sup> Garfinkel, Renee: "What works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs", Special Report, No 123, United States Institute for Peace, Washington, D. C: Usip Press. 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Interfaith dialogue is a central approach within religious peacemaking, although other approaches will also be discussed. See 2.2.1 and 3.2.2 on liberation theology.

<sup>53</sup> Garfinkel: 2004:3.

<sup>54</sup> Garfinkel: 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Scott Appleby uses the concept *religious peacebuilding*, but he also writes about *faith based diplomacy* in the concluding chapter of Johnston: 2003: 231-256.

<sup>56</sup> Johnston: 2003:15.

<sup>57</sup> Johnston: 2003:16.

with a certain spiritual authority”<sup>58</sup>, which gives them a unique status within the religious communities, either through their ties with a religious institution or as spiritual leaders with a certain charisma. The third characteristic is that they have a “pluralistic heart”<sup>59</sup>, which means that they are both firmly rooted within their own religious tradition and still acknowledge the faith of others, both their common values and differences. The fourth characteristic is a “transcendent approach to conflict resolution”<sup>60</sup>, which basically means that they “look to their sacred texts to inform them not only about human nature and behavior but about the spiritual dimensions of human existence and how those can be tapped where all else fails”<sup>61</sup>. From the discussion so far, the differences between *peacebuilding* and *religious peacebuilding* are that the latter mainly occurs on second track diplomacy and sees religious faith as a central part of its work. Both concepts describe peace initiatives from different levels of society.

In what ways does *religious peacebuilding* involve international actors? Since *religious peacebuilding* mainly occurs on track-two diplomacy, I think two international agendas are interesting in our context. First of all, *religious peacebuilding* is often conducted through NGOs (non-governmental organizations). In religious peacebuilding, several NGOs work on the international level, like the mentioned World Conference of Religions for Peace, but also United Religions Initiative<sup>62</sup> and World Council of Churches<sup>63</sup>. The international NGOs often support local NGOs in the conflict area. Other NGOs work on a regional basis, such as the Middle East Council of Churches<sup>64</sup>. Both the international and regional NGOs can have local NGOs as members. Another way that international actors can be engaged in local religious peacebuilding is through an interest in conflict resolution methods. Scott Appleby offers five recommendations in order for *religious peacebuilding* and faith-based diplomacy to be most effective. These five recommendations are:

1. Identify the genius of each religious tradition and cultivate ways to evoke its distinctive strengths in conflict resolution and peacebuilding<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Johnston: 2003:16.

<sup>59</sup> Johnston: 2003:17.

<sup>60</sup> Johnston: 2003: 17.

<sup>61</sup> Johnston: 2003:17.

<sup>62</sup> See the official website of the United Religions Initiative online: <http://www.uri.org/> Retrieved October 8, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> See the official website of World Council of Churches online: <http://oikoumene.org/> Retrieved October 8, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> See the official website of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) online: [http://www.mec-churches.org/main\\_eng.htm](http://www.mec-churches.org/main_eng.htm) Retrieved October 8, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Johnston: 2003:243.

2. Provide access to the mystical, experiential, and syncretistic dimensions of the faith traditions<sup>66</sup>
3. Engage scholars, theologians, hierarchs or other officials, and prominent lay leaders who believe conflict resolution to be a normative commitment of their religious communities.
4. Within religious communities, develop experts and expertise in culturally derived methods of conflict resolution and other skills essential to effective faith-based diplomacy.
5. In developing the field of faith-based diplomacy, draw on the range of actors, networks, institutions, and nongovernmental organizations working in related areas<sup>67</sup>.

The recommendations by Appleby require international cooperation and networking. In this way *religious peacebuilding* is not isolated from the broad field of conflict resolution theories and methods, but rather engages in their education and seeks to implement their methods. For example - in order to achieve the goal of conflict transformation WCRP encourages peace education and peacebuilding training<sup>68</sup>. The recommendations from Appleby also encourage cooperation and networking among all actors engaged in peacebuilding.

### 2.1.2 Contested Sacred Space and Eliadean Sacred Space

In order to understand how holy sites are redefined and reformulated in conflict areas, I find the study of Chidester and Linenthal<sup>69</sup> from the field of sociology of religion helpful. Chidester and Linenthal emphasize the secular forces which come into play with regard to a holy site when it is contested. In their view, sacred space is not merely a religious symbol which gives meaning to the believer, but also a place where hierarchical power relations between rulers and ruled, ownership and loss of ownership, influence the many interpretations of sacred sites. They adopt Michel Foucault's theory of power in order to explain the various functions exerted upon holy sites. Chidester and Linenthal argue that when sacred space is the focus of competition or struggle over ownership, legitimacy and sacred symbols, it becomes a *contested sacred* space. They argue that when sacred space is also a place over which ownership or possession may be claimed, it is also an arena in which various players engage in a power struggle. Chidester and Linenthal suggest that a holy place is usually considered most sacred when it is perceived as being in danger of secularization by economic, social and political forces or of seizure by some other entities.<sup>70</sup> In their book *American Sacred Space* (1995) Chidester and Linenthal criticize Eliade's concept of *Sacred space*, and suggest

<sup>66</sup> Johnston: 2003:249.

<sup>67</sup> Johnston: 2003:253.

<sup>68</sup> This is clearly stated at WCRP webpage under "Transforming violent conflict", online: <http://religionsforpeace.org/initiatives/violent-conflict/>. Retrieved March 21, 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Chidester and Linenthal: 1995.

<sup>70</sup> Chidester and Linenthal: 1995:17.



another approach: “Sacred space may be set apart, but not in the absolute, heterogeneous sense that Eliade insists upon. Against all the efforts of religious actors, sacred space is inevitably entangled with the entrepreneurial, the social, and the political, and other “profane forces.”<sup>71</sup> According to Chidester and Linenthal this means that:

When space or place becomes sacred, spatially scarce resources are transformed into a surplus of signification. As an arena of signs and symbols, a sacred place is not a fixed point in space, but a point of departure of an endless multiplication of meaning ... it is upon to unlimited claims and counter-claims on its significance<sup>72</sup>.

Without denying the religious significance of sacred space for the religious mind, the concept of Chidester and Linenthal, *contested sacred space*, can be helpful in order to understand how sacred place can be a symbol which also plays a role in the construction of exclusionist social discourses which legitimate conflicts<sup>73</sup>.

On the other hand, Peter Burgess points out how the understanding of holy sites as part of a power struggle might neglect the implicit meaning and value holy sites have for the believers and thus Burgess suggests an Eliadean phenomenological perspective<sup>74</sup>. Burgess underscores how an Eliadean perspective will prevent sacred space from merely being understood as “the site of a power transaction”<sup>75</sup>. According to Burgess:

Sacred space is place. But it is not place that is simply reducible to here and now, never simply this stone, this dust. Sacred space is the site of the creation of meaning – historical, cultural, spiritual ... One most reasonably see that the religious space of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif is indeed also material, can be rolled over with a tank, fought for and defended with machine guns or stones. The challenge for analysts and peacemakers is to navigate this paradox<sup>76</sup>.

The excerpt from Burgess is clearly connected to the understanding of *hierophany* and sacred space in Eliade’s *The Myth of Eternal Return*, (1954):

Among countless stones, one stone becomes sacred – and hence instantly becomes saturated with being – because it constitutes a hierophany, or possesses mana, or again because it commemorates a mythical act, and so on. The object appears as the receptacle of an exterior force that *differentiates* it from its milieu and gives it meaning and value. This force may reside in the substance of the object or in its form; a rock reveals itself to be sacred because its very existence is a hierophany, incomprehensible, invulnerable, it is that which man is not.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Chidester and Linenthal: 1995:18.

<sup>73</sup> This will be explained in more detail in chapter 3, while presenting the social theory of Vivienna Jabri.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Burgess writes of the specific context of Jerusalem and the question of how it should be administrated. Burgess, J.Peter: “The Religious Site in Civil Space: Meaning and Function of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif”, in *Social Identities* 3/2004:311-323.

<sup>75</sup> Burgess: 2004:319.

<sup>76</sup> Burgess: 2004:321.

<sup>77</sup> Eliade, M.: *The Myth of the Eternal Return. Or, Cosmos and History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1991 (1954): 3-4.

From the perspective of religious thought, Eliade argues that a *hierophany* gives order and structure to the world, and establishes a sacred order. While the profane space cannot give man any pattern for moral behavior, the site of a *hierophany* has a sacred structure and amounts to a “revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the non-reality of the vast surrounding expanse”<sup>78</sup>. Eliade further established a connection between the sacred and the myth, by arguing that something was made sacred through a mythical story – a first beginning or a primordial time which the religious man longed for. Eliade’s concept of *sacred space* can be helpful in understanding the Holy Land as a religious symbol which gives meaning to the believers<sup>79</sup>.

In the context of this dissertation *sacred space* refers to when a holy site is understood as a religious symbol which gives meaning and order to the believer in a positive way. *Contested sacred space* is used when the same holy site becomes part of a contest and power struggle and thus becomes a negative issue in relation to peacebuilding<sup>80</sup>. In this dissertation I will argue that while *sacred space* cannot be negotiated, the *contest* can be negotiated and challenged in a peaceful way<sup>81</sup>.

## **2.2 The Religious Potential in Peacework**

In the second section of this chapter I would like to present some theories on how religious traditions can play a positive role in peacework. In the first part I would like to present some theories on how each of the three Monotheistic faiths can have a potential in peacework, in relation to their perception of man, peace and social action. I will also introduce liberation theologies within Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the second part of this section I will present some theories on how religion can play a positive role in peacework in an interreligious setting.

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<sup>78</sup> Eliade: 1991:4.

<sup>79</sup> The significant of the Holy land in Judaism, Islam and Christianity is presented in 1.1.1.

<sup>80</sup> This distinction will be further explained in 2.2.2 and through the presentation of how Marc Gopin argues that holy sites should be part of the interfaith dialogue.

<sup>81</sup> This understanding is partly connected to Marc Gopin’s suggestions of how holy sites should be part of the interreligious dialogue among Israelis and Palestinians. This will be explained in more detail in 2.2.2.

### 2.2.1 The Monotheistic Traditions

According to Gopin, the main task of combining conflict resolution theories and religion is to explore the religious potential for peace work in the sacred scriptures<sup>82</sup>. Although Gopin clearly emphasizes how religious communities living in conflict areas are also plagued by the traumas of conflicts, and therefore that religious values might not be sufficient when these issues are considered, he nevertheless suggests searching out the religious potential for peace work<sup>83</sup>. Based on the writings of David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Geraldine Burr<sup>84</sup>, Marc Gopin<sup>85</sup>, and Mohammed Abu-Nimer<sup>86</sup> I will present how these authors think the religious *perception of man*, the *pro-social values*, the *call to pursue peace* and involvement in *social action* are central dimensions which can promote peace. Finally, I would like to present liberation theologies and their relationship with the religious call for social action.

In all three Monotheistic faiths *man* is perceived to have a unique status. In Judaism and Christianity man was created in the image of God and given responsibility for this world. The centrality of *man* is also fundamental in Islam. Abu-Nimer mentions several Islamic values related to humanity: humans are regarded as the most dignified and exalted of all creatures<sup>87</sup>, the Prophets acknowledge the common origins and universal equality of humans<sup>88</sup>, and the Quran affirms the sacredness of human life<sup>89</sup>.

All three Monotheistic faiths consist of a number of *pro-social values*. According to Marc Gopin, a key interest should be laid on developing a conflict analysis and resolution theory in relation to religious ethics. In relation to Judaism Gopin emphasizes how:

... there are thousands of rabbinic sources on a broad range of ethical values, which are specifically designed to prevent economic disagreement, misunderstanding, disrespect, callousness, conflict, hatred, revenge, violence, and bloodshed. Effectively, a large portion of Jewish ethics governs behaviors that, each in their own way, constitute broad and complex areas of human intercourse that lead toward or away from conflict<sup>90</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> Gopin: 2000: introduction.

<sup>83</sup> See Gopin: 2002: 3-6. A critical approach will be presented in the next chapter.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, David Whitten and Burr, Elizabeth Geraldine: *Understanding World Religions. A Road Map for Justice and Peace*. Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Gopin: 2000, 2002 and 2003.

<sup>86</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003.

<sup>87</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003:57.

<sup>88</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003:59.

<sup>89</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003:59, with references to Sure 5:32.

<sup>90</sup> Gopin: 2000:77.

The main argument of Gopin is that although controversial texts exist which might legitimate war in some contexts<sup>91</sup>, the dominant Judaic sources promote social ethical values to prevent conflict of any kind. The pro-social values in Judaism are also quite similar with Islam<sup>92</sup>. Smith and Burr also argue that some of the most pacifist statements are found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew:

<sup>38</sup>Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: <sup>39</sup>But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also ... <sup>43</sup>Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. <sup>44</sup>But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; <sup>45</sup>That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust<sup>93</sup>.

Smith and Burr explain how these passages have been discussed for centuries among Christian theologians, and highlight four approaches taken in the past to interpret them. First a minor group of Christians have interpreted them as absolute –which means that they took them seriously and sought to live by them. One example of such an interpretation can be found in the teachings of Francis of Assisi<sup>94</sup>. A second interpretation seeks to reduce the intensity of these commands, when they are explained as rhetorical exaggeration, as a message of reaching for perfection or as an impossible demand to break pride – the latter explanation has been popular among Lutherans<sup>95</sup>. A third way of interpreting the Sermon on the Mount is to “limit the area that the commands apply to”<sup>96</sup>. In the Roman Catholic Church the traditional explanation has been that these commands are only meant to be held by hermits, monks and nuns. Martin Luther distinguished between the individual and the communal life, where these commands were meant to be held by the individual, but not in relation to nations. The fourth approach has been to invalidate the demands of the Sermon, claiming that Jesus thought the end was so near that people could live by them for a very short period<sup>97</sup>. Nevertheless, the pro-social values are central in the New Testament.

<sup>91</sup> Gopin highlights what he calls “legal religious war in the contemporary context”, although he emphasizes how the legitimation of war does not have much literature in the rabbinic sources, since Judaism was a minority the last two thousand years. In this way contemporary interpretations rest basically on the Hebrew Bible and its implication on contemporary times is still under discussions. See Gopin: 2000:68-72.

<sup>92</sup> See Gopin: 2000: 79. This will also be further discussed below.

<sup>93</sup> King James version, online:

<http://bibleresources.bible.com/passagesearchresults.php?passage1=Matthew+5&version=9> Retrieved March 21, 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007: 96.

<sup>95</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007:97.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007:98.

*The call to pursue peace* is also central in each of the three Monotheistic traditions. Abu-Nimer explains how the quest for peace is central in the sacred scriptures of Islam:

Peace in Islam is understood as a state of physical, mental, spiritual, and social harmony, living at peace with God through submission, and living at peace with one's fellow human beings by avoiding wrongdoings. Islam obligates its believers to seek peace in all life's domains. The ultimate purpose of Qur'anic revelation for Muslims is to create a peaceful and just social order<sup>98</sup>.

Several Qur'anic verses and hadiths can attest to this<sup>99</sup>, although limited defensive force can be legitimated. When injustice has occurred in a relationship, Abu-Nimer explains how Islam has several virtues to promote peace between the parties: forgiveness, mercy, patience (*sabr*) and retribution are central values<sup>100</sup>. One verse in the Qur'an says: "God fills with peace and faith the heart of one who swallows his anger, even though he is in position to give vent to it" (42:37)<sup>101</sup>. Gopin highlights the concept of *shalom* (peace) which is mentioned twenty-five hundred times in classical Jewish sources<sup>102</sup>, and the religious concept of *redifat shalom* which means that it is a *mitzvah* to seek peacemaking<sup>103</sup>. Gopin also emphasizes how the chapter on peace in the Babylonian Talmud (*perek ha-shalom*) has:

...a variety of ethical insights that includes conflict resolution techniques, such as shuttle diplomacy, empathy, and unilateral gestures to evoke a response in the other party to a conflict. The literature on repentance involves a range of activities designed to make peace between people, including confession of wrongdoing, commitment to a change of behavior in the future, asking of forgiveness, and offering of forgiveness. There are many other traditions, including the Hebrew biblical commitment to aiding an enemy and its expansion by rabbinic texts to suggest that the law in Exodus 23:5 is designed as a conflict resolution device: "When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden, and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him". Helping the enemy with a burden would change his opinion of you<sup>104</sup>.

The issue of peace is also central in the scriptures of Christianity. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God". (Matt. 5:9).

All three monotheistic traditions *call for social action*, specifically in relation to the weak or poor in society. In an inspiring study, David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Geraldine Burr trace Christian social concern through history. The narratives of Jesus picture him as a person who associated himself with sinners and the poor and has given Christianity a special concern and responsibility for the poor. Although history provides many examples of violence

<sup>98</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003:60.

<sup>99</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003: 60-63.

<sup>100</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003: 67-73.

<sup>101</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003: 67.

<sup>102</sup> Gopin:2000: 77.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Gopin: 2000:77-78.

perpetuated by Church leaders, Smith and Burr point out how individual Christians always have found support in the Gospel to challenge injustice against the weak and the poor<sup>105</sup>. Abu-Nimer focuses on the call in Islam to establish a just society<sup>106</sup>. Abu-Nimer emphasizes the potential of developing peacebuilding strategies from Islam because of “an overarching emphasis on individual responsibility and the primary moral obligation to fight against injustice”<sup>107</sup>. In Islam, social justice is both related to man’s relationship with God and secondly with the society. One central dimension of how justice can be accomplished in society is related to economic justice. Abu-Nimer presents several examples on this from Islam. One is related to giving alms (*al-zakah*) to the poor<sup>108</sup>, another related to *waqf* – an area or property which individuals can give to the poor<sup>109</sup>. Abu-Nimer also emphasizes how several concepts in Islam can be central to social empowerment of the weak in a society. Two such concepts are *khary* (doing well) and *ihsan* (grace, beneficence, kindness). According to Abu-Nimer these concepts emphasize the Muslims’ obligations toward the underprivileged in their communities<sup>110</sup>. Gopin also argues that in Judaism social justice is a kind of *mitzvah*, and thus involvement in “the suffering of others and taking responsibility to heal that suffering<sup>111</sup>” can be considered a *mitzvah*. Social action can also express itself in what Gopin calls symbolic actions or deeds, which Gopin recommends when words are not sufficient. Gopin provides many examples. One is related to how charity and acts of kindness can function as a kind of penance supported by the fact “that Judaism recommends going beyond the word of repentance to the deed”<sup>112</sup>. Gopin also points to how the Day of Atonement<sup>113</sup>, where according to Judaism man stands in front of God after having asked his fellow man for forgiveness and is now asking God – is a symbolic day for repentance. Gopin also mentions the Jewish memorial service, *aveilus*, where the faithful mourn the loss of their loved one, as a ritual that could be used to remember the dead Palestinians and Israelis of the conflict<sup>114</sup>.

In addition to these central values within each of the religious traditions, I would like to present an approach to religion called *liberation theologies*. Smith and Burr present how liberation theologies have been developed by Jews<sup>115</sup>, Muslims<sup>116</sup> and Christians<sup>117</sup> and how

<sup>105</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007: 228.

<sup>106</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003:49.

<sup>107</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003:51.

<sup>108</sup> One of the five pillars of Islam.

<sup>109</sup> Abu-Nimer: 2003:54.

<sup>110</sup> Abu-Nimer: 55-56.

<sup>111</sup> Gopin: «Judaism and peacebuilding», in Coward and Smith: 2004:118-119.

<sup>112</sup> Gopin, 2003:119

<sup>113</sup> Gopin, 2003:117

<sup>114</sup> Gopin: 2000: 171-174.

<sup>115</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007: 266-267. Represented by an American Jew, Marc Ellis.

all these theologies have similarities with the social action presented above<sup>118</sup>. In the context of this dissertation, liberation theology will be understood through a paradigm presented by Jan Ove Ulstein<sup>119</sup>. According to Ulstein, liberation theology is profiled through five characteristics<sup>120</sup>: The first characteristic is the focus of theology on social relations and on the group identified as the oppressed. He further explains how this requires that the social realities are viewed from the perspective of the oppressed. The second characteristic of the paradigm of liberation theology is their conception of God, and how the question is not about the existence of God, but the difference between true worship of God and idolatry. The third characteristic mentioned by Ulstein is its focus on conflict analysis, and to develop a theology in that specific context. The fourth characteristic is the combination of social science and theology. The fifth characteristic is the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. This means that doing theology is part of a hermeneutic circle where the theology is reflected theoretically before it motivates to action. And this process continues as new events occur in the life of the actors, and new theological reflections are given to those events to further implement new actions<sup>121</sup>.

### 2.2.2 The Religious Potential in an Interreligious Setting

Interfaith dialogue is another approach to seek out the religious potential for peacework in an interreligious setting<sup>122</sup>. In this context I would like to present the conception of interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding in the Middle East, made by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty in their investigation of interfaith dialogue in five different Middle Eastern countries: Jordan,

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<sup>116</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007: 267-269. Represented by the South African Muslim, Farid Esack.

<sup>117</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007: 266. Represented by Naim Ateek, who is the director of Sabeel – presented in chapter 6 in this dissertation.

<sup>118</sup> Smith & Burr: 2007: 253.

<sup>119</sup> The Norwegian theologian Jan Ove Ulstein presents a paradigm for liberation theology, based on the study by Per Frostin: *Liberation theology in Tanzania and South Africa. A First World Interpretation*, Malmö 1998.

<sup>120</sup> Ulstein, Jan Ove: "Hermeneutikk til frigjering: Tolking av tekst og kontekst i frigjeringsteologien", in Henriksen, Jan-Olav: *Tegn, tekst og tolk. Teologisk hermeneutikk i fortid og nåtid*: Universitetsforlaget: 1994 : 237-239.

<sup>121</sup> Ulstein: 1994: 239.

<sup>122</sup> Several academics have written about different kinds of interreligious dialogue. From the great classical writings of Martin Buber and Emanuel Levinas, through modern critical approaches towards interreligious dialogue like Ruth Illman, Oddbjørn Leirvik and Willy Pfändtner. See the excellent volume in the Journal *Approaching Religion*, Volume 1, May 2011 where classical and modern reflections on interreligious dialogue are given by the mentioned academics. In the context of this dissertation I partly limit my use of theories to those specifically related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. The reason for this limitation is the interest in this dissertation in the content of the organized dialogue, not theories of what actually happens in the dialogue on an individual level.

Palestine, Israel, Egypt and Lebanon. According to their study the following seven models dominated the interfaith dialogue in the Middle East:

- 1) Intellectual/Cognitive and Informational Models of Dialogue
- 2) National unity model
- 3) Harmony model
- 4) Conflict and diversity model
- 5) Social action and liberation theology model
- 6) Theological dialogue
- 7) Dialogue of Life<sup>123</sup>

The *intellectual/cognitive and informational models of dialogue* are dominated by an information-based approach, specifically on an elite-level where most people on the grassroots level are absent. The aim of the *national unity model* is to bring people from different religious communities together from the same nation in areas where there exists a conflict which might have divided them. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty point out how this model has a tendency to focus on common values between the conflicting parties to create bonds between the religious communities within one nation. The *harmony model* focuses on what the different religious communities have in common and can have a tendency towards masking radical disagreements. The *conflict and diversity model* is really the opposite of the harmony model, because it explores differences and conflicting views in an interfaith dialogue setting on either religious or political issues. The *model of social action and liberation theology* aims to liberate an oppressed community or group in a state. This model is clearly engaged in politics<sup>124</sup>. The *theological dialogue* focuses on sacred texts and religious belief and is normally led by theologians, imams or rabbis. The last model – *dialogue of life* - focuses on cooperation between the religious communities concerning common social needs and interests<sup>125</sup>.

Marc Gopin makes several suggestions on how interfaith dialogue can have potentials for promoting peace. Gopin suggests that interfaith dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians should include shared study sessions, specifically between followers of Judaism and Islam. Although Gopin points to the danger of neglecting politics, he nevertheless argues that leaving controversial political issues outside of the interfaith dialogue setting might be

<sup>123</sup> The following is a brief review of the comparative perspective of the research, made by Abu-Nimer, Welty and, 2007:219-228.

<sup>124</sup> The engagement of religious people in politics related to both liberation theology and peace movements has also been described by Casanova, Jose: *Public Religion in the modern world*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.

<sup>125</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:219-228.



valuable in some settings if the participants are “building something deeper<sup>126</sup>” based on equality and respect<sup>127</sup>. Gopin explains about his experience with an IFD between Israelis and Palestinians where politics was neglected:

The text-center reverence in Judaism and Islam is a likely cause of this successful mode of interaction, as well as the power and wonder of discovering shared values and traditions *before* one engage in difficult exchanges with adversaries about inflicting injuries ... We may be witnessing the birth of an indigenous method of conflict resolution that has public joint study and appreciation at its core, while the difficult exchanges on the conflict are reserved for intentional meetings in a very private space<sup>128</sup>.

In this way Gopin argues that in some settings, avoiding politics might be useful to develop good relations between individuals from the conflicting parties. On the other hand, Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty argue that to “continuously ask participants to talk about religion and completely ignore their own sociopolitical realities seems counterproductive in terms of promoting political changes to address violence and achieve justice”<sup>129</sup>.

Gopin emphasizes how sometimes the use of words in dialogues can be very difficult, specifically when the enmity is characterized with feelings like “deep envy, or shame at the collective humiliation of one’s group, or an intense desire to humiliate, or to take revenge, or to see the enemy suffer”<sup>130</sup>. Gopin suggests several additional options to interfaith dialogue in peacemaking. One suggestion is to do concrete deeds together with your enemy to improve situations<sup>131</sup>. In this way the individual engaged in interfaith dialogue is empowered together with his/her adversaries<sup>132</sup>. Gopin also argues that one-to-one dialogue in an informal setting is the best situation for transformation of relationship<sup>133</sup>.

Gopin also gives recommendations for how to deal with the issue of holy sites in an IFD setting between Israelis and Palestinians. According to Gopin, study sessions on the sacredness of land and Jerusalem in all faiths can be helpful: “This is a vital and unique way in which religious people are beginning the process of evaluating the enemy other’s attachment to and care for the same sacred space”<sup>134</sup>. Gopin further argues that:

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<sup>126</sup> Gopin: 2007:40.

<sup>127</sup> In this context Gopin is actually referring to an experience with one of the organizations in this dissertation, IEA. This will be discussed further in the analysis in 9.2.2.

<sup>128</sup> Gopin: 2007:39.

<sup>129</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 21.

<sup>130</sup> Gopin: 2007:34.

<sup>131</sup> Gopin: 2007:37.

<sup>132</sup> Gopin: 2007:38.

<sup>133</sup> Gopin: 2007:38. The centrality of face-to-face encounter in dialogue settings can also be related to the classical dialogue philosopher Emanuel Levinas. See for example Leirvik, Oddbjørn: “Philosophies of interreligious dialogue. Practice in search of theory” in *Approaching Religion*, Vol. 1, May 2011.

<sup>134</sup> Gopin: 2007:40.

An interreligious textual study on the sacredness of Jerusalem, a study of all these texts, traditions, metaphors, and symbols of all peoples in a respectful, nonbelligerent atmosphere, may be doing things that no rational dialogue or rational bargaining session could ever accomplish<sup>135</sup>.

In this way Gopin suggests that mutual understanding and respect for the sacred sites of the other could promote peace in a unique way. The significance of textual study of sacred sites can be understood through the challenge Gopin sees in what he calls Land-centered Orthodox Judaism<sup>136</sup>, which has developed these last decades. According to Gopin:

The most important and successful obstacle to a Palestinian/Israeli treaty has come from the modern Orthodox Community, the religious Zionists, out of whose midst Gush Emunim, the preeminent ideological founders of settler Judaism, and other much more extreme groups have emerged<sup>137</sup>.

In this way Gopin encourages an inclusive interpretation of holy sites in Judaism. According to Gopin, Israeli policy must respect Palestinian identity, sacred sites and right to properties, and there must be room for a dual sovereignty over some locations<sup>138</sup>. Gopin specifically emphasizes how at this present time in history - when the Jews are in power - it is important to face these challenges in a positive way<sup>139</sup>. One of the greatest challenges of holy sites in interfaith dialogue in this region is to change the atmosphere of contest to one of cooperation and mutual respect. According to Gopin “sacred space seems to become even more sacred as the conflict intensifies or as more and more “holy” sites, such as burial places, are discovered or rediscovered and become the object of jealous veneration”<sup>140</sup>. Gopin puts forward the idea that holy sites “rather than a space of ultimate contention, shared sacred space could represent a disciplined paradigm for interreligious morality ... moving away from defining it exclusively in terms of sole ownership”<sup>141</sup>. Gopin also suggests that “this contractual commitment to shared sacred space could form the basis for multireligious treaty and secular-religious treaty for governing the entire Holy land region”<sup>142</sup>. David E. Guinn also gives recommendations for how Jerusalem can be addressed in peacebuilding negotiations<sup>143</sup>. In this study Guinn gives an insight into the troublesome history of Jerusalem and suggests a strategy for how to structure the negotiations, where religious actors have a role to play too in

<sup>135</sup> Gopin: 2007:40.

<sup>136</sup> Gopin: 2002:78.

<sup>137</sup> Gopin, 2004: 113.

<sup>138</sup> Gopin: 2002:80.

<sup>139</sup> Gopin: 2002: 82.

<sup>140</sup> Gopin, 2003:94.

<sup>141</sup> Gopin, 2003: 94.

<sup>142</sup> Gopin, 2003:95.

<sup>143</sup> Guinn, David E., *Protecting Jerusalem's Holy Sites. A Strategy for Negotiating a Sacred Peace*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

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cooperation with the politicians. One suggestion is to encourage interfaith cooperation between religious leaders from the region, supplemented by international religious leaders who may serve as mediators among the group<sup>144</sup>. Guinn encourages cooperation between the political authorities and religious leaders in the region in this process<sup>145</sup>.

In this section I have presented several recommendations on how each of the religious traditions can have a religious potential for peacework, both alone and in an interreligious setting. But there is also a need for a critical approach in order to grasp fully the capacity of peace workers to promote peace. This is the topic of the next chapter.

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<sup>144</sup> Guinn: 2006: 182.

<sup>145</sup> Guinn: 2006: 182-185.

### 3 A Critical Approach

*One of the most striking features of ... attempts at representing the conflict as if from the outside has been the notion that Palestinians and Israelis are equal, symmetrically, balanced, polarized at dead centre ... It will hardly come as a revelation, however, when I say ... that no such symmetry has ever existed, no matter how tempted we might be by the nicely balanced rhetorical form of the polarity.*

Extract from Edward Said, 1986.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of peacebuilding in asymmetrical conflicts was pointed out by the Palestinian philosopher, Edward Said in 1986. Although Said addressed the situation for the Palestinians a few decades ago, his comment still emphasizes some important features which have been identified by many scholars: the need to critically approach the question of symmetry and asymmetry<sup>2</sup>. Similar statements related to interreligious dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians were made by Arab leaders during a gathering in New York arranged by the UN in November 2007<sup>3</sup>. During this conference the President of Libya said the following:

The effectiveness of the dialogue in question remains subject to the dynamics of asymmetrical power relations ... for how could any dialogue flourish and progress where the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories persists, where the national and human rights of the Palestinian people are systematically violated ...<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Jabri: 1996:155. See also Said, E.: "The Burdens of Interpretation and the Question of Palestine", paper presented to the conference of the International Society of Political Psychology, Amsterdam, July 1986.

<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in chapter 1 Abu-Nimer's study in 1999 also showed how dialogue did not lead to social change. See also Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 21.

<sup>3</sup> See the UN program online: [http://www.un.org/ga/63/meetings/peace\\_culture\\_hl.shtml](http://www.un.org/ga/63/meetings/peace_culture_hl.shtml) Retrieved December 12, 2008. This gathering and the response from the Arab leaders are also mentioned in Wang, Yvonne: "Religionsdialog og fredsarbeid i et hellig land" (Interfaith dialogue and peacework in a Holy Land) in Nordisk tidsskrift for Midtøsten studier, Babylon, no. 1., 2009 (Norwegian only).

<sup>4</sup> H.E. General Michel's Sleiman, President of the at High-level meeting of the General Assembly on Dialogue between cultures and religions. New York, November 12, 2008. Online: <http://un.org/ga/63/meetings/pdf/lebanonE12.pdf> Retrieved December 12, 2008.

Parallel statements, which demanded justice for the Palestinians and a solution to the question of Jerusalem before any dialogue could flourish, were given by King Abdullah II of Jordan<sup>5</sup>, Mohammad Saed Tantawy from Egypt<sup>6</sup> and the Prime Minister of Morocco Abbas El Fassi<sup>7</sup>.

In the previous chapter the focus was on the religious potential for peacework. This chapter seeks to adopt a critical approach which can be helpful in understanding the challenges of peacework and dialogue in conflict areas. In the first section of this chapter I would like to present the question of asymmetry. First in relation to what contemporary conflict resolution theories call *asymmetrical conflicts*, and secondly in relation to what several academics have pointed out in relation to the danger of employing asymmetry into the organized peacework. In the second part of this chapter I would like to present critical approaches to dialogue within the field of conflict resolution, and then more specifically within the social theory of the political science Vivienne Jabri.

### **3.1 Asymmetry and Peacebuilding**

Asymmetry can be understood as an unbalanced power relation. The question of asymmetry has been central within contemporary conflict resolution theories in recent decades. This is related to both the asymmetry within a given conflict – a so-called asymmetric conflict, and to asymmetry in organizational peacework.

#### **3.1.1 Asymmetrical Conflicts**

According to Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse, asymmetric conflicts are conflicts “between dissimilar parties such as between a majority and a minority, an established government and a group of rebels”<sup>8</sup>. The difference between symmetric and asymmetric conflicts is that the root of the conflict is not a particular issue or interest, but “in the very structure of who they are and the relationship between them”<sup>9</sup>. Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse also point out how traditional conflict resolution theories mainly apply to

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<sup>5</sup> Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2008, online: <http://un.org/ga/63/meetings/pdf/jordanE12.pdf> Retrieved December 8, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> H.E. Dr. Mohammed Saed Tantawy, The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, 2008, online: <http://un.org/ga/63/meetings/pdf/egyptE12.pdf> Retrieved December 8, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> H.E. Mr. Abbas El Fassi, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco, 2008, online: <http://un.org/ga/63/meetings/pdf/moroccoE12.pdf> Retrieved December 8, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

symmetric conflicts between equal parties, while in an asymmetric conflict the difference in power relations affects the approach:

Classical conflict resolution, in some views, applies only to symmetric conflicts. In asymmetric conflicts the structure is such that the top dog always wins, the underdog always loses. The only way to resolve the conflicts is to change the structure, but this can never be in the interests of the top dog. So there are no win-win outcomes, and the third party has to join forces with the underdog to bring about a resolution<sup>10</sup>.

Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse suggest two main approaches to asymmetric conflicts. The first is to confront the difference in power relations, through demonstrations and through increasing solidarity with the underdog- both locally as well as internationally. The second approach is by empowering the underdog<sup>11</sup>.

Several academics have pointed out the asymmetry inherent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict<sup>12</sup>, between an established state and a people where many have lived in refugee camps and under occupation for decades. In this way the criticism raised by Edward Said and the Arab leadership - mentioned in the introduction – can be understood. This criticism can also be related to the research conducted by Abu-Nimer in 1999, which expressed the fear that dialogue between the parties would ultimately lead to a preservation of the status quo - or a normalization of the occupation<sup>13</sup>.

On the other hand, Gopin points out how both peoples are victims although the conflict is asymmetric:

If we do not want to perpetuate this dance of death between competing miseries, between suicide bombers and dysfunctional border guards, then we had better pay attention to alleviating the circumstances that create such psychologies ... Of course there is asymmetry! And justice demands greater attention to the latter's needs. But conflict resolution and simple compassion demand care for all of those people born in misery who contribute actively to violence<sup>14</sup>.

Following Gopin, a critical approach would acknowledge the need for protest and confrontation in an asymmetric conflict in favor of the Palestinians, but also the need to not be trapped in this confrontation, which eventually would reproduce the conflict and ignore the victims on both sides. Thus, a critical approach to asymmetric conflicts needs both to consider

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005:22.

<sup>12</sup> Jabri: 1996:155, Gopin: 2002:180. In addition, see the excerpt from Edward Said in the introduction to this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Abu-Nimer: 1999:160.

<sup>14</sup> Gopin: 2002: 182.

general theories in conflict resolution on asymmetric conflicts, as well as including specific theories related to the context of the given conflict under study<sup>15</sup>.

In addition, discussions related to conducting a critical approach, where asymmetric conflicts and dissimilarities between a majority and a minority became important issues,<sup>16</sup> must also consider the difference between doing peacebuilding in conflict areas and in post-conflict areas. Contemporary conflict resolution theories have also been interested in distinguishing between peacebuilding activities in conflict areas and post-conflict areas. Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse write, for example, that there was no point in attempting reconciliation in the early stages of peacebuilding and that it might even be counter-productive. According to Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse, deeply traumatized individuals and groups are not ready for such an undertaking:<sup>17</sup>

... it is much harder to move forward with the deeper processes of reconciliation if the divisive political issue are still active and threatening ... it is harder to forgive an enemy who is still seen to be an immediate and potent threat. The link here between reconciliation in its first sense and peacekeeping after violent conflict... The deeper processes of reconciliation cannot be reached while dehumanized images of the enemy are still current and mutual victimization are widely believed<sup>18</sup>.

In this way reconciliation can be difficult as long as the conflict and pain goes on. The feeling of being a victim might make it difficult to engage in peacebuilding activities aimed at reconciliation. A critical approach to conflict resolution theories and peacemaking must consider the differences and the importance of the right timing concerning peace building activities.

### 3.1.2 Asymmetry in Organizational Peacework

The danger of employing asymmetry - consciously or unconsciously – in the organizational dialogue has gained attention specifically during the last decade. According to Gopin:

Asymmetry of power is another important problem in conflict resolving processes, such as dialogue encounters. Simply stated, adversary groups often come out of circumstances in which one group has more military, economic, political and/or demographic power than the other group. But the asymmetry also may express itself in the nature of the encounter, its language, structure, and cultural ethos. This skews dialogue and contact between enemy groups as a method of

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<sup>15</sup> In the excerpt from Gopin mentioned above, he is specifically referring to the need for symbolic gestures in addition to dialogue. This has also been mentioned in 2.2.

<sup>16</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 21 -22.

<sup>17</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 232-242.

<sup>18</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 243.

conflict resolution ... A peacemaking method can produce asymmetry in and of itself if its execution favors the skills of one group over another's or one sub community of each group<sup>19</sup>.

In this way Gopin indirectly encourages a critical approach to the organizational peacework that is conducted among the parties.

Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty give eight recommendations to avoid asymmetry in the organizational peacework<sup>20</sup>. The first recommendation is related to how the participants must not feel they represent their whole religious community, but speak freely as individuals. The second, to recognize the complexity of religious traditions, is related to acknowledging that there does not exist one view among all Jews, all Muslims or all Christians. The third recommendation is related to how the interfaith dialogue should be conducted after an unreligious meeting has been held first. The fourth is naturally connected to a requirement of respect for the other. The fifth can be related to how the participants need to acknowledge both common ground and disagreements. The sixth is related to the relationship between the parties, where a majority might benefit from a dialogue, while a minority might not be heard if they experience injustice in a dialogue based on understanding. According to Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: "The imbalance of power can partly be corrected to careful attention to the location, timing, participant selection and other dynamics of the dialogue design"<sup>21</sup>. The importance of symmetry between the participants can also be related to education, age and gender. The participants might also be understood as the staff members within an organization. When an organization seeks to develop programs of dialogue for the different parties, it is important that those who develop these programs represent and understand both sides. The seventh recommendation is related to how the participants should have equal status and importance. And finally "the dialogue group itself should establish some basic ground rules for the meetings"<sup>22</sup>.

Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty also point out some challenges of interfaith dialogue in Israel and Palestine related to their empirical study in this region. The first category is related to the *location* where the dialogue takes place. When two parties are in conflict it is important that the location of the dialogue is in a place where both parties feel comfortable, preferably in a neutral place or the location can alternate every second time to suit both parties. The lack of freedom of movement among the Palestinian participants is brought up as one central problem. Several peace activists have given examples of incidents where the Palestinian

<sup>19</sup> Gopin: 2007: 43.

<sup>20</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 37-41.

<sup>21</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:40.

<sup>22</sup> Abu, Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 41 .The paragraph refers to page 37-41.



participants were either delayed because of the Israeli checkpoint or at worst denied access for some Israeli security reason<sup>23</sup>.

Several academics have also pointed out the importance of language in the dialogue. According to the study by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, the importance of language needs to be considered. While a great number of Palestinians know some Hebrew, most of the Israelis do not know Arabic. Still, Hebrew is not the mother tongue of the Palestinians, and thus it is not right that Palestinians should speak in a dialogue in their second language, as pointed out by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty<sup>24</sup>. Dajani and Baskin suggest that Israelis and Palestinians engage in joint activities try to find a neutral language or invest in translators:

It is important for people to be understood. This might mean that the activities can take place in English or another neutral language, or it might mean that Hebrew and Arabic could be spoken so both peoples can speak freely and say what they have to say the way they feel comfortable saying it. But this requires efficient and qualified translators, a factor that significantly increases costs<sup>25</sup>.

In this way the use of English as a neutral language requires that the participants are skilled in English, while it gives no economic costs for the organizations.

To summarize the issue of asymmetry both within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and within the organizational work of peace workers, it is clear that several considerations need to be taken into account within each organization.

### **3.2 A Critical Approach to Dialogue**

Several academics have undertaken a critical approach to dialogue in recent years<sup>26</sup>. As Ruth Illman points out:

Throughout history, dialogue has mainly been regarded as a positive and constructive enterprise, but as a result of critical reflections on power and representation, equality and agency, the image is becoming more ambiguous. Dialogue is losing its innocence, yet not its relevance<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007: 80-81.

<sup>24</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:85.

<sup>25</sup> Dajani and Baskin: 2006:98.

<sup>26</sup> See for example the following articles by academics in the journal *Approaching Religion*, Åbo: The Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, 2011: Schirin Amir-Moazami, "Pitfalls of consensus-orientated dialogue. The German Islam Conference", 2011:2-15, Leirvik, Oddbjørn, "Philosophies of interreligious dialogue. Practice in search of theory", 2011: 16-24, Grung, Anne Hege: "Interreligious dialogue. Moving between compartmentalization and complexity", 2011: 25-32, Pfändtner, Willy: "A postcolonial philosophy of religion and interreligious dialogue" 2011:33-40, and Illman, Ruth: "Artists in dialogue. Creative approaches to interreligious encounters", 2011: 59-71.

<sup>27</sup> Illman, Ruth: "Initiating dialogue", in *Approaching Religion*, Åbo: The Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, 2011: 1.

An issue which has been put forward in conflict resolution theories has been the question of how dialogue can deal with radical disagreement. According to Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse, dialogue can, if approached wrongly, have the potential of hiding the factual radical disagreement, and as such eventually be counter-productive to peace<sup>28</sup>.

### 3.2.1 Dialogue and Radical Disagreement

In recent years dialogue has been integrated as a method within conflict resolution, and discussions within the field concentrate on the theme of communication and how successful conflict resolution has been in responding to radical disagreement among the protagonists of a conflict. Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse suggest that three dominant different types of communication exist within the field of conflict resolution: 1) interactive conflict resolution, 2) dialogical conflict resolution and Gadamerian hermeneutics and 3) discursive conflict transformation and Habermasian critical theory.<sup>29</sup> The first approach is exemplified with the work of Jay Rothman,<sup>30</sup> where the aim is to create an atmosphere where mutual understanding and perceptions of the other develop, and the conflict is perceived as a shared problem. This process is conducted through dialogue. The dialogue does not deal with radical disagreements but mainly seeks to understand the other and how they can cooperate to promote peace. The second approach to communication, the dialogical conflict resolution and Gadamerian hermeneutics, aims to reach an understanding through a dialogical exchange of views via mutual translation into a common language. The aim of intergroup dialogue is to study oneself and the other as equals, where the dialogue leads to a “fusion of horizon”<sup>31</sup>. Although the capacity to promote peace is not denied in these approaches by anyone, a number of conflict resolvers and conflict transformers have criticized these approaches for unmasking the radical disagreement at stake and for ignoring asymmetric relations among the parties<sup>32</sup>. Among them is Vivienne Jabri who argues that these approaches do not “challenge the basis of the militarist and exclusionist identities which enable war as a form of human conduct”<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 288-300.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> See Rothman, Jay: *Resolving identity-based conflict in nations, organizations, and communities*. San Francisco, California, Jossey-Bass: 1997.

<sup>31</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005: 293.

<sup>32</sup> See above, in addition to Jabri: 1996:156.

<sup>33</sup> Jabri: 1996:156.

Jabri suggests a critical approach to dialogue which is connected to her social theory of conflict. I will therefore briefly present her social theory, before I explain her suggestion on how to deal with radical disagreement in dialogue. Jabri uses both political and social theory to develop a critical analysis of war and violent conflict. The main objective of her study is to uncover the discursive and institutional processes which reproduce war and violent conflict as aspects of human condition. Jabri's study is inspired by Anthony Giddens's structuration theory in relation to the fact that there is presumed to be an ontological relationship between action and structure, or between the action by the members of a society and the structure of that society. Jabri conceptualizes conflict as a social phenomenon where a dialectic relationship exists between the members of the society and the dominant structures in that society, which allows social change. According to Jabri her approach: "allows an ontological discourse on the place of war in the constitutive relationship between self and society, the construction of identity, and the institutional and normative orders which are implicated in the reproduction of violent conflict as a social continuity"<sup>34</sup>.

The members of a society are still perceived as situated actors, which means that they are born into a specific social system with a set of framework of meaning and a set of dominant discourses and institutions which influence their practical consciousness:

Individuals always stand in relation to specific histories, memories, ideologies, symbolic systems, languages and geographic locations ... All individuals are "positioned" on specific locations along the structural continuities of social systems, in form of symbolic orders, normative expectations and power relations.<sup>35</sup>

According to this theory, the possibilities to promote social change in a society are always limited by a set of cultural and contextual constraints. The possibility to promote social change is related to the dialectic relationship between the members of a society and the structural organization of that society. In this way the actors engaged in a dialogue are also part of the system they were born into, but nevertheless they have the ability to promote change if they understand the system. In the following I will present the study by Jabri as a threefold strategy for investigation to address the problem within societies plagued by a political conflict: First, to present what she calls 'discourse on violence'. Second: how to identify an independent locus of a transformative 'discourse of peace'. And third: to invoke Habermasian discourse ethics as a baseline for a critical approach.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jabri:1996: vii. The threefold strategy of Jabri is also mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation.

<sup>35</sup> Jabri:1996: 130. See also Jabri:1996:135.

<sup>36</sup> Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005:296. They divide Jabri's study in a threefold strategy.

Jabri's main argument concerning what she calls discourses on violence is her conceptualization of conflict as constructed discourse "constituted around the construction of a *discourse of exclusion*."<sup>37</sup> An important argument in Jabri's writings is how inter-state conflict and inter-communal conflicts cannot be understood fully by only looking at the leadership's decisions-making, but "calls for uncovering the continuities in social life which enable war and give legitimacy, backed by discursive and institutional structures."<sup>38</sup> Jabri's primary assumption is that "war or violent conflict are social phenomena emerging through, and constitutive of, social practices which have, through time and across space, rendered war an institutional form that is largely seen an inevitable and at times acceptable form of human conduct"<sup>39</sup>. Although Jabri recognizes war as a response to external conditions,<sup>40</sup> she puts a focus on how to uncover the processes which often occurs once violent conflict comes to define a relationship. She is interested in how the discourse of war aims to construct "a mythology based on the inclusion and exclusion"<sup>41</sup> and how this discourse not only defines an enemy, but also "incorporates the inclusion of texts which valorise the history and cause of one party to a conflict while depicting the claims of the enemy as unfounded, unjust or even diabolical"<sup>42</sup>. The hegemony or dominant voice within the public space is central for the influence on the socially constructed identity<sup>43</sup>. According to Jabri:

The ability to consolidate and reproduce authoritative power is dependent on the capacity to manipulate the memory traces of a community and control information gathering and dissemination which generate and reproduce the discursive and institutional continuities which "bind" societies.<sup>44</sup>

Jabri further exemplifies how manipulation of memory traces, like images of past glories, episodic ceremonials, symbolic representations, focus on origin or present achievements – can be used to construct exclusive national identities.<sup>45</sup> According to Jabri the reproduction of conflict is possible when "... the language of politics becomes a discourse of exclusionist protection against a constructed diabolical, hated enemy who deserves any violence perpetrated against it."<sup>46</sup> How does the inclusion-exclusion dichotomy result in the emergence

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<sup>37</sup> Jabri, 1996:130.

<sup>38</sup> Jabri: 1996:3.

<sup>39</sup> Jabri: 1996:3.

<sup>40</sup> Jabri: 1996:50.

<sup>41</sup> Jabri: 1996:7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> See the presentation of the studies of Bar-Tal and Teichman: 2005, and Kelman: 2004 in 1.1.2.

<sup>44</sup> Jabri, 1996:131.

<sup>45</sup> Jabri, 1996:132.

<sup>46</sup> Jabri, 1996:127.

of and support for violent human conflict? To answer this Jabri argues for the influence of the system on the actors or individuals:

Individuals are born into discursive and institutional continuities which define and bind particular societies. Individuals are involved in the reproduction or transformation of social systems which are in existence through the continuity of praxis.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, Jabri's use of the structurationist theory of Giddens allows her theory to value the possibilities of the situated actors to change the society. But in order to be change makers Jabri argues that the individuals need to understand the processes and institutional continuities which reproduce the conflict<sup>48</sup>.

According to Jabri, her conception of *discourse on peace* is the emancipator component of her study. It presumes recognition of the transformative capacity of agents in societies to promote social change, although always within the complex combination of structural enablement and constraint<sup>49</sup>.

A crucial point for agents who seek to promote change, either through conflict resolution strategies or peace activism, is to gain an understanding of the structured legitimation of violence in a given society and the institutional orders which legitimate violence. According to Jabri, in order to develop a `discourse on peace` one must incorporate an understanding of what reproduces the conflict within the given society:

A discourse on peace assumes a basis for the transformation of symbolic and institutional orders which underpins violent human conflict. A discourse on peace is necessarily a counter-discourse which seeks to understand the structured legitimation of violence and challenge the militarist order and exclusionist identities which encompass it.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, Jabri argues that a genius understanding of the structures within a society and the discourses within the public sphere which legitimate violence must be clearly understood by those who try to produce a `counter-discourse`. Jabri emphasizes the need to implement Galtung's definitional distinction between direct and structural violence. Galtung suggested that a positive conception of peace should point to the elimination of structures of exploitation and dependency which, he argues, are as destructive of human life and well-being as the direct violence experienced in times of war.<sup>51</sup> Thus Jabri argues that the concept of peace

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<sup>47</sup> Jabri, 1996:135.

<sup>48</sup> Jabri: 1996:140-41.

<sup>49</sup> Jabri: 1996:145.

<sup>50</sup> Jabri: 1996:146.

<sup>51</sup> Jabri: 1996:150.

must incorporate a rejection of violence and its institutional underpinnings in combination with a defined process which would enable its realization.”<sup>52</sup>

Several researchers within conflict resolution have been inspired by Habermas<sup>53</sup> and his communicative interaction model as a process towards mutual understanding of the causes of conflict and the obstacles to resolution. The conception of dialogic relations emerging through discourse is based on the idea of an egalitarian dialogue where the rational arguments of the participants should be based on validity claims and not on power claims. In such an ideal setting the parties in conflict would use rational arguments and together discover what Habermas calls *emancipator interest*<sup>54</sup>.

To Jabri, the Habermasian model of discursive ethics “provides a process of which peace is by necessity constitutive”, or “provides a framework to which war as an institution may be put to question”<sup>55</sup>. But this process must also be evaluated through a critical approach. Jabri suggests the following:

The ideal speech situation assumes equal participation and the right to question the validity claims of normative and factual statements in a dialogic process which aims at reaching free rational consensus about such claims. Furthermore, participants must be symmetrically situated with respect to social norms and material conditions if unhindered communication is to take place. Discourse is the process through which normative statements are treated as hypotheses in need of justification and defense. Consensus is possible, but it is not imposed<sup>56</sup>.

In this, Jabri suggests, that peace movements (or conflict resolution theories) must be evaluated according to how the parties in conflict have equal rights to question the validity of the other's arguments, and further be based on a relationship where the participants are symmetrically situated without any asymmetrical power relation between the two. Normative statements should then be equally treated as hypotheses to be either justified or defended within the communicative act.

The main issues of the Habermasian communicative model was that it should ideally become a communicative interaction process where mutual understanding of the causes of conflict and the obstacles to resolution should develop.

But Jabri also argues that a critical analysis must consider the possibilities for the discourses on peace to enter the public space. Such a question is related to the actual

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<sup>52</sup> Jabri: 1996:146.

<sup>53</sup> See for example Jabri: 1996 and Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse: 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Jabri: 1996: 161. See also Cronin, C.P. & Pablo, D.G.: *The inclusion of the other: studies in political theory/Jürgen Habermas*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 1998: 49-73.

<sup>55</sup> Jabri: 1996:166.

<sup>56</sup> Jabri: 1996:164.

hegemony of the discourses within the public space, and the possibilities of the peacemakers to be heard and thus create an actual counter-discourse:

The transformative capacity of counter-discourse must also be located in the public space. It is the domination of space which generates hegemonic discourses based on exclusionist ideologies which are used to legitimate the onset of war and the manipulation of information in time of war. Structures of domination point to the existence of asymmetrical access to public space such that the counter-discourses generated by social movements opposed to war are marginalized or rendered invisible.<sup>57</sup>

According to Habermas, the public space or “public sphere” is a place where a public opinion can be constructed.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Jabri argues that to situate peace in the discourses within the public space requires a:

... process of unhindered communicative action which involves participation and difference. Situating peace in the unhindered process of intersubjective communication recognizes two indisputable assumptions: (a) that only human enact war and (b) that only human enacts what we call linguistic communication. This process is, by definition, between “self” and “other”, a structure which is both the basis of conflict and dialogue. Communication implies a process of common discovery, the emergence of a “we”, through a process of unrestricted questioning and dialogue.<sup>59</sup>

Thus the peacebuilders need to be heard clearly in the public sphere.

To summarize the above presentation of Jabri’s critical approach it should be pointed out firstly, that the dialogue needs to be process-oriented, as the participants are situated actors born into a way of viewing the world and yet with the ability to change, Secondly, a dialogue needs to be egalitarian or symmetric in order to bring forth an equal understanding of how to transform the conflict into a sustainable peace. Thirdly, the peacemakers need to challenge exclusive dominant discourses and institutions which legitimate and reproduce the conflict and bring their voice into the public sphere.

### 3.2.2 Dialogue and Liberation Theology

According to the social theory of Jabri, the two parties in conflict should meet in the context of a symmetric relationship, and together form a counter-discourse of peace, which challenges those dominant discourses and institutions which legitimate violence. By using Habermas’ discursive ethics as a baseline for investigation, researchers should be capable of evaluating whether the dialogue encourages the development of a common understanding of what is needed to challenge institutions and discourses which legitimated conflict or if the dialogue

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<sup>57</sup> Jabri: 1996:158.

<sup>58</sup> Jabri: 1996:159-160.

<sup>59</sup> Jabri: 1996:161.

ignores the actual radical disagreement between the parties and as such becomes counter-productive. In many ways, Jabir's argumentations of why radical disagreements need to be taken seriously seems to correspond with the arguments made by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty which claim that by ignoring politics, interreligious dialogues could be counter-productive because they do not promote social change – which is vital in peacework<sup>60</sup>. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty seem to give preferences to the social action and liberation theology model, because this model more deliberately seeks social change. As we saw in the previous chapter Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty do not distinguish between interfaith dialogue and liberation theology. In the following I would like to argue that such a distinction is important in order to critically examine how religious peace activists seek to promote peace in their work.

According to Leirvik there is a critical relation between interfaith dialogue and liberation theology – in relation to both whom one seeks to understand and in relation to radical disagreement. In relation to how these different strategies approach radical disagreement, Leirvik argues that interreligious dialogue tends to “expand the space for legitimate disagreement<sup>61</sup>” while liberation theology demarks “the limits of acceptable disagreement<sup>62</sup>”. This means that while the opposite parties in dialogue seek to understand what issues on which they radically disagree and how to cope with this disagreement, liberation theology will bring forth issues they believe need to be changed, such as oppression of groups, and thus emphasize the limits of acceptable disagreement.

Following Jabri's model, peace workers engaged in dialogue can be evaluated according to their ability to take radical disagreement seriously within the dialogue. If both parties are equally represented, and the aim is that these two parties shall come to a shared understanding of how both parties equally can promote peace and challenge dominant discourses and institutions in both societies, then they are engaged in a genuine and productive dialogue where they can distinguish between legitimate disagreement and common interests.

Following Abu-Nimer's research on dialogue programs between Israeli Jews and Arabs in the 90s, he argues that the models used in this dialogue “directly or indirectly contribute to preserving the status quo”<sup>63</sup>. Thus the danger in a dialogue setting is, as Abu-Nimer points out, that it might preserve the status quo<sup>64</sup>. On the other hand, liberation theology in the form

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<sup>60</sup> See 1.2.1.

<sup>61</sup> Leirvik, 2004:129.

<sup>62</sup> Leirvik: 2004: 129.

<sup>63</sup> Abu-Nimer: 1999: 158.

<sup>64</sup> See the presentation of Abu-Nimer's study in 1.2.1.



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of nonviolent resistance seeks to limit acceptable disagreement by challenging those in power, including institutions and dominant discourses among the other party which legitimate violence. In the context of this dissertation I will nevertheless suggest that a critical approach to liberation theology must explore its potential of reproducing one`s own group`s dominant discourses which legitimate violence against the other.

According to Leirvik, differences between interreligious dialogue and liberation theology need to be explored in areas of conflict:

The urgent question for everyone committed to both interfaith dialogue and liberation theology must then be how to unite a radical struggle for justice that will always be controversial and create conflict with a liberal engagement for multi-religious-co-existence in which respect of different opinions must be the corner stone. How can one, in shifting contexts, reconcile a double responsibility for the religious Other and the suffering Other?<sup>65</sup>

A critical approach to religious peacebuilding cannot ignore this paradox of how both dialogue and resistance can both promote peace by challenging dominant discourses and institutions in the conflict which legitimate violence – which is crucial in the theory of Jabri – and still on the other hand can reproduce the conflict by either preserving the status quo or by reproducing stereotypical images of the other which eventually will legitimate the conflict. I will argue that in this dissertation the research question: How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land? – requires an evaluation of how organized dialogues address the danger of preserving the status quo in their settings. And equally this research question requires an evaluation of how organized nonviolent resistance – in the context of a liberation theology – addresses the danger of reproducing stereotypical images of the other which eventually will reproduce negative stereotypes in the public sphere.

In the next chapter I will discuss how the issues brought up in this chapter and the previous chapters will find their way into the analytical considerations behind this research, after presenting the methodological considerations behind the sampling of data.

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<sup>65</sup> Leirvik: 2004: 132.

## 4 A Qualitative Research

*Among people of secular, liberal religious or cosmopolitan orientations, there is broad-based support for the notion that the best way to move society away from religious intolerance and towards more pluralism is the development of a universal set of political guidelines... However, many religious people around the world do not share this universal "secular" moral discourse. It is fine to wish that they did, but in moments of crisis what is needed are methods of dealing with religious actors as they currently define themselves ...Analysis of religious peace organizations is instructive in this regard.*

Extract from *Between Eden and Armageddon*, by Marc Gopin, 2000<sup>1</sup>.

This dissertation is a qualitative research which seeks to understand how local religious peacebuilders in Jerusalem believe religion can contribute to peace in the Holy Land. It is explorative in that it seeks to uncover how religion is used as both an inspiration and a motivation for peace activism through the interpretation of sacred texts and formation of programs. This dissertation is also normative in the way it seeks to evaluate the capacity of a selected number of peace organizations to form new discourses or counter-discourses which deconstruct those dominant discourses and institutions which legitimate violence<sup>2</sup>. Several perspectives have been given by qualitative researchers on how to define the purpose of qualitative research. A good qualitative research can have the purpose to "understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing"<sup>3</sup>, or generate understanding<sup>4</sup>. Denzin and Lincoln define qualitative methodology as a:

... situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations ... Qualitative researchers study things in their

<sup>1</sup> Gopin: 2000:18.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>3</sup> Eisner, E. W.: *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York, NY, Macmillan Publishing Company: 1991:58.

<sup>4</sup> Stenbacka, Caroline: «Qualitative research requires quality concepts of its own», *Management Decision*, Vol. 39 Iss. 7, 2001:551.

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natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them<sup>5</sup>.

Lincoln and Guba<sup>6</sup> argue that sustaining the trustworthiness of a research report depends on the issues, quantitatively, discussed as validity and reliability. In qualitative research the idea of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness, which is defensible and establishes confidence in the findings<sup>7</sup>. According to Stenbacka, the quality of a research is related to generalizability of the result and thereby to the testing and increasing the validity or trustworthiness of the research. The present study and its generalizability, is related to the understanding this study can document on the relationship between religious peace activism and its ability to promote peace. The particularity of this study is related to its focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the specific relationship between religion and national identity in the Holy Land.

According to Kirk and Miller, evaluating the validity of a research “calls for a consideration of the components of the research situation (place, time, informant) and the research problem and tools”<sup>8</sup>, while the reliability is related to whether or not a researcher “would expect to obtain the same finding if she or he tried again in the same way”<sup>9</sup>. The validity and reliability of the research is mainly given below through the methodological and analytical considerations behind this dissertation.

The main question is: How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land? The present chapter is divided in two sections. In the first section I will first present the methodological consideration behind this research and how data have been sampled. In the second section I will give the considerations behind the analysis and evaluation in this dissertation. I will also discuss the choice of theories behind the analysis and evaluation and their abilities to preserve the genius of each organization.

## **4.1 Method**

The purpose of this dissertation is to gain new understanding of how religious peacebuilding is organized in the specific context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and further limited to the work conducted from Jerusalem. In this section I would like to present the methodological

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<sup>5</sup> Denzin, L. & Lincoln, Y.: *The Landscape of Qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage: 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Lincoln, Yvonna. S. & Guba, Egon. G.: *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage: 1985: 289-331.

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln and Guba: 1985:

<sup>8</sup> Kirk, Jerome and Miller, Marc L. *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*, United States of America: Sage Publication, 1986:69.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

consideration behind the selection of organizations and outline the process and considerations made during the sampling of data.

#### **4.1.1 Methodological Considerations**

The methodological considerations behind this dissertation have been guided by an interest in how the religious potential in peacework is activated by different Israeli and Palestinian organizations located in Jerusalem. While the study by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty reveals the different models for dialogue, approaches and ambitions behind the Israeli and Palestinian religious peace activists through empirical study, an analysis of how religious issues are brought into the writings, programs and activities of these organizations has not yet been undertaken. The report by Yehezkel Landau is an informative report based on interviews which document some of the motivations and thoughts of the religious peace activists. However, no empirical research has been done which analyzes the rich documentation of these organizations' publications and programs. This dissertation is an attempt to fill this vacuum. By building upon previous research done by Abu-Nimer, Khoury, Welty and Landau<sup>10</sup>, this dissertation is explorative –aimed at understanding the role of religion in the peacework of a selected number of eight organizations<sup>11</sup>.

The interest of this study is not to give a thick description of one or two organizations, but rather to offer an insight into several organizations – both Israeli and Palestinian- to understand the plurality and diversity of how religious issues are drawn into peacework in Jerusalem. For this reason I have chosen eight organizations representing the three Monotheistic faiths and the two peoples in conflict. As mentioned, two of them are Palestinian, four are Israeli while two are Israeli-Palestinians.

The starting point behind the selection of organizations was my previous presentation of the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) in 1999<sup>12</sup>, and through this connection I learned about the other organizations. Since ICCI is a coordinating council with 75 member organizations I looked at these member organizations first and selected Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR) and Jerusalem Peacemakers (JP). ICCI had also published a pamphlet called “Triologue in Jerusalem: Jews, Christians and Muslims” in 1998, which was presented to me during the

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<sup>10</sup> As mentioned in 1.2.1. previous research on the general secular peace movement is available, where the religious peace organizations are mentioned briefly.

<sup>11</sup> Previous research has been presented in 1.2.1.

<sup>12</sup> See the Preface of this dissertation.

seminar at the Hebrew University in 1999. One of the writers in this pamphlet is Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, which led me further to the religious studies unit of the Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs (PASSIA). The three other organizations were introduced to me during an International Conference in Jerusalem Summer 2008 coordinated by ICCI for the International Council for Christian and Jews (ICCI)<sup>13</sup>. The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL) was present at this Conference and the representative for the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, David Rosen, held a lecture about their work and the importance of interreligious dialogue. It was also during this conference and the following post-conference study tour, that I learned more about Sabeel and the Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA) through conversations with the participants at this conference. My final choice of organizations was based upon the following considerations: (1) that they had different agendas apart from wanting to contribute to peace. In this way I was hoping that this research would illuminate some of the plurality that I had gotten the impression existed. (2) That they represented both a Palestinian and an Israeli voice on the concept of peace within the religious peace camp. (3) That they were active today and (4) that they were located in Jerusalem. And finally (5) that they had accessible information available on the Internet or through publications. The selected organizations are two Palestinian, four Israeli and two Israeli-Palestinian. The two Palestinian organizations in this dissertation are Sabeel and the religious unit of Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA). The four Israeli organizations are Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI), the Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA) and Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR). The two Israeli-Palestinian organizations are Jerusalem Peacemakers and the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. All these organizations have informative webpages which make them accessible for further study conducted from a foreign county. Since English is often used as a neutral language between Israelis and Palestinians<sup>14</sup>, most of the information has been available in English.

Little empirical research has been done on the organized religious peacework in Jerusalem. Thus, as mentioned above, the aim of this dissertation is not to give a thick description of these eight organizations, but an insight into their main mission and motivation, activities and cooperation partners.

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<sup>13</sup> The content of this conference is outlined below. See the official webpage of ICCI online: <http://www.iccj.org/> Retrieved March 12, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See 3.1.2 and the study by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty which comments on the use of language in the dialogue.

### 4.1.2 Sample of Data

This dissertation primarily rests on written documents by the organizations and interviews with leading personnel of <sup>15</sup>these organizations. In addition I have made three trips to Jerusalem to gain an understanding of the work of these organizations.

The starting point for the sampling of data was to go through all the written documents published by the organizations. Most of the organizations have published approximately between 300 and 600 pages on their official webpages. Several of the organizations have also published books. In addition I googled the internet for more information and found several video clips on the You Tube. I sampled the written data during the period from spring 2008 until autumn 2010. The material has been available in English. Since the intention behind my choice of organizations was to understand the diversity each represented I chose a large number of organizations. By doing research on such a rich material and so many organizations I felt a need to visit the organizations in Jerusalem and conduct interviews with the leaders of the organizations after reading through their documents. By firstly reading through the documents I was in a position to ask questions directly related to the documents. The interviews have also been conducted in English, since most of the leaders of the organizations in this dissertation have their origins in an English-speaking country.

The interviews were conducted between April and October 2010 and were tape-recorded. The informants were given an Interview Guide two weeks before the meeting took place, all with carefully open questions<sup>16</sup>. These three open questions were: 1) Can religion be a resource to fuel the conflict? 2) Can religion be a resource for peace? And 3) Who do you cooperate with? All the participants in the interview were asked to respond to a semi structured list of questions. I chose to do the interviews after I had finished the sampling of the written data, and made two visits to Jerusalem. Most of the interviews were conducted in Jerusalem in April 2010, but a few interviews were conducted by telephone in October 2010. The interviews were open and structured thematically around the three questions mentioned above<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Mishler, Elliot G. *Research Interviewing – Context and Narrative*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1986: 66-75.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

The formal and written data were basically sampled from the organizations' webpages<sup>18</sup>. Since the information the organizations give on their homepage basically are about the research questions they have had the desired function in my research<sup>19</sup>. But before using the Internet it has been important to notice whether the webpage was active - that is by controlling that the information was actually related to the present time and not an old webpage unused for many years. The personal contacts with the leaders of these organizations in the process have been helpful to verify the accuracy of the documents found on the Internet.

During my research period I have made three visits to Jerusalem. Conversations with religious peace activists and visits to a number of workshops have been helpful tools to understand the reality behind the documents.

Another medium which has been helpful is Facebook. Two of the organizations, Interfaith Encounter Association and Rabbis for Human Rights have their own Facebook where they frequently give information. Both Interfaith Encounter Association and Jerusalem Peacemakers have posted documentary self-made films on YouTube, which also have been helpful<sup>20</sup>.

In June 2008 I attended an international conference in Jerusalem, held by the International Council of Christian and Jews (ICCJ), where five of the eight organizations in this dissertation held courses and workshops. The Theme of the Conference was "The Contribution of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue to Peace-Building in the Middle East"<sup>21</sup>. I attended a one-week conference followed up by a second week post-seminar. The Conference included a Women's Conference- where Israeli<sup>22</sup>, Palestinian<sup>23</sup>, Australian<sup>24</sup> and American<sup>25</sup> women argued for the need of women to enter peacework. The Conference included lectures by prominent Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders like Rabbi David Rosen

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<sup>18</sup> Højsgaard, Morten Thomsen, *Religion bak skjermen: Kvalitetskriterier og kildekritikk i religionsfaglig bruk av internett* in Kraft, Siv Ellen and Natvig, Richard J. (ed) "Metode i religionsvitenskap", Oslo: Paxforlag, 2006: 145-146. (Norwegian only).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter 9 and 11.

<sup>21</sup> The five organizations presented were Interreligious Coordinating Council, Rabbis for Human Rights, Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land and Jerusalem Peacemakers, the latter only during the post-conference tour. The sixth organization not presented was Interfaith Association. The Interreligious Coordination Council was the host of the conference.

<sup>22</sup> Represented by Sarah Bernstein from ICCI.

<sup>23</sup> Represented by Nadia Harhash.

<sup>24</sup> Represented by Wilma Viswanathan from the United Church Interfaith Group in Australia.

<sup>25</sup> Represented by Rabbi Amy Eilberg, from Jay Philips Center for Jewish-Christian Relations.

and Michale Sabbah<sup>26</sup>. Rabbi Micahel Melchior gave reflections on the Alexandria Process and the decision of religious leaders in Israel and Palestine to draw up the Alexandria Declaration in 2002<sup>27</sup>. The Conference also arranged for a number of visits to institutes engaged in religious-based reconciliation work. During the Conference I visited the Interreligious Coordinating Council, attended a lecture on "The Arab Christians as a Double Minority and potential bridge between the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Muslim majorities" by Danile Rossing at JCJCR. During the post-conference study tour, visits to the Temple Mount, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Monastries and Churches in the Judean desert and visits to Christian Churches in Nazareth were included.

The lunch breaks and long bus drives also gave me the chance to get advice in more unformal settings. In January 2009 I attended a two week course in Jerusalem arranged in cooperation with the Hebrew University and two of the organizations in this dissertation<sup>28</sup>. One of the lecturers was Professor Marc Gopin, whom I was able to have unformal conversations with about religious peace activism in Jerusalem. This course was conducted during the Israeli military campaign against Gaza, which also led to a special interest in the responses of specifically the Israeli organizations to this tragedy. This course also included a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher followed up by presentations by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch on the challenges Palestinian Christians outside Jerusalem faced when they wanted to visit their Churches in Jerusalem – based on Israeli security restrictions. We were also invited to the home of the Palestinian Muslim Sufi leader, Bukhari, to learn about his peacework in the Old City and the organization Jerusalem Peacemakers<sup>29</sup>.

The third visit was in April 2010, where I in addition to making several of the interviews also visited two different dialogue forums. One was a dialogue group between Palestinians from Abu Dis and Jewish settlers from Maaleh Adumim. The meetings were held in Abu-Dis, close to the so-called security wall separating the Palestinian communities from Jerusalem<sup>30</sup>. The other was participation in a dialogue forum for Christians leaders at Tantur<sup>31</sup>. Tantur is a

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<sup>26</sup> Both are central in the work of CRIHL. See chapter 12.

<sup>27</sup> This is also mentioned in the report by Yehezkel Landau, in 1.2.1 and further described in the introduction to chapter 12.

<sup>28</sup> The course was arranged by Hamline University Law School, and held at the Hebrew University. For description of the course see online: <http://law.hamline.edu/study-abroad/study-abroad-jerusalem.html> Retrieved January 7, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>30</sup> This group is one of IEAs groups, see chapter 9.

<sup>31</sup> I was invited to join this seminar after the interview with Daniel Rossing and Hana Bendcowsky at JCJCR. The interview is partly presented in chapter 10.



Christian eucumenical center which encourages dialogue between the different Christian denominations in Jerusalem<sup>32</sup>.

The sampling of informal data was gathered and categorized in fieldnotes and became central in the interviews conducted with members of these organizations later. The understanding I had gained from the informal data was then translated into small questions used in the interviews. In this way I decided to do the interviews as late as possible in my research in order to verify that my perception of these organizations was correct. In this way the informal sampling of data could form reliable sources and documented through the recording of these interviews. During my research I was unable to get in touch with the director of Sabeel, Naim Ateek. But since Naim Ateek has made several publications and since Sabeel has a supportitative organization in Norway- whom I have been in contact with – I find the sampling of data from Sabeel to be sufficient for the purpose of this study.

The sampled data has been categorized and is presented in the following eight chapters (5-12). The data give information on each organization`s mission, motivation, activities and cooperation. A brief outline of the sampled data is also given in the introduction to each of these eight chapters.

## **4.2 Analytical Considerations**

As mentioned above, the next eight chapters will present each of the organizations. After that – in chapter 13 – the analysis of each organization will be given and then undertaken. In the following I will discuss the considerations behind my choice of analytical models. Secondly, I will present the critical approach used in the evaluation.

### **4.2.1 Analytical Considerations**

Each organization is first analyzed according to the following model:

What kind of organization is this?	Related to 2.1.1 Key words: <i>peacebuilding</i> and <i>religious peacebuilding</i>
How does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework?	Related to 2.1.2 and 2.2 Key words: <i>contested sacred space</i> , <i>sacred space</i> , <i>the religious potential in peacework</i>

<sup>32</sup> See 1.2.2.

	<i>(individual and in an interreligious setting, liberation theology)</i>
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The first analytical question aims to understand what kind of organization that has been presented, with regard to its relationship to the two concepts *peacebuilding* and *religious peacebuilding*, in addition to Paul Lederach's concept *multi-track* function, and how these organizations have contacts with all the three levels of peacebuilding<sup>33</sup>. Thus, in order to analyze the data in relation to the first analytical question the following variables will be used: 1) How can the organization be understood in relation to the concept *religious peacebuilding*? 2) Is it engaged in cultural, structural or elite peacebuilding? 3) What level does it work at? Does it have contacts with other levels of peacebuilding – so that we can find a multi-track process as recommended by Lederach? 4) Does it cooperate with other NGOs –if so at what level?<sup>34</sup> According to Scott Appleby, it is essential to view the religious traditions in light of contemporary conflict resolution theories. Thus, I will have an interest in whether they manage to develop local conflict resolution methods based on the local and religious context of their work or not.

The second analytical question – how does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework – can be further categorized according to four interrelated questions: 1) Does the organization seeks to activate the religious potential in each individual religious tradition? 2) Does the organization seek to activate the religious potential in an interreligious setting? 3)How does the organization relates itself to the fact that it is working in the Holy Land and from Jerusalem?<sup>35</sup>

Several theoreticians have been presented in the previous chapter, which explains the religious potential of each religious tradition<sup>36</sup>. Since some of the organizations are interreligious while others are unireligious, and since these organizations represent the voice of peace workers from three different religious traditions, I have found it most fruitful to apply several different theories in order to understand the organizations accurately. Gopin suggests several pro-social moral values in Judaism which could be helpful to mend conflicted relations. Mohammed Abu-Nimer makes similar suggestions in Islam in relation to Islam's call for justice and peace. David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Geraldine point out the call for peace and social action from the New Testament. Thus, the question in the analysis

<sup>33</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>34</sup> These questions are related to 2.1.1.

<sup>35</sup> For background information see 1.1.1.

<sup>36</sup> See 2.2.1.

needs to be how each organization seeks to activate these religious moral values in their peacework. Central issues which have been brought into focus in relation to each religious tradition are: the perception of man, pro-social values, the call to pursue peace, the call for social action and symbolic actions.

Smith and Geraldine also write about liberation theologies in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Do any of the organizations in this dissertation develop a liberation theology in their peacework? In the analysis I have found it fruitful to investigate whether the organizations have liberative motives by comparing their work against those aforementioned five characteristics of liberation theology<sup>37</sup>: 1) a theology of social relations and on the group identified as oppressed, 2) a focus of true worship of God in contrast to idolatry, 3) develop a theology for the specific context of conflict, 4) combine social science and liberation theology and 5) a dialectic relationship between theory and practice.

Another underlying question related to the second analytical question is how the organizations seek to activate the religious potential in peacework in an interreligious setting. In this context I will firstly apply the interfaith dialogue models developed by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty. As mentioned in the previous chapter Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty suggest that seven dominant interfaith models exist in the Middle East:

1) Intellectual/cognitive and informational model, 2) National unity model, 3) Harmony model, 4) Conflict and diversity model, 5) Social action and liberation theology model, 6) Theological dialogue and 7) Dialogue of life<sup>38</sup>. Is it possible to identify which of these models the organizations in this dissertation use? This is what the analyses must seek to understand. In addition to these seven models, Marc Gopin also gives some suggestions on the best content of interreligious dialogue to promote peace. Gopin specifically suggests shared study sessions or symbolic deeds which can improve relations. The analysis also needs to identify these characteristics in the activities of the organizations<sup>39</sup>.

The fact that these organizations work in the Holy Land and from Jerusalem also requires an interest in how they address sacred space in their work. Do the organizations seek to challenge contested sacred space through an Eliadean model – as suggested by Peter Burgess?<sup>40</sup> Do they arrange for an interreligious textual study on the sacredness of Jerusalem – as suggested by Gopin?<sup>41</sup> Or do they seek to encourage an inclusive interpretation of holy

<sup>37</sup> These five characteristic is described in more details in 2.2.1. In this chapter I only give a brief outline.

<sup>38</sup> These models are presented in more details in 2.2.2.

<sup>39</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>40</sup> See 2.1.2

<sup>41</sup> See 2.2.2.

sites as Gopin also suggests?<sup>42</sup> And finally we need to ask whether the question of Jerusalem is raised with the political authorities to promote cooperation between the religious communities and the political authorities as Peter Burgess, David Guinn and Gopin recommend?<sup>43</sup> Since no empirical research has been done on how the religious potential in peacework is played out among the different religious peacebuilders in Israel and Palestine, these questions will give new insight in the field.

#### 4.2.2 A Critical Approach

After this first analysis has been made, I will add a critical approach according to the following model:

How does it deal with the issue of asymmetry in its peacework?	Related to 3.1
Is it capable of formulating a discourse on peace?	Related to 3.2

The first critical research question – how does it deal with the issue of asymmetry in its peacework? – is related both to the asymmetry of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to asymmetry in the organizational work. As has been presented in the previous chapter, Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse suggest two approaches to asymmetrical conflicts: 1) solidarity with the underdog and 2) empowering the underdog. Gopin underlines how although solidarity should be given specifically to the Palestinians, the suffering of the Israelis must not be ignored. Thus, Gopin warns against ignoring the situation of the majority (Israel), because it might eventually reproduce the conflict or ignore the suffering of the top dog<sup>44</sup>.

Concerning asymmetry in the organizational peacework, several recommendations have been presented in the previous chapter. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty gave eight recommendations, while Dajani and Baskin also made recommendations concerning finding a neutral language<sup>45</sup>. Since the present dissertation is based on interviews and organizational documents, and not field work, I would like to focus on those recommendations which can be

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> 2.2.2.

<sup>44</sup> See 3.1.1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

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undertaken in this dissertation<sup>46</sup>. The issue of power will in this dissertation be limited to an interest in the staff, localization, and the encounter group's gender, age and profession.

The second critical research question: - Is it capable of formulating a discourse on peace? –is related to several issues. Firstly, the question is related to how the peace workers understand which institutions and social discourses which legitimate the conflict and thus seek to deconstruct these institutions and discourses. Secondly, the peacework should ideally be a result of a common understanding of what is needed among the two parties in the conflict. Thirdly, the relationship between understanding the *religious other* or understanding the *suffering other* needs to be investigated critically- not necessarily only in relation to interreligious dialogue versus liberation theology but also in general<sup>47</sup>. Finally, a discourse on peace must naturally be heard in order to challenge dominant exclusive discourses<sup>48</sup>. Thus, I need to ask whether they are capable of reaching the public sphere with their voice for peace. In the context of this dissertation the investigation only refers to the information given by the organizations themselves concerning their capacity to enter public space. This means that sampling of data has not been conducted from all major public forums among Israelis and Palestinians. For this reason, the answer to the research question in this study is somewhat limited<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> The limits of this research will be discussed further in chapter 15.

<sup>47</sup> See 3.2.2.

<sup>48</sup> Dominant exclusive discourses in Israel and Palestine are partly presented in 1.1.2.

<sup>49</sup> The limits of this research will be discussed in chapter 15 with additional recommendations for further study on this topic.



## **Part II Presentation of the Research Material**

## 5 Rabbis for Human Rights

*I believe with all my heart, that when the Jewish people returned to Israel ... this was not only an act of human action, but also the results of God's plan. And I really believe that God's plan is not that we should be at war with each other, but that we should find a way to live in peace with each other. I think that God choose Israelis and Palestinians to show the world that two people can figure out a way to short this out and live in peace.*

*Extract from interview with Rabbi Levi Weiman- Kelman, Jerusalem April 27, 2010.*

As mentioned earlier, RHR was established in 1988 in the wake of the Palestinian intifada<sup>1</sup>. RHR presents itself, as an organization which seeks to give "voice to the Zionist ideal and the Jewish religious tradition"<sup>2</sup>. Its human rights activities are focused on the areas within the state of Israel, and the areas "for which Israel has taken responsibility"<sup>3</sup> – which means the occupied territories – specifically East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Since one of the main objectives of RHR is to "introduce into Israel's public discourse an authentic and humanistic understanding of the Jewish tradition and sources"<sup>4</sup>, they have an impressive webpage presenting their work, opinions and official publications<sup>5</sup>. RHR has also published several videos at You Tube<sup>6</sup>. The following information is based on these publications, in addition to an interview made with one of the staff of RHR, Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman, in Jerusalem, April 27, 2010.

RHR is a rather small organization with a staff of eight persons, 16 board members and about 100 member rabbis<sup>7</sup>. RHR is mainly supported by NGOs or foundations in the USA, European countries and Israel, in addition to individual donors<sup>8</sup>. To some degree its sister

<sup>1</sup> See 1.2.2.

<sup>2</sup> RHR, "About RHR", online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=about&language=en> Retrieved February 7, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> RHR's webpage, online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/index.php?language=en> Retrieved February 2, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> See a list of videos published by RHR at You Tube, online: [http://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Rabbis+for+Human+Rights&aq=f](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Rabbis+for+Human+Rights&aq=f) Retrieved February 2, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> A list of board members and staff is given by RHR, online: <http://org.il/eng/index.php/about/> Retrieved December 7, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> A list of donors is given by RHR, online: <http://rhr.org.il/eng/index.php/links/> Retrieved December 8, 2010.



organization RHR- North America is running its main campaign in collecting funding<sup>9</sup>. RHR consists of about 100 member rabbis from Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism. But Levi Weiman-Kelman explains that only 25 of the member rabbis are active today. In addition RHR has field workers in daily contact with Palestinians in the occupied territories. In the following presentation I will first explain the mission and motivation behind the work of RHR, before I in the second part of this section give an insight into the activities and their cooperating partners.

## 5.1 Mission and Motivation

RHR explains the main mission of their establishment in the following way

Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) was established with the purpose of giving voice to the Zionist ideal and the Jewish religious tradition of human rights. Since its inception in 1988, RHR has championed the cause of the poor in Israel, supported the rights of Israel's minorities and Palestinians, worked to stop the abuse of foreign workers, endeavored to guarantee the upkeep of Israel's public health care system, promoted the equal status of women, helped Ethiopian Jews, battled trafficking in women, and more<sup>10</sup>.

According to this extract one of the main missions of RHR is to connect what they call "the Zionist ideal" and the "Jewish religious tradition of human rights". In order to understand the relationship between these two, I would like to present the main arguments in an article published by RHR called *RHR, Zionism, Responsibility and Liberty* by Yehoyada Amir.

Amir puts forward three issues which he thinks are relevant for contemporary rabbis: 1) the ramification of Zionism to change the foundation of existence of the Jewish people, 2) how a Jewish state can serve all its citizens and 3) the results of the occupation and oppression of millions of Palestinians. The first issue is to discuss the state as an institution, and how nations came into being in the biblical narratives: "After the flood, the families divided into nations and the narrative gradually acquires a political character. The story of Abraham and his family also evolves from a family saga into the saga of "the people of the children of Israel"<sup>11</sup>. From this, Amir explains how the biblical narratives focus on the covenant between God and a nation: "It is the nation that forms the covenant with God; it is the nation that is called on to observe the Divine command; it is the nation that, in most cases, sins and is

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<sup>9</sup> Rabbis for Human Rights North America, "Israel & the Occupied Territories", online: <http://www.rhr-na.org/issuescampaigns/israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territories.html> Retrieved December 8, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> RHR, "About Us", online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=about&language=en> Retrieved January 4, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

punished for its sins; it is the nation that will be redeemed when Zion's sins end"<sup>12</sup>. Based on this explanation of the biblical narratives, Amir suggests how this picture of the Bible could give new perspective of contemporary "Jewish political thought and in a cultural and religious evaluation of the institution of the state"<sup>13</sup>. Secondly, Amir asks how a Jewish state can serve all its citizens. The first argument Amir puts forward is the Judaic understanding that Man was created in the image of God, and therefore is granted both value and responsibility. The second argument is that Judaism support both universal values and the importance of different groups –such as "familial and national communion". On the basis of these two arguments, Amir suggests that the same balance should be incorporated in the public domain. In this way, Amir argues that "there need not necessarily be any contradiction between bringing a blessing on "all the families of the land" and granting sacred value to the national existence of one family within this mosaic"<sup>14</sup>. Amir's argumentation is that both exclusive universal outlooks and exclusive nationalistic particularism should be avoided.

Our task should be to develop a political, social, and cultural philosophy that will be based on the bible and post-Biblical Jewish literature, as well as on the best of humanistic thought from around the world. The guiding criterion in this process should be the quest for the proper balance between the two extremes. We must combine pan-human responsibility and an awareness of our obligation toward all humans, without distinction of religion, race, and sex, with an ability to develop familial and national partnership and responsibility anchored in the cultural collectivity this entails<sup>15</sup>.

In this way Amir justifies the call of RHR to engage politically for improving human rights within both the state of Israel and the occupied territories, based on its belief in the religious significance of the state of Israel. In answering the third questions Amir argues that rabbis should respond to human rights abuse and specifically the occupation. Amir writes:

Anyone who regards reality with open eyes will easily recognize that the damage this situation causes both sides is getting worse with each passing decade. The continuation of the occupation threatens to drive us further down the slope of degeneration, violence, and disregard for human rights; disregard for God's image in every human and in ourselves. A specific struggle against some of the most evident injustices of the occupation is the sacred duty of anyone who cherishes Israel's future<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> RHR, Zionism, Responsibility, and Liberty – The Jewish State, the State of All Its Citizens, and Human Rights", by Yehoyada Amir, online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=1&language=en> Retrieved February 7, 2011.

According to Amir, the mistreatment of the Palestinians is rooted in an exclusive conception of Jewish and Zionist identity: “The top of the list of the injustices related to Israel’s Jewish and Zionist identity is the occupation and all its entails”. Amir sees this as a negative development which followed the Six Day War “when the “territories” were seen as a card to be used in securing peace, to an approach that sanctifies settlement and the continued control of this land”. Today, Amir argues that this occupation “has become a central component in Israel’s moral and cultural identity and a key bone of contention in debates about the meaning of its Jewishness and its attitude toward the Jewish cultural and religious heritage”. According to Amir, the occupation has made Israel guilty of adopting:

... clearly colonialist patterns of action and thought, whether voluntarily or on the basis of a religious ideology of settlement or in response to the Palestinian struggle against it. It has adopted a discriminatory and dangerous policy of separation in many areas of life, creating systems of government and law that openly and declaredly seek to serve one population at the expense of another, manifested in the complete inequality of allocation of land, water, infrastructures, and economy<sup>17</sup>.

According to Amir, to “struggle against some of the most evident injustices of the occupation” should be “the sacred duty of anyone who cherishes Israel’s future”. Amir calls this struggle a part of the “Sanctification of God’s Name”:

The rabbinical struggle to protect human rights should indeed be natural and obvious – a fundamental component in the obligation to do what is good and right. Twenty years after Rabbis for Human Rights began its work, recognition of this fact has spread among growing circles. This fact in itself, the product of a political effort and a struggle on the ground and, no less importantly, the product of the long-term educational efforts, constitutes a catalyst for the work that will be undertaken in the years to come<sup>18</sup>.

In this way Amir connects the mission of RHR to its main motivation – the religious faith. In RHR’s document “Principles of Faith”<sup>19</sup>, eight principles are put forward: 1) The issue of justice is based on the Torah and Israel’s Declaration of Independence, 2) the relationship between God and human beings is based on the belief that since Man was created in the image of God, he/she is to function as God’s partner in perfecting the world<sup>20</sup>, 3) Abraham is a source of blessing to all people – which requires that the descendants of Abraham enact

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> RHR, “Principle of faith”, online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=about&id=8&language=en> Retrieved February 7, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> In Hebrew this refers to *tikkun haolam*, which originally is an expression from Mishnaic literature, and further systematized in the Kabala. It means repairing or perfecting the world. In contemporary Jewish learning the term *tikkun haolam* is often used to describe enactment in global issues such as environment, poverty and the like. See for example Sacks, Jonathan, “Tikkun haolam”, online: [http://www.ou.org/public/Publib/tikkun.htm#\\_ftnref26](http://www.ou.org/public/Publib/tikkun.htm#_ftnref26) Retrieved February 10, 2011.

justice and compassion and act as an example to the world, as written in Deut. 4,8: What great nation has laws and rules as just as all this Torah that I set before you this day?” 4) there is a sanctity of all human Life, 5) *Kiddush Hashem*- sanctification of God’s name should be pursued by showing respect “for human worth and the dignity of all creation”. 6) the Torah obligates to love one’s fellow and stranger<sup>21</sup>, 7) to be holy is to lead a moral life in relationship to everyone and 8) peace is the core message of both Israel’s Declaration of Independence and the Judaic scripture<sup>22</sup>. After presenting these eight principles of faith, RHR concludes:

Based on these principles of faith, we pray and work for peace as envisioned by the prophets of Israel, when “Nations shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa 2:4) and when “Justice will well up high as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24)<sup>23</sup>.

In the following excerpt from the interview with Kelman, he explains the relationship between Judaism, human rights and the work of RHR:

... the essential Jewish value for me and I think others at Rabbis for Human Rights, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, is that every person is created in God’s image. That message I think is one that can lead to a resolution of the political conflict ... then you have responsibilities towards them (the Palestinians), and you have to relate to them with dignity and respect ... That I think is for most of us the central Jewish value and the Torah plays that out in many, many ways<sup>24</sup>.

There are many examples from the writings of RHR which exemplify how Jewish values are put forward to protest human rights violation. These examples are easily conveyed through RHR’s comments on the weekly Torah portions, and the High Holydays. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to present them all, but the following three comments on two Torah portions and one holiday – *Rosh Hashanah* – can serve as good illustrations. In the Torah portion *parashat metzora* in 2008, Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom commented on the texts from Lev 14-15 during a difficult situation for the Palestinians in Gaza after the Israeli military had closed the gates into Gaza, leaving them without food and medicine:

<sup>21</sup> With a special emphasize on Lev 19:33-34. RHR interprets this text in relation to the relationship between Israeli Jews and Palestinians or Israeli Arabs in the following statements: “Our historical experience of exile and redemption, as well as our ethical consciousness, must sensitize us to the suffering of others and compel us to defend the rights of all who dwell among us”. Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> RHR, “Principles of faith”, online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=about&id=8&language=en> Retrieved February 7, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Rabbi Kelman.

Does Jewish tradition have anything to say about starvation as a tactic against enemies? I haven't looked at the halakhic literature, but in Proverbs 25:21-22 we find: *If your enemy is starving, feed him bread, if he is thirsty, give him water. You are thereby heaping hot coals on his head, and God will repay you.* What an incredible leap of faith this verse requires: instead of letting us take advantage of his weakness, we strengthen him!<sup>25</sup>

In this way RHR uses examples from social values in the Judaic scriptures to criticize Israeli policy. In another *parashat hashavua*, which deals with the conflict between King David's two sons who both like to see themselves as Kings, Rabbi Tzvi Weinberg interprets the text as telling us that conflicts are natural among people, and for that reason the greatest task of humanity is to resolve conflicts:

The challenge we face as individuals and as nations is to create conditions that enable both individuals and nations to live together, to settle their disagreements, to prevent clashes, and ultimately, to create peace... In the Ethics of the Fathers we read, "Hillel stated 'Be among the students of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace'<sup>26</sup>.

Thus, the biblical narrative of David's two sons becomes an example for RHR of how both individuals and nations should seek to pursue peace. In a speech held during the New Year in the Jewish calendar, *Rosh Hashanah*, the vision of RHR was clearly stated to a group of students:

After the High Holidays everything will be renewed, and the weekdays will be back and renewed, the earth, the rain and the fire... we all will be renewed. Again we start a journey ... A journey of shaping the young generation in the State of Israel, a journey which never ends... a journey to the Israeli society's fields of shadows in which human rights are violated, a journey to the fields of light where we can see the praiseworthy activities of many of the State's citizens for "Tikun Olam". A journey in the path of the vision of the prophets and the founders of the State (...) Rabbis from all streams will open a skylight to a Jewish-Zionist and humanitarian world for these young people<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, RHR's vision is of a time when the state of Israel is influenced by the humanitarian values of Judaism. During *Rosh Hashanah*, RHR wrote a prayer of forgiveness for the sins

<sup>25</sup>RHR, "Parashat Metzora", by Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom, online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat\\_hashavua&shana\\_id=2&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat_hashavua&shana_id=2&language=en) Retrieved December 3, 2009. Milgrom relates his comments specifically to the haftarah from II Kings 7:3-20.

<sup>26</sup> RHR, "Peace is great because all blessings are contained in it", online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat\\_hashavua&parasha\\_id=103&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat_hashavua&parasha_id=103&language=en) Retrieved December 3, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> RHR, "Human Rights Education", online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human\\_rights\\_education&id=5&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human_rights_education&id=5&language=en) Retrieved December 3, 2009. The phrase "Tikun Olam" is a popular Jewish expression of making this world a better place by encouraging social action. The phrase originates in the Kabbalah. See My Jewish Learning online: [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring\\_For\\_Others/Tikkun\\_Olam\\_Repairing\\_the\\_World\\_.s.html](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring_For_Others/Tikkun_Olam_Repairing_the_World_.s.html) Retrieved December 3, 2009.

they believe the Israeli government has committed against the Palestinians, and which RHR believes Israel is guilty of collectively. The prayer is meant to invite Jews to rethink the arguments and justifications based on security, which led to the oppression of the Palestinian people<sup>28</sup>.

Finally, I should like to present some of the challenges RHR mentions in relation to how Judaism is interpreted by some. The first challenge is related to the issue of minority and majority for the Israeli Jews. Kelman explains how the fact that Israeli Jews now are a majority requires a rethinking of the Jewish texts and how to relate to *the other*. The sacred texts were written by Jewish scholars who lived as a minority in a dominant and often hostile Christian or Muslim environment. Similar views were also mentioned in Rabbi Michael Marmor's article<sup>29</sup>, where he argues that the historical change that happened when the Jewish people created a state and became powerful themselves has also created a need to shape a new approach to Judaism and to the question of how to base political power<sup>30</sup>.

The second challenge for RHR is related to the contemporary dominant religious Zionism. In the interview Rabbi Weiman-Kelman explains how the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is a national conflict. Kelman thinks that if one views the conflict as a religious conflict, it will be about absolute truths, and absolute beliefs, and difficult to compromise. On the other hand, Kelman sees a clear change in the role the religious voices, on both sides of the conflict, have gained in recent decades. Kelman sees this as a relatively new phenomenon, since both the Palestinian nationalism and the Zionist movement were secular in their origins. Kelman says this process started as early as in the 1967 war, where religious voices grew more dominant and religious Zionism came to dominate the discussions in Israel. Kelman thinks both settlers and the ultra-orthodox have added their religious voices to the conflict. Kelman also sees a parallel trend within the Palestinian national movement, as going from being a national secular movement to becoming more and more dominated by religious Islamic voices. Kelman explains how both secular and religious dimensions were there from the start, but he thinks religion has increasingly been used as a resource to feed the conflict during the past forty years. On the other hand, Kelman expresses his belief in Zionism and the desire of RHR to express another religious Zionist voice than the dominant voice among religious Zionists today:

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<sup>28</sup> RHR, "RHR Vidui 5770" online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=14&language=en> Retrieved December 3, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> This is described in the paragraph above.

<sup>30</sup> RHR, "Why Rabbis for Human Rights", by Rabbi Michael Marmor, Hebrew Union College, Online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=3&language=en> Retrieved December 7, 2009.

I am a Zionist, so that is still a small voice within the religious Zionist camp that emphasizes the voices of the prophets, the prophetic, who talk about Zion being based on justice ... it's our religious duty to make sure that the Jewish state is a moral state, a just state as much as possible<sup>31</sup>.

Thus, RHR seeks to challenge the dominant religious Zionist voice in Israeli society.

In one article called *Why Rabbis for Human Rights*, Rabbi Michael Marmor partly blames the Israeli governments for the development of a negative religious voice within the conflict, because of its preference for Orthodox Judaism. They believe this limits Israel's changes of developing cohesion and partnership with the Palestinians:

It has granted religion – in its increasingly narrow and degenerated Orthodox form – a monopoly over key areas of life and has encouraged aggressive religious interference in politics... Unless a cultural and legal order is created that ensures cultural pluralism and empowers diverse communities, the wound will not be healed and it will not be possible to develop an independent and creative Jewish society. It will certainly not be possible to find a proper balance between internal Jewish cohesion and partnership with the other religious, national, and cultural communities, and particularly with the Palestinian minority in Israel<sup>32</sup>.

A third challenge is related to how one views the religious other. During *Yom Kippur* 2009, the director of RHR, Rabbi Arik Ascherman explained what he saw as the most severe failure towards Palestinians as follows:

I have been wont to say for the last year or so that one of the greatest divides in the Jewish world today is between those who interpret the Jewish tradition regarding how to treat our fellow human beings as relating only to Jews (or maybe not all Jews—just those of their insular community), and those of us who understand our tradition universally<sup>33</sup>.

Thus, according to RHR the understanding of who one's fellow man is, is essential for whether one will engage in human rights activities to protect *the other*, or whether one will only protect the human rights of one's own group.

But the critique against how Judaism is interpreted does not only direct itself towards one's understanding of the *fellow man* but also towards how one perceives the Israeli state as a Jewish state, and how that should affect the role one thinks Judaism should play. In the following excerpt Marmor addresses similar concerns as Kelman:

There are those who negate Judaism absolutely, claiming that historically, Judaism served the Jewish people in the Diaspora, and is now superfluous. There are those who negate the new situation, whether from anti-Zionist self-righteousness, or ultra-Orthodox insularity. And there

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> RHR, "Yom Kippur Thoughts", by Rabbi Arik Ascherman, online:

<http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=15&language=en> Retrieved December 3, 2009.

are those who view the State of Israel as the realization of an ancient messianic vision. For myself, all three of these trends terrify me. We did not come here to abandon our culture, the very stuff of our essence. At the same time, we cannot continue living our lives as if the twentieth century did not occur, as if the Jews live outside of the dimension of time and reality. And the third approach, the messianic, is also dangerous, because alongside the potential that lays within for sanctity and blessing, at the door couches the danger of distortion and desecration<sup>34</sup>.

In this way Marmur positions RHR as a voice needed to address three different views on the state and its relationship with Judaism, which RHR sees as negative. The first group are those who negate Judaism, the second group are those who are anti-Zionist (including ultra-Orthodox) and the third group are those who view the state of Israel as a messianic realization – referring to the dominant religious Zionists expression often associated with the Jewish settlers<sup>35</sup>. Although RHR does not want a theocratic state<sup>36</sup>, it nevertheless seeks to incorporate the social values of Judaism as part of the practical politics of Israel.

## **5.2 Activities and cooperation**

RHR is engaged in several activities, but in the following I will present two of them which are most central in our context : 1) Human Rights in the Occupied Territories and 2) Human Rights education. The work in the occupied territories includes preventing settlers from not allowing Palestinians access to their fields, or preventing the demolition of Palestinian homes by Israeli authorities. RHR also rebuilds houses demolished or plants olives trees destroyed by settlers . RHR has been specifically active in two events which received a lot of attention in the Israeli press: the situation for Palestinians in Sheikh Jarakh and Silwan. Sheik Jarakh is located near the tomb of Simon the Just, and thus a sacred tomb to Jewish settlers. On the other side, twenty-eight Palestinian refugees claim ownership to this area as they were settled there by Jordanian authorities and UNWRA in 1956. In July 2008 the Israeli High Court decided in favor of the Israeli Jewish claim to the area . This decision led to the eviction of two Palestinian families from their house in Sheikh Jarakh. Since then several members of RHR have tried to protest against the Israeli government`s treatment of the families, and several rabbis have been arrested . In parashat *vayetze*, Rabbi Arik Ascherman comments on the wrongdoings done towards the family Um-Kameli in Sheikh Jarakh:

<sup>34</sup> RHR, “Why Rabbis for Human Rights”, by Rabbi Michael Marmu, Hebrew Union College, online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=3&language=en> Retrieved December 7, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> See previous chapter on Gush Emunim established in 1975 at 1.2.2.

<sup>36</sup> RHR, Zionism, Responsibility, and Liberty – The Jewish State, the State of All Its Citizens, and Human Rights”, by Yehoyada Amir, online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=1&language=en> Retrieved February 7, 2011.



When we each will give an accounting when we leave this world for the Olam HaEmet, the prosecuting or defending attorney, depending on our deeds, will be Um-Kamel. She will ask, what did you do when I was turned out of my home and was living in a tent at the outset of a Jerusalem winter?<sup>37</sup>

Thus, it becomes clear that RHR believes that humans are responsible for both their actions and their ignorance of human rights violation. The other area which RHR has been specifically engaged in is Silwan, a neighborhood adjacent to the Old City of Jerusalem with roughly 45000 inhabitants. According to the Palestinians the village was constructed by Caliph Omar. Part of Silwan was said to have been given as a waqf by Caliph Othman to the poor people of the village. In 1882 a group of Jews from Yemen arrived and settled in the village. The Yemenite Jews stayed there until the Arab revolt in 1936-39, when Palestinians moved in to the empty houses. After the Arab-Israeli War, Silwan was annexed by Jordan, and remained under Jordanian control until 1967 when Israel captured the Old City. Since Israel gained control some Jewish organizations have sought to re-establish a Jewish presence in Silwan. This process has led to increased building activities and archeological excavations in the area called Ir David, the City of David. According to RHR the Jewish Organization Elad is trying to Judaize East Jerusalem<sup>38</sup>, specifically Silwan<sup>39</sup>. In a letter to the Mayor of Jerusalem, Barkat, RHR pleaded for the inclusion of the Palestinian inhabitants of Jerusalem, specifically in Silwan<sup>40</sup>. Thus, RHR urged the Mayor to prevent the building, by appealing to the religious significance of Jerusalem:

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<sup>37</sup> RHR, "Parashat Hashavua, Vayetze", by Miri Gold, online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat\\_hashavua&parasha\\_id=101&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat_hashavua&parasha_id=101&language=en) Retrieved July 14, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Haaretz, "Elad seeks approval for new construction project in City of David", online: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1102020.html> Retrieved November 12, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> RHR, "Annual Activity Rapport 2008-2009:10, online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/pdf/RHR09israelprint.pdf> Retrieved November 24, 2009. Elad is frequently mentioned in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz as an association that receives a great amount of funding abroad for acquiring Palestinian properties in East Jerusalem and for managing archeological excavations in Silwan. See Haaretz, "Group 'Judaizing' East Jerusalem accused of withholding donor information" 21 November 2007, online: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/926546.html> Retrieved November 30, 2009. Bernard Wasserstein also writes about the difficult situation in Silwan, see Wasserstein: 2008:186, 258, 288.

<sup>40</sup> RHR was also active in protesting against the so-called Museum of Tolerance. For more information on the Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem see the Museum's webpage online: <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=5505225> Retrieved August 30, 2010. Haaretz writes how Jews and Muslim unite against the building, online: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1096949.html> and the Palestinian Monitor protests, Retrieved August 30, 2009.

Issues seem enormous in Jerusalem because of the weight of history, Jerusalem's religious significance, and the fact that the eyes of the world are upon her, but therefore relatively small actions have enormous symbolic value and can translate into meaningful change<sup>41</sup>.

RHR has also engaged itself in demonstrations against the Separation Barrier. While the Wall was erected in 2002 after the Second Intifada to prevent terrorists, RHR protested against the Wall together with Palestinians<sup>42</sup>. RHR used the Israeli national Jerusalem Day in 2009 to demonstrate against discrimination in the city. The demonstration was held in cooperation with The Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ICHAD) and local Palestinian peace activists<sup>43</sup>.

RHR has also established Human Rights Education, where the social and ethical values of Judaism are taught in the framework of Human Rights activities. The educational courses are offered to both Israeli and Arab schools, Universities and different groups. In 2008 about 1000 students were involved in RHR educational programs<sup>44</sup>. RHR initiates educational projects in a variety of frameworks. It conducts seminars in different schools: the secular and religious public schools, the Arab school system and teacher seminaries. RHR holds lectures for university students and soldiers, and leads educational tours for the general public. The organization also works regularly with pre-army academies throughout the country, and conducts Batey Midrash for university students, in which current issues of human rights and social justice are taught from both modern and traditional Jewish perspectives. In 2009 the number of students comprised about 1,000 people<sup>45</sup>. RHR's educational department has created a Talmudic-style commentary on Israel's Declaration of Independence, which emphasizes themes that address the nature of the Jewish State<sup>46</sup>. In the interview with Kelman he explains about this commentary:

... the Israeli Army and the police often bring people from Rabbis for Human Rights, to teach the texts that we have been emphasizing... in addition to using the traditional Jewish texts, we also use the Israeli Declaration of Independent, which has only been since 1948, but also talks

<sup>41</sup> RHR, "Human rights in the occupied territories", online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human\\_rights\\_in\\_the\\_occupied\\_territories&id=7&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human_rights_in_the_occupied_territories&id=7&language=en) Retrieved July 14, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> RHR, "Human rights in the occupied territories", online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human\\_rights\\_in\\_the\\_occupied\\_territories&id=6&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human_rights_in_the_occupied_territories&id=6&language=en) Retrieved November 24, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> RHR, "Events", online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=act&category\\_id=0&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=act&category_id=0&language=en) Retrieved July 14, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> RHR "Human Rights Education", online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human\\_rights\\_education&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human_rights_education&language=en) Retrieved October 15, 2009. The number of students was also verified by Rabbi Kelman during the interview.

<sup>45</sup> "Human Rights Education", online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human\\_rights\\_education&id=4&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human_rights_education&id=4&language=en) Retrieved July 19, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

about the reliance on the words of the prophets, ... as essential values to the Jewish state, so we use the Declaration of Independent as a kind of a modern Jewish text, that we also teach.

In the educational programs the students are invited to discuss the relationship between Jewish values and the right to education, restricted freedom of expression, loyalty to the state, disgraceful treatment of foreign workers, the treatment of the unemployed and attacks of Palestinians. The Israeli Ministry of Education has supported the development of RHR educational programs<sup>47</sup>.

While the military campaign against Gaza was going on, Rabbi Kelman wrote “A Jew`s Prayer for the children of Gaza” January 9 2009, which was published in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. The following is an excerpt from that prayer:

If there has ever been a time for prayer, this is that time. If there has ever been a place forsaken, Gaza is that place. Lord who is the creator of all children, hear our prayer this accursed day. ... Be that Lord, the God of our kinsman Ishmael, who heard his cry and sent His angel to comfort his mother Hagar. Be that Lord, who was with Ishmael that day, and all the days after. Be that God, the All-Merciful, who opened Hagar's eyes that day, and showed her the well of water, that she could give the boy Ishmael to drink, and save his life. Allah, whose name we call Elohim, who gives life, who knows the value and the fragility of every life, send these children your angels<sup>48</sup>.

This prayer refers to sacred figures common to both Islam and Judaism, and the story of Ishmael and Hagar common to their sacred scriptures. After the so-called Operation Cast Lead RHR published a small movie of the destruction and suffering it had cost the Palestinians in Gaza, entitled with the question: “Haim Zeh Hanachno?” (Is this Us?). RHR demanded an investigation into the Gaza war event<sup>49</sup>. RHR also published a letter on their webpage, where they strongly urge Israelis to support an independent investigation into the war in Gaza, based on the ethical values of Judaism:

Do we aspire to justifying cruelty or embodying the teaching “this people is known by three signs: They are merciful, God-fearing and act with loving-kindness” (Yebamot). May we reduce the threat to our soldiers by violating the teaching allowing us to kill those coming to kill us but forbidding us to kill innocents even to save ourselves (Sanhedrin)? Are we content saying, “Our hands did not shed this blood” (Deut. 21:8), or do we accept responsibility if we haven't done enough to prevent bloodshed (Sotah)?<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> RHR, “Human Rights Education”, online:

[http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human\\_rights\\_education&id=2&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=human_rights_education&id=2&language=en) Retrieved July 19, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Haaretz, online: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/a-jew-s-prayer-for-the-children-of-gaza-1.267635> Retrieved January 19, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> See the film at You Tube, online:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11BzqU8yvOc&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11BzqU8yvOc&feature=player_embedded) Retrieved December 2, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> RHR, “Let`s face the allegations” by Rabbi Arik Ascherman, online:

<http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=6&language=en> Retrieved December 3, 2009.

During the war in Gaza RHR also participated in a joint interfaith prayer for a “just, honorable and peaceful future<sup>51</sup>”, and the participants visited the injured from Gaza and Israel in the Shiba hospital in Tel-Hashomer. This visit was arranged together with members from Jerusalem Peacemakers<sup>52</sup>.

In the interview Kelman explains how RHR as a small organization sees cooperation as essential for the work to have an impact. RHR cooperates with both Israeli and Palestinian secular organizations working for Human Rights in the territories, like B’tselem<sup>53</sup>, The Association of Civil Rights in Israel<sup>54</sup>, Peace Now and local Palestinian peace activists<sup>55</sup>. They also cooperate with religious peace organizations, such as Jerusalem Peacemakers<sup>56</sup>, Interreligious Coordinating Council<sup>57</sup> and Yakar Center for Social Concern<sup>58</sup>. A member from RHR has also published an article on the official webpage of PASSIA<sup>59</sup>. RHR is a member of the Palestinian Israeli Peace NGOs Forum, along with 105 other organizations, which was established at a seminar in Helsinki 1999, where 29 Palestinian and Israeli were invited to evaluate the Palestinian –Israeli Civil Society<sup>60</sup>. On the other hand, Kelman explained in the interview that they had not participated or heard about any activities of the Palestinian Israeli Peace NGOs Forum in recent years<sup>61</sup>. In addition RHR has fieldworkers who have daily contact with the Palestinian communities under occupation. In the interview Kelman explained how they had paid professional fieldworkers who always knew the development of events for the Palestinians on the West Bank. According to Kelman, RHR has no current dialogue with Jewish settlers, but had a good dialogue with Palestinians and in some way he thinks it’s easier to engage in dialogue with the Palestinians.

<sup>51</sup> RHR, “Interfaith prayer for peace”, online:

[http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=generating\\_hope&id=2&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=generating_hope&id=2&language=en) Retrieved December 3, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> See Reports from Israeli human rights group, online: <http://gazaeng.blogspot.com/2009/01/btselem-calls-on-both-sides-to-stop.html> where Rabbis for Human Rights cooperates together with several other organizations. Retrieved December 3, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> See above.

<sup>55</sup> See above.

<sup>56</sup> Rabbis for Human Rights held an interfaith prayer together with members of Jerusalem Peacemakers during the war in Gaza 2009, online: [http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=generating\\_hope&id=2&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=generating_hope&id=2&language=en) Retrieved October 12, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Rabbi Levi Weiman Kelman from RHR is a member of the executive committee of ICCI. See online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54) Retrieved August 30, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Rabbis for Human Rights held a Parashat in memory of Mickey Rosen, the founder of Yakar Center, where his work is held of high value, online:

[http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat\\_hashavua&parasha\\_id=100&language=en](http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=parashat_hashavua&parasha_id=100&language=en) Retrieved October 12, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> See chapter 8.1.2.

<sup>60</sup> Subcontracting peace: the challenges of the NGO peacebuilding / edited by Oliver P. Richmond, Henry F. Carey . See also online: <http://www.peacengo.org/> Retrieved November 29, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Rabbi Weiman-Kelman.

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Although RHR is not specifically engaged in dialogue, they participated in an interfaith meeting in Turkey in November 2009 to discuss how each faith group relates to violence, and the participants discussed the possibilities of Palestinian priests and imams to coming to speak in Israeli synagogues<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> RHR, "Excerpts from, Director's Report for Board Meeting, Rabbi Arik Ascherman 17/09/09", online: <http://www.rhr.org.il/page.php?name=article&id=13&language=en> Retrieved December 3, 2009.

## 6 Sabeel

*It is my strong conviction that in response to the conflict, the Church in Israel-Palestine is called to a two-dimensional ministry, a prophetic and a peacemaking one. These roles constitute a dual imperative for the Church, and should be the focus of its strategy today. The prophetic imperative directs that the Church should dare to analyze and interpret events theologically... With the peacemaking imperative, the Church recognizes that it is called by God to be a catalyst of peace and reconciliation.*

*Extract from "Justice and Only Justice", by Naim Ateek<sup>1</sup>*

In Sabeel's presentation on their webpage, they explain their choice of the Arabic name *Sabeel* because it means 'the way', 'channel' or 'spring' of "life-given water"<sup>2</sup>. The Director of Sabeel Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek explains in his book *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation* how Sabeel was established in 1990 as a reaction to the first Palestinian intifada, but also as a result of the developments in Israeli politics after 1967:

These two events – the 1967 war and the first *intifada* – set the stage for what was to come. The former showed the expansionist policies of the Israeli government on the one hand, and the futility of war and violence to redress injustice on other. The latter pointed toward the way of nonviolence as the only way to resist the occupation, and clearly showed that the Palestinian people, both Muslim and Christian, were capable of such undertaking<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, Ateek also describes how the formation of two Palestinian religious voices became a starting point for his work and the formation of Sabeel. During the first intifada Ateek explains how *Hamas* emerged as the Movement of Islamic Resistance and *Hamam* as the Movement for Christian Resistance, both to invoke armed struggle in the name of their faith. According to Ateek, the latter organization *Hamam* was disorganized, partly influenced by himself<sup>4</sup>. But these incidents moved Ateek to seek for a way of nonviolent resistance against the occupation. In 1989 Ateek published his first book *Justice and Only Justice* in

<sup>1</sup> This book became the starting point for the formation of Sabeel. See Ateek, Naim: *Justice and only Justice*: Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books: 1989: 151-152.

<sup>2</sup> History of Sabeel. Online. <http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=2> Retrieved May 11, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Ateek, Naim Stifan: *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*: Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books: 2008:4-7.

<sup>4</sup> Ateek:2008:7-8.

which he presented the beginning of a Palestinian Theology of Liberation<sup>5</sup>. The year after, the first Conference on a Palestinian Liberation theology was held at Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem with both local and international theologians and Sabeel was founded in 1990<sup>6</sup>. Sabeel became an ecumenical grassroots movement located in Jerusalem. The center serves also Bethlehem, Ramallah and the surrounding areas. They also have a branch office in Nazareth<sup>7</sup>.

The following information is based on the two above mentioned books by Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice* and *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*. The first - written in 1989 - became the starting point for Sabeel, the latter written twenty years later builds on this first book and presents a fully developed Palestinian Liberation Theology. In addition Sabeel has an official webpage, with information on their activities and an online magazine Cornerstone, which provides accurate information about Sabeel. It should also be mentioned that Sabeel was an active partner in developing the well-known Kairos Palestine Document (2009), which also is a source of information.

## **6.1 Mission and Motivation**

According to Ateek, Sabeel's work focuses on three agendas: First, ecumenical relations between all Christians<sup>8</sup>. Second, they work for unity among Christian and Muslim Palestinians and thirdly they cooperate "with Christians, Muslims, and Jews, locally and internationally<sup>9</sup>" on issues related to establishing "justice and peace"<sup>10</sup>.

In part two of Ateek's book *A Palestinian Christians Cry for Reconciliation*, Ateek presents the main mission and motivation of Sabeel, to develop a "Palestinian Liberation Theology in the Service of Nonviolence and Peace". The issues of this presentation are also described in Sabeel's magazine Cornerstone and throughout their official Webpage. In the following I will present these issues. In order to understand Sabeel's main mission and motivation I think five issues need to be presented in their writings. The first is the overall challenge of forming a Palestinian Liberation theology aimed at constructing a nonviolent resistance against the Israeli occupation. The second and third issues are closely interrelated,

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<sup>5</sup> Ateek: 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Ateek, 2008: 8-10. See also Sabeel's presentation of "Our Story" Online. <http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=2> Retrieved May 11, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> This focus is also stated in Ateek:1989: 152-153.

<sup>9</sup> Ateek: 2008:15.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

and concerned with sacred place and about how to understand the sacred texts concerning the land theology (2) and Jerusalem (3). The fourth issue is how to promote reconciliation, while the fifth issue is the vision of the long-term future in the thinking of Ateek and in the writings published by Sabeel.

Sabeel affirms its commitment to make the gospel relevant ecumenically and spiritually in the lives of the local indigenous Church:

Our faith teaches that following in the footsteps of Christ means standing for the oppressed, working for justice, and seeking peace-building opportunities, and it challenges us to empower local Christians. Since a strong civil society and a healthy community are the best supports for a vulnerable population, Sabeel strives to empower the Palestinian community as a whole and to develop the internal strengths needed for participation in building a better world for all<sup>11</sup>.

The main concern of Sabeel is to develop a liberation theology for the Palestinian Christians. This is explained by Naim Ateek as follows:

The message of Jesus acquires renewed relevance. His message of justice and liberation helps us focus on the inequalities and discrimination that are apparent within the society. At the same time we need to consider the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving a just peace in the political realm<sup>12</sup>.

According to Naim Ateek, the need to develop a new liberation theology for the Palestinian people was caused by the pain they felt after occupation and the emergence of western Christian Zionist supporters of the settlers. This pain was linked to the support Western Christians gave to the settlers, while ignoring the pain afflicted on the Palestinians by the occupation<sup>13</sup>.

As mentioned above, both the first book written by Naim Ateek about a Palestinian Liberation Theology and the latter establishment of Sabeel came as a result of a desire to combat violence and encourage Christians to join in a nonviolent resistance movement against the Israeli occupation. Ateek saw this challenge as deriving from the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel. The life of Jesus as described in the Gospel becomes central in Ateek's Palestinian liberation theology – specifically in the way Jesus lived under occupation of the Roman Empire and the way Palestinians today live under Israeli occupation. Ateek compares the time of Jesus with the Palestinians' situation by showing how different groups had different

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<sup>11</sup> Sabeel, Our Story, online: <http://www.sabeel.org/ourstory.php> Retrieved February 14, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Ateek, Naim, "Some are More Equal", Cornerstone, issue 54, fall 2009, p. 2. Similar statements on how a Palestinian Liberation Theology must focus on the life of Jesus in the Gospel are made in Ateek, Naim, "There is Another Way. The Way of Nonviolence, the Way of Fidelity", in Cornerstone, issue 28, spring 2003, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ateek, Naim, "The Israeli Occupation and Theological Thinking", Cornerstone, issue 56, spring 2010, p 2-3.



interpretations of events at that time too. Ateek divides these as four different trends for responding to occupation, where Jesus showed another way: The first trend in the time of Jesus was the Zealots, whom Ateek compares with those who choose revolutionary and armed struggle as a response to occupation. The second trend is the Essenes, which Ateek compares with those who escape from the reality of life into the desert or into ignorance. The third trend is represented by the Herodians and the Sadducees in Jesus' time, who decided to cooperate with the Herodians so that they could continue their service at the Temple. Ateek compares this third trend with Palestinians who accept the Israeli occupation of their country and "in order to advance their business activities or for reason of prestige<sup>14</sup>" allow themselves to get close to the powers and cooperate with the occupation or at worst become collaborators. The fourth trend was the Pharisees who Ateek describes as fanatics who cling to the observance of laws and regulation. "Jesus criticized them for paying attention to the minute details of the law yet forgetting the more important issues of life such as justice, faith, and mercy<sup>15</sup>". According to Ateek, several segments of their society can be compared with them. But the main interest of Ateek is really to present how he thinks Jesus gave another alternative which Ateek sees as central to the Palestinian Liberation Theology:

What is the way of Jesus? It is the way of allegiance to God's kingdom. The way of Jesus is: (1) to stand for justice and truth without picking up the sword – that is, to resist evil without using evil methods; (2) to rise above the ways of the world without abandoning involvement and commitment to the poor and oppressed; (3) to seek the humanity of the oppressor without losing integrity by appeasement or collaboration; and (4) to love and worship God without adhering to a strict and closed religion<sup>16</sup>.

By choosing to work for peace through nonviolent resistance Ateek further argues that Christians will seek the Messiah as the Suffering Servant, in contrast to the dominant Messiah figure during the time of Jesus – the Son of David – as a King who would end occupation through military and violence. According to Ateek, Christian Zionists have chosen the wrong image of Messiah in this context: "Christian Zionists have deferred the image of a warrior messiah to the last days, placing Christ in this role and thereby changing his basic character. For them, Christ is no longer a Suffering Servant at all but one who will return with wrath and anger to destroy his enemies"<sup>17</sup>.

A central text in Sabeel's Liberation Theology is from John 8:32 "... and the truth will set you free". But in the writings of Sabeel, the truth does not refer to the Gospel as such, but to

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<sup>14</sup> Ateek: 2008:95.

<sup>15</sup> Ateek: 2008, 95.

<sup>16</sup> Ateek, 2008:95-96.

<sup>17</sup> Ateek, 2008:102.

the experience and daily life Palestinian Christians have, according to Sabeel. According to Ateek:

... the propaganda machine of the state of Israel has coined words, created myths, produced stereotypes, and crafted propaganda tools in order to justify and legitimize the Zionist narrative while, at the same time, it has managed to cast doubt upon and negate the Palestinian narrative<sup>18</sup>.

In this way Ateek feels the Palestinians have been neglected by the state of Israel and their narratives have been deliberately negated.

The second issue, which is central for Sabeel, is related to *land theology*. In the following extract Naim Ateek explains why he considers land theology as a central part in a Palestinian Liberation theology:

God is very much present to the people of this land and is continuously invoked by Jews, Muslims and Christians. It often seems that each of our religions has created God in its own image to serve its own needs; perhaps this is why it seems that at times God is part of the problem rather than the solution. How then can we speak of God and God's authentic word for us as we struggle for justice and peace?<sup>19</sup>

How one interprets the land in light of one's sacred scriptures becomes central in Ateek's teaching, specifically because he thinks Palestinians have been hurt by what he calls exclusive and nationalistic interpretations among some Jewish groups and Christian Zionists<sup>20</sup>. His question is considered urgent because he believes many might lose their faith in the Bible and its god if this is the only way to interpret the land. The main concern of Sabeel is when Jews interpret the Hebrew Bible to claim exclusive ownership of the Holy Land<sup>21</sup>.

A central focus in Ateek's writing is the exclusive interpretation he thinks some Jewish groups and Christian Zionists make compared to the inclusive interpretation in the New Testament and some texts in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament<sup>22</sup>. Ateek explains how exclusive theologies of the land can be found within both Islamic and Jewish thought. According to Ateek, Sabeel oppose any exclusive theology of the land, but argue that when Jewish settlers and Christian Zionists use the Hebrew Bible to claim ownership to the land, it

<sup>18</sup> Ateek, Naim, "The Laundering of Words and the Oppression of Palestinians", in Cornerstone, Issue 53, summer 2009, p 2. See also the essay written by Alian Weaver. "Memory Against Forgetting" in Cornerstone, Issue 44, Spring 2007. p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ateek: 2008: xiv.

<sup>20</sup> This concern is also central in Ateek's first book, Justice and Only Justice, 1988:74-114.

<sup>21</sup> History of Sabeel. Online: <http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=2> available May 11, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Ateek, Naim, "Christian Zionism: The Dark Side of the Bible", Cornerstone, Issue 30, Winter 2003, p.2. Online: <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/Cornerstone%2030:%20Fall%202003.pdf>, available May 11 2010. See also Kuttab, Jonathan, "Challenging Christian Zionism", Cornerstone, Issue 32, Spring 2004. Online: <http://www.sabeel.org/documents/cs32.pdf> July 7, 2010.

is more difficult because they have the same scriptures as Christians in the Old Testament. In many ways Ateek argues that the Western Christian Zionists, and their ignorance of the life and situation of the Palestinian Christians, became a starting point for developing a liberation theology<sup>23</sup>.

In this way it becomes “important for Christians to understand the use of an exclusive theology of the land in the Old Testament *and* how the New Testament renders such an exclusive reading unacceptable”<sup>24</sup>. An important question in Ateek’s liberation theology for Palestinian is therefore to find theological ground for interpreting seemingly exclusive terminologies in the Old Testament. The primary answer Ateek gives is the following explanation: “When I read and study the Old Testament, it is with an eye toward those narratives that reflect the inclusive and nonviolent message of Christ<sup>25</sup>”. The importance of questioning the sacred texts related to the land becomes an important issue because according to Ateek it is really a question of the possibility to believe in the scriptures:

Since the conflict in this part of the Middle East revolves around the issue of the land – and since God and the Bible have been used to justify the theft of the land – it is important to continue to study the Bible to discover if God and the Bible are indeed a party to such injustice. Frankly, if the passages used to create and support injustice compose the heart of the biblical message regarding the land, most Palestinian Christians (and many others) would not want to have anything to do with such a Bible or god<sup>26</sup>.

Ateek presents several texts from the New Testament in his book, which he thinks demonstrates how Jesus speaks about the land in a different way than the Hebrew Bible. Ateek brings forward the Kingdom of God and the universal message of salvation<sup>27</sup>, as his focus. According to Ateek: “A chasm exists between a Christian reading of the Old Testament regarding the land and a Zionist reading of it. As Christians, we must not succumb to Zionism, but stand firm and with boldness and courage read texts from our own faith tradition”<sup>28</sup>. Because of the centrality of the land issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ateek sees it as a major problem when Western Christian Zionists interpret the Bible more according to Zionism. In a whole chapter devoted to combating Christian Zionism, Ateek compares their theology with earlier Christian legitimating of slavery, although he encourages approaching Christians Zionists in a friendly spirit:

<sup>23</sup> Ateek, Naim, “The Israeli Occupation and Theological Thinking”, Cornerstone, issue 56, spring 2010, p 1-4.

<sup>24</sup> Ateek: 2008:52-53.

<sup>25</sup> Ateek: 2008:54.

<sup>26</sup> Ateek: 2008:57.

<sup>27</sup> Ateek: 2008: 58-66. A few examples are the texts from Matthew 5:8, John 1: 43-51 and Romans 4:13.

<sup>28</sup> Ateek, 2008:65.

Christian Zionism is one of these tragic abuses that we must confront. It represents a primary challenge to an inclusive theology of love and justice. But Zionism must be confronted and challenged in a spirit of love ...many Christian Zionists may be simply unaware of the implications of their exclusive theology<sup>29</sup>.

In 2004 Sabeel conducted its Fifth International Conference in Jerusalem on the topic of "Challenging Christian Zionism"<sup>30</sup>. This Conference is also presented in Sabeel's magazine *Cornerstone*<sup>31</sup>.

A third issue behind the mission of Sabeel is related to Jerusalem. Ateek's concern for how people interpret Jerusalem can be described similarly to his teaching of land theology. His focus is on the sacred texts and whether an accurate interpretation of Jerusalem would be inclusive or exclusive when the Old Testament is read in light of New Testament. In the same way as Ateek emphasizes the need to develop an inclusive theology of the land, he also emphasizes the need for an equal inclusive theology of Jerusalem. In a whole chapter of Ateek's book the question of Jerusalem is in focus. According to Ateek there are both exclusive and inclusive texts in the Old Testament<sup>32</sup>. But Ateek resolves this dilemma by arguing that Christians should read the Old Testament in light of the New<sup>33</sup> and shows how Jesus in John 4: 21-24 says that the true worship in spirit and truth need not be only in Jerusalem, and further how the verses from Revelation 21: 1-5 speak about a Heavenly Jerusalem apart from territorial borders. In this way Ateek finds the Christian interpretation of Jerusalem important because of its inclusive character:

The heart of the Middle East conflict is the conflict over Palestine, and the heart of Palestine conflict is the city of Jerusalem. Tragically, the government of Israel has chosen the exclusive paradigm of Nehemiah, a paradigm that will never lead to peace. Nothing but perpetual conflict will lie in its wake because it is built on selfishness and greed, on control and negation of other. Slogans such as "Jerusalem is Jewish" or "Jerusalem is Islamic" reflects this narrow, exclusive, and xenophobic paradigm. With it in place, future reconciliation does not seem possible<sup>34</sup>.

Ateek argues that an inclusive theology of Jerusalem can be developed by looking at both the inclusive texts of the Old Testament and the New<sup>35</sup>, the former which would be helpful for

<sup>29</sup> Ateek, 2008: 79.

<sup>30</sup> *Cornerstone* Issue 32, 2004, "Challenging Christian Zionism", online: <http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev50/files/cs32.pdf> Retrieved February 11, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Ateek put forward the verses from Nehemiah 2:19-20 as an example of an exclusive text, while Psalm 87 is an example of an inclusive text. See Ateek, 2008: 141-147. Ateek has also written an article on Psalm 87 in Ateek, Naim, "A Vision worthy of Jerusalem", *Cornerstone*, Issue 55, winter 2009, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> See above.

<sup>34</sup> Ateek: 2008:149-150.

<sup>35</sup> Ateek: 2008:150.

both Judaism and Christianity. In this way Ateek calls for an inclusive theology of Jerusalem. Sabeel has also published a prayer for Jerusalem, which is both inclusive and universal. The following is an excerpt: “Let this city be a center of unity for the Churches. Let it be a place of friendship and understanding for men and women of different faiths. Let it be truly the City of Peace, a joy of the whole earth and a place of blessing to all nations”<sup>36</sup>.

A fourth issue central for Sabeel is to promote *reconciliation through a human paradigm*. Although one can find clearly in all Ateek’s writings and at Sabeel’s publications<sup>37</sup> a search for the meaning of the sacred texts according to present events, Ateek does not see a divine paradigm of reconciliation as a possible solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ateek explains how a divine paradigm is a “radical model embedded in Christian faith. It is a paradigm of revolutionary forgiveness even when no admission of guilt takes place”<sup>38</sup>. Ateek argues that a divine paradigm for reconciliation is impossible in the present conflict and therefore suggests a human paradigm through six steps. In Ateek’s final chapter “From Justice to Forgiveness” he presents six steps needed to be taken for a final reconciliation and forgiveness to take place. These steps can briefly be listed as follows:

- 1) Confront and analyze the roots of the conflict- to listen and understand the two narratives of the conflicting parties.
- 2) Israeli occupation must end and Palestinian violence stop. And it is also important to understand the Palestinian violence as a response to Zionism.
- 3) Justice must be done after international law and Israel must be willing to make amends and offer restitution<sup>39</sup>.
- 4) The real work begins when justice has been established, to end all violence on both sides.
- 5) Healing can begin through a long process. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be established to review the history of the conflict.
- 6) Forgiveness, the final step in the process of healing<sup>40</sup>.

According to this process Israeli occupation must end before healing can begin.

The fifth issue of Sabeel is its visions for the future. Ateek supports a two-state solution, although he sees a Middle East federation of the Holy Land, where four sovereign states cooperate – that is Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Jordan - as the best alternative<sup>41</sup>. In such a federation Jerusalem could be the capital, while each sovereign state had capitals outside

<sup>36</sup> Appeltown, George, “Jerusalem prayer for the world today”, Cornerstone, Issue 55, winter 2009, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> See for example Sabbah, Michael, “Forgotten Christians in the Holy land”, in Cornerstone, issue 43, Winter 2007, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ateek: 2008: 184.

<sup>39</sup> The importance of justice is strongly emphasized in Ateek’s first book as a prerequisite for peace, Ateek: 1989:177.

<sup>40</sup> Ateek, 2008:185-186.

<sup>41</sup> Such a federation was also suggested in Ateek’s first book, 1988: 173-175.

Jerusalem “in order to set it free from political intrigues. Jerusalem would then be free from any narrow exclusive claims and become God’s gift to not only the people of the region but beyond to the billions of faithful believers all over the world<sup>42</sup>”.

## **6.2 Activities and Cooperation**

Sabeel has only nine full time staff members, six at their office in Jerusalem and three at their office in Nablus. In addition they have a General Assembly, an executive committee and several local and international volunteers. Sabeel has a certain hierarchic structure, based on the fact that the director of Sabeel is the one who mainly has developed the Palestinian liberation theology, and the fact that it has a branch office in Nablus.

Sabeel can offer several activities. They have community building projects, Youth program, Women’s program, clergy program and international programs. In addition they have annual programs for five occasions. The first is an annual day of prayer and fasting for the local churches. The second is a meeting between Palestinian Christians and Muslim during the Muslim month of Ramadan through a fast-breaking dinner on *iftar*. The third is a Christmas dinner. The fourth is an ecumenical day of worship where they focus upon special events, like the separation wall (2005) or the Tsunami (2004). The final annual gathering is a seasonal Lenten and Advent program where they meet weekly to discuss the Biblical messages for the current political context<sup>43</sup>.

Sabeel sponsors a variety of local and international programs. Through these programs Sabeel seeks to encourage people of faith to develop a spirituality of nonviolent liberation which will empower them to work for justice, peace and reconciliation in Palestine - Israel<sup>44</sup>. Sabeel emphasizes how four decades of occupation have made life in the Palestinian community difficult. They explain how increasing limitations on movement and freedom have put the community under a great deal of economic and civic stress. Through the Community Building Program, Sabeel seeks to educate the community on the political situation, broaden the community’s knowledge of work that is already being done to end the conflict, foster a sense of solidarity, strengthen the community’s capacity to grow spiritually and to address collectively the social realities<sup>45</sup>. Sabeel presents its youth program as follows:

<sup>42</sup> Ateek, 2008:176. Ateek offers a rather detailed description on how the political conflict could be resolved. See Ateek, 2008:165-177.

<sup>43</sup> Sabeel: Annual Event. Online. <http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=3#annual> Retrieved June 24, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Sabeel program, online: <http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=3> Retrieved June 24, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Sabeel, Community, online: <http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=3#community> Retrieved June 2, 2010.

The youth of Palestine - Israel are eager to see an end to violence and to become contributing citizens of a respectful pluralistic society. Through the Youth Program Sabeel seeks to provide opportunities for young people from different churches meet and get to know each other, to encourage and support youth in serving their churches and communities, and to educate and empower youth to be future civic and spiritual leaders<sup>46</sup>.

Through the Women's Program, Sabeel seeks to encourage networks of women, and develop the capacity of women to take on leadership roles. Through the Clergy Program, Sabeel seeks to nurture unity and mutual support among local clergy, encourage ecumenical thought and action, and deepen theological analysis and in the face of challenges presented by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the occupation. Through the International Program, Sabeel seeks to educate the Christian community worldwide about how they experience the present reality of Palestinian Christians.

The Nazareth branch of Sabeel ministers to the Christian population living inside Israel. Their unique circumstance of being Arab, Christian, Palestinian, and citizens of Israel creates an identity problem that involves unemployment and discrimination. Sabeel also have good contacts with Palestinian Christians in Gaza. After Operation Cast Leads, Sabeel devoted one whole number of Cornerstone to this event. This whole magazine is related to Gaza. Representatives from The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) address human rights violations in Gaza, a prayer for Gaza is also published. Staff members of Sabeel joined in a protest on the War on Gaza and are pictured outside at the French Consulate in Jerusalem, and Sabeel publishes a statement to end the occupation of Gaza. In this issue a Priest of the Catholic Church in Gaza, Father Manuel Musallam, is also interviewed concerning the situation in Gaza during Operation Cast Leads.<sup>47</sup>

A genuine example of the cooperation between different Christian Churches and Sabeel is demonstrated through the Kairos Palestine Document, which was supported by the World Council of Churches and published in December 2009<sup>48</sup>. The Document was called "A Moment of Truth" and written by several Palestinian theologians from different dominations in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, among them Naim Ateek<sup>49</sup>. The document was inspired by the South Africa Kairos document launched in 1985<sup>50</sup>. The relationship between Ateek and

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> See Cornerstone 52, Spring 2009, Shame, online: <http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev70/files/Corner52.pdf> Retrieved October 10, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> World Council of Churches, Kairos Palestine Document, online: <http://www.oikoumene.org/gr/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/kairos-palestine-document.html> Retrieved January 15, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Kairos Palestine, Online: <http://kairospalestine.ps/?q=node/2> Retrieved October 10, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Desmond Tutu is also exemplified by the fact that Desmond Tutu wrote the foreword in Ateek's book *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*, and was invited to an International Conference held by Sabeel in 2008<sup>51</sup>. It is interesting to notice that the five issues so relevant in the mission and motivation behind Sabeel's work are also central in the Kairos Palestine Document. The following comparison is not meant to analyze the whole Kairos Palestine Documents, but to highlight some similarities between the mission of Sabeel and this document which explain the cooperation between Sabeel and other Palestinian Christian Churches. The first issue is to form a Palestinian Liberation theology aimed at nonviolent resistance against the occupation. In the introduction to the Kairos Palestine Document the Church leaders link their document to the South African document launched in 1985 and their goal of this document to become "a tool in the struggle against oppression and occupation"<sup>52</sup>. The resistance is also given prominent attention in the document: "The aggression against the Palestinian people which is the Israeli occupation, is an evil that must be resisted. It is an evil and a sin that must be resisted and removed"<sup>53</sup>. On the other hand, the emphasize on nonviolence also connects Christian moral obligations: "it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy. Seeing the image of God in the face of the enemy means taking up positions in the light of this vision of active resistance"<sup>54</sup>. The second issue central for Sabeel related to land theology, is also central in Kairos Palestine. The document emphasizes their interpretation of the land as inclusive and universal<sup>55</sup>, and raise criticism against Christian Zionists whom they feel make the Gospel a "harbinger of death"<sup>56</sup> by supporting the settlement. The third issue central for Sabeel is related to the interpretation of the position of Jerusalem. In the Kairos Palestine Document they write:

Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace ... She is the city towards which all people are in movement – and where they will meet in friendship and love in the presence of the One Unique God, according to the vision of the prophet Isaiah: *"In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it (...) He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any*

<sup>51</sup> Cornerstone Issue 48, Spring 2008 "The Apartheid Regime", online: <http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev66/files/CornerstoneIssue48.pdf> Retrieved January 14, 2011.

<sup>52</sup> The focus to end the occupation is mentioned several times in the Kairos Palestine. See the document online: <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf> Retrieved August 28, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Kairos Palestine 4.2.1.

<sup>54</sup> Kairos Palestine: 4.2.3.

<sup>55</sup> Kairos Palestine: 2.3.

<sup>56</sup> Kairos Palestine: 2.3.3.



*more*" (Is. 2: 2-5). Today, the city is inhabited by two peoples of three religions; and it is on this prophetic vision and on the international resolutions concerning the totality of Jerusalem that any political solution must be based<sup>57</sup>.

In this way both Sabeel and this document seek either an international solution of Jerusalem or a division based on a prophetic claim. The Kairos Palestine Document does not give clear suggestions as how to bring about reconciliation, as Sabeel does in its` forth issue of interest. Nor does it give clear political visions for the future as the fifth issue of Sabeel`s mission. Nevertheless, as we have seen, there are clear resemblances between the two which demonstrate the influence of Sabeel in its cooperation with Palestinian Church leaders. Both bishop Munib A. Younan and Patriarch Michel Sabbah are central persons in the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land<sup>58</sup> and also listed among the supporters and co-authors of the Kairos Palestine Document<sup>59</sup>.

Sabeel also cooperates with a number of international Christian organizations working for peace<sup>60</sup> and has established so-called "International Friends of Sabeel" in North America, Canada<sup>61</sup>, United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, France, Germany<sup>62</sup> and Australia<sup>63</sup>.

Sabeel also works for unity among Palestinians specifically by engaging in interfaith and dialogue between Palestinian Christians and Muslims. On several occasions they have cooperated with the Palestine Forum on Peace and Justice in Nablus (PFPJ)<sup>64</sup>, and also with members of PASSIA<sup>65</sup>.

As mentioned above, Sabeel holds an annual international conference where they discuss present issues with both local and international leaders, from all the three Abrahamic Faiths. During the 7<sup>th</sup> International Sabeel Conference in 2008, the theme was "The Nakba: memory, Reality, and Beyond – A Time to Remember, a Time for Truth". The leader of the Conference, was the Lutheran bishop Munib Younan<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Kairos Palestine: 1.1.8 and 9.5.

<sup>58</sup> See chapter 12.

<sup>59</sup> Kairos Palestine: p. 2 and 4.

<sup>60</sup> See online: <http://sabeel.org/links.php> Retrieved October 24, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> See online: <http://sabeel.org/friends-americas.php> Retrieved October 24, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> See the list of European countries, online: <http://sabeel.org/friends-europe.php> Retrieved October 24, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> See online: <http://sabeel.org/friends-australia.php> Retrieved October 24, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Sabeel Narrative Report 2009. Online. <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/Narrative%20report%202009.pdf> p. Retrieved October 24, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> See Ateek`s references to Mustafa Abu Sway, 2008:51-52. See also Sabeel`s participation in meetings held by PASSIA in 8.1.2.

<sup>66</sup> Excerpts from the homily of the Lutheran bishop Munib Younan at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Sabeel Conference Nov. 19, 2008. Cornerstone, Issue 51, winter 2008, p. 2. Munib Younan is also a representative in Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. See chapter 12.

Sabeel cooperates with other Church leaders. In an article in *Cornerstone*, Michael Sabbah, argues that Christians should find motivation to work for peace because of the Christian vision of hope<sup>67</sup>. The vision of hope, so central to Christian theology, was also elaborated during a visit between members of Sabeel and Desmond Tutu. According to Desmond Tutu, God had a dream for all humanity, and therefore a message central to both Palestinian Christians and Christians living under Apartheid in South Africa<sup>68</sup>.

In *Cornerstone*, several issues related to their feeling of being occupied are addressed and discussed theologically. These issues can be exemplified through the titles of *Cornerstone* such as: “A Time to Remember, a Time for Truth”, “The Ongoing Nakba”, “Suicide bombing” or “The Apartheid Regime”<sup>69</sup>.

As early as in 1988 Ateek argued for the need to support Jewish theologians who emphasize ethical Judaism<sup>70</sup>. And as we have seen, several Jews have been represented in *Cornerstone*, International Conferences of Sabeel, among them an American Jew who is known for developing a Jewish liberation theology - Marc Ellis<sup>71</sup>.

Sabeel is also engaged in activities on the ground in Jerusalem, like olive tree planting and olive picking, in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan<sup>72</sup>. Sabeel describes the situation in Jerusalem, with the following title of a program in 2009: “Jerusalem at the heart of the Nakba and the Ongoing Nakba”<sup>73</sup>, and sees Jerusalem as “the key to peace”<sup>74</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Sabbah, Michael, “Forgotten Christians in the Holy land”, in *Cornerstone*, issue 43, Winter 2007, p. 6.

Michael Sabbah is also a Christian representative at CRIHL, presented in chapter 12.

<sup>68</sup> Tutu, Desmond, “Realizing God’s Dream”, in *Cornerstone*, Issue 48, Spring 2008, p.5

<sup>69</sup> A list of all “*Cornerstone*” Issues can be found online: <http://www.sabeel.org/cornerstone.php> Retrieved February 14, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Ateek, 1988:69-71.

<sup>71</sup> In *Cornerstone* Issue 58, Autumn 2010, The Changing Theological Landscape, makes references to a liberal Jewish theologian, Marc Ellis, online: [http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev173/files/Corner58\\_B.pdf](http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev173/files/Corner58_B.pdf) Retrieved October 14, 2010. And in *Cornerstone* Issue 57, Autumn 2010, Through the Eyes of Women they makes References to the Israeli Human Rights Watch. In *Cornerstone* Issue 56, 2010, a Jew named Mark Braverman, a clinical psychologist who serves on the advisory board of Friends of Sabeel North America and on the Board of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions-USA is presented. Online:

<http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev133/files/Corner56.pdf> Retrieved October 14, 2010. *Cornerstone*, Issue 54, fall 2009, Those Who Remained, an Israeli Jews writes “The Factory of Words”, Gideon Levy is a columnist for “Haaretz,” Israel’s oldest daily newspaper, and a member of their editorial board. For the past twenty years, he has written the weekly column “Twilight Zone,” which covers the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. He also writes political editorials, mainly about the relations between Palestinians and Israelis and criticizes the occupation and treatment of Palestinians. Online: <http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev72/files/Corner54d.pdf> Retrieved October 14, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Sabeel Narrative Report 2009. Online: <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/Narrative%20report%202009.pdf> Retrieved October 14, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Sabeel Narrative Report 2009. Online: <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/Narrative%20report%202009.pdf> p 6. Retrieved October 14, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Narrative Report 2009. Online: <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/Narrative%20report%202009.pdf> Retrieved October 14, 2010. Another place Sabeel has published an article by Illan Pape where he concludes that Israel was indeed born in sin. See Pappé, Illan, “Calling A Spade A Spade, the 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine”, in



## 7 Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel

*Yet, when the violence subsides, as it will in the not-too-distant future, we will still be faced with the same dilemmas: how can we find a way to live together peacefully in this part of the world? Can dialogue offer some hope? Can we engage young people, women, educators and religious leaders in processes of dialogue, education, reconciliation and action that offer an alternative future to the one of continual confrontation and violence?*

*Extract from the response to Operation Cast Lead, by Ron Kronish<sup>1</sup>*

The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) was, as mentioned earlier, established in 1991, on the eve of the Gulf War, as an educational and coordinating organization. ICCI has its own webpage, with information about its mission, programs and continuously information of activities and seminars. In addition ICCI has published several books since its inception<sup>2</sup>, and occasionally appeared in the Israeli News<sup>3</sup>. The following presentation is based on this information in addition to two interviews. One with the director of ICCI Ron Kronish - the other with director of educational initiatives, Ophir Yarden. In the following I will present ICCI's mission and educational programs, their activities and cooperation.

<sup>1</sup> Kronish, Ron: "ICCI Update", 2009: <http://www.unobserver.com/layout5.php?id=5521&blz=1> , downloaded: 2 February 2009.

<sup>2</sup> ICCI presents a list of six publications: *I'm from... Biram Village and Kfar Etzion - Stories from 1948 - Teacher's Guide*, (2006), *Women of the Book: A Jerusalem Collage* (2005), *Understanding One Another: The Use of Film for Coexistence Education* (2005), *Ourselves and Our Environment: Daily Reflections on the Environment for Elul, Lent and Ramadan*. (2003), *Pilgrimage in a New Millennium: Spiritual Reflections from Christians and Jews in the Holy Land*: (1999), *Millennium Christian Documents in Jewish-Christian Relations in The Contemporary Era* (1996). In addition I received a publication called *Common values- different sources* (1999) during my visit to Jerusalem 2008. The list can be found online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=68](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=68) Retrieved November 24, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> During the period between 2007-2010 ICCI has had a media report from Jerusalem Post fourteen times, while only twice in Haaretz. See ICCI, "ICCI in the media", online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=69](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=69) Retrieved January 2, 2011.

As mentioned, ICCI has a list of “ICCI in the Media”, which documents how ICCI during the period between 2007-2010 had a media report from Jerusalem Post fourteen times, while only twice in Haaretz<sup>4</sup>.

## **7.1 Mission and Motivation**

The main objective of ICCI at the beginning of the 90s was to coordinate the many religious organizations working for peace in Israel. But during the last twenty years ICCI has developed as the peace process evolved through different stages. Starting out as an organization basically working with purely interreligious encounters between Jewish, Christian and Muslim participants, ICCI has since the end of the 90s expanded its activities and broadening its perspective by both including the national dimension of the conflict and implementing conflict resolution methods in its interreligious programs<sup>5</sup>.

According to ICCI its main mission is to “harness the teachings and values of the three Abrahamic faiths and transform religion’s role from a force of division and extremism into a source of reconciliation, coexistence, and understanding”<sup>6</sup>. Thus, ICCI is basically an educational organization. ICCI does not only bring religious issues into the interreligious dialogue, but includes issues related to the national conflict. In the interview Yarden explains how to “say we don’t talk about politics is to say to the participants: As you walk into the room, leave half of your identity outside”. Thus, ICCI seeks to approach dialogue in a holistic way, where a person freely can express his religious conviction along with his political stand and personal experience.

In the interview Yarden further explains how stereotypes and prejudices need to be broken down between Israelis and Palestinians specifically, and between the religious communities generally. One example of how ICCI seeks to challenge this is the newly developed course on how to educate Muslims about Judaism and Jews about Islam, and thereby break down stereotypes about the religious faith of the other:

While Jewish and Muslim communities live side by side in Israel, very little is done to bring these different populations together and reduce the existing levels of ignorance, stereotypes, and

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<sup>4</sup> ICCI, “ICCI in the media”, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=69](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=69) Retrieved January 2, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> This information is based on the interview with the director of ICCI Ron Kronish.

<sup>6</sup> See Interreligious Coordinating Council official website, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=52](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=52) Retrieved October 14, 2009.

hostility. Islam and Judaism bear a decisive role toward reaching an understanding of each of the two communities, and, unfortunately, also contribute to widening the distance and alienation between them as well<sup>7</sup>.

In this way ICCI seeks to bring Jews and Muslims together to reduce negative images of one another.

In the interview with Kronish he explains how ICCI has developed since its inception in 1991 and until the present time. Kronish tells how the 90s was a period of expectations, a time when Israelis and Palestinians believed in peace. Thus, Kronish explains how the aim of ICCI in the 90s was to learn how to live together in a new hoped-for future, based on the assumption that a two-state solution was to be implemented. Both Yarden and Kronish explain how ICCI sought to focus on common values among the three Monotheistic religions in the 90s. In 1999 ICCI published a book together with Muslim academics called *Different Sources, common values*<sup>8</sup>, where Muslims, Christians and Jews write about their common values of peace, justice, tolerance, the image of God and value of education within all three religions, in light of the sacred scriptures<sup>9</sup>.

Although common values among the three Monotheistic traditions are important for ICCI, Yarden specifically emphasizes how this is not enough, although he thinks common values and common figures in the sacred texts could function as a positive starting point for the dialogue.

Nevertheless, Yarden explains how the real challenge is to explore difficult issues in a dialogical setting. ICCI developed into an interreligious organization which incorporated political and conflicting issues into the dialogue in the late 90s. The importance of presenting the different historical narratives of *the Other* was implemented as part of the program of ICCI as early as 1997, when Kronish called for developing a multidisciplinary approach between six different disciplines related to education, religion, nationalism, history, sociology and psychology. Concerning the discipline of history attention was paid to how understanding of history is developed in education, subcultures, local media and religious communities:

Different groups within Israeli society and the region identify with different historiographies. History has been subservient to ideology in this part of the world, as in many other places. At

<sup>7</sup> ICCI, "Past events", online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=23&Itemid=191&limit=9&limitstart=9](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=23&Itemid=191&limit=9&limitstart=9) Retrieved July 9, 2010. See also ICCI "Recent events", online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=18&Itemid=154](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=18&Itemid=154) Retrieved July 9, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> ICCI Publications, *Common Values – Different Sources*, 1996. Hebrew Only

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

least two different versions of history have been taught here over the last century, the Palestinian one and the Israeli one. In the new era of peace dawning in our country and our region, there will be a need in the future for a synthesized version of history which will take into account new developments and a new sense of contemporary consciousness<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, ICCI integrated the historical narratives of *the Other* in most of its programs at the end of the 90s<sup>11</sup>. In the interview Kronish explains how ICCI does not engage into the historical debate about what really happened in 1948, but rather twists the story to a personal level where the participants might present some of their collective narratives:

We try to bring people together, Palestinians and Jews, and we spend a lot of time of getting to know the personal narrative of the other. Now to some extent, each person reflects some of the collective narratives ... everybody has their own personal twist on what happened and they interpret to give it a life, so ... we put a lot of time of putting a face on the conflict, a face, a family, a story. And we believe in what I would call pluralism and people have different takes on the subject<sup>12</sup>.

In this way issues such as the Nakba, Israel's Independence Day and Holocaust can be part of the dialogue through a personal narrative<sup>13</sup>.

Yarden explains another way of dealing with conflicting views by allowing texts which describe the other in a negative way. Speaking as a traditional Jew, Yarden explains how negative utterances had appeared through the course of time in the Jewish prayer book. He explains how this happened during times of persecution in Jewish history and was therefore understandable. But when these same texts were read in modern time and specifically in Israel it was more problematic:

... if the dominant other is the Palestinians, and the prayer book teaches a negative attitude towards the other, than we have an intersection of religion and politics, you could call it – we have a negative religious influence... So, I'm a traditional Jew, so I am not saying we should go and change our prayer book ... But I think we need to teach these things with certain sensitivity, and context, because – that is just one example of how our religious tradition can exacerbate the conflict<sup>14</sup>.

Another issue Yarden brings up as constructive to teach Jews about is how the Christian Church has changed during the last half century after the Holocaust. Of equal importance

<sup>10</sup> Kronish, Ron: "Understanding One Another in the Israeli Society", Jerusalem: Published by ICCI, 1997,

<sup>11</sup> ICCI, Online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=62](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=62)

Retrieved June 16, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Kronish.

<sup>13</sup> Paper at Pre-Conference Study Tour, 17-22 June 2008, Program Readings, Listening to the Other's Religio-Historical Narrative, ICCI.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ophir Yarden.

Yarden emphasizes that Palestinian Muslims and Christians need to understand Judaism and Zionism, and also to allow Jews to define their faith and Jewish identity for themselves.

Although ICCI is a well-established organization, they still feel like a marginalized group in the Israeli society. Kronish explains how at the present time religion is not necessarily associated with peace:

You cannot mention five rabbis in Israel, except Rabbi Michael Melchior, who are in favor that religions could be a force for peace. That idea runs far into the soil. So in that's sense, it's very limited and its impact, because, you know – the Israeli society are made up by a lot of Holocaust survivor , and people came from Arab countries , and people came from Russia, and people came from Ethiopia, and all these people were escaping, and they don't want another version of communism and socialism here<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, neither Yarden nor Kronish will call the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a religious conflict. Nor do they think that religion is enough to end the conflict. Yarden explains how religious terminology has been misused in the conflict<sup>16</sup> and how an interreligious dialogue can help clarify religious positions in an interreligious and inclusive setting.

By the end of the 90s ICCI became the chapter of World Conference for Religion for Peace (WCRP). In the interview Kronish explains how the cooperation with WCRP was part of a development in the late 90s and specifically after the second intifada, where ICCI started to implement conflict resolution theories and methods into their programs and activities<sup>17</sup>. ICCI works as the local partner of the World Conference of Religions for Peace<sup>18</sup> (WCRP). According to WCRP they seek to develop local programs which can transform conflicts<sup>19</sup>.

ICCI envisions a long-term development where “non-violence and mutual cooperation among local Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities becomes a model for society as a whole, we envisage a transforming of the public discourse which will empower peace-builders in the region to effect lasting change”<sup>20</sup>. But in the interview Kronish is quite clear that in order to gain peace among the two peoples, the political authorities have to reach a peace agreement. Kronish explains how during the last decade most Israelis and Palestinians

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ron Kronish.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Ophir Yarden.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Ron Kronish. On December 14, 2010 a Palestinian chapter for Religions for Peace was established at the University of Bethlehem. Online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=18&Itemid=139](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=18&Itemid=139) Retrieved March 14, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> The homepage of Religions for Peace is available at <http://www.wcrp.org> Retrieved October 29, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> See Religion for Peace, online: <http://religionsforpeace.org/initiatives/violent-conflict/conflict-transformation/> Retrieved June 20, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> ICCI, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=52](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=52) Retrieved November 15, 2009.



have lost the belief in peace, and it is hard to attract people into dialogue settings<sup>21</sup>. Kronish explicitly emphasizes how he hoped that the youth group of ICCI - who met youth groups from post-conflict societies (Ireland and South Africa) during a summer camp in New York - would gain hope for the future relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, but this process is dependent upon a final peace agreement:

So in Ireland, when the peace process came, the government said “we will teach reconciliation in our schools, we will teach reconciliation to our policemen, we will teach reconciliation in the community council. Everywhere the idea of peace and reconciliation, were for the whole society ... So, in the end of the day, as I was saying, when there is a peace agreement they’ll say we have two tracks, one of the governments, the government of Israel and the government of Palestine, we’ll get into peace education, start teaching the truth about the other side, and not the other as an ideological monster<sup>22</sup>.”

But as for today, specifically after the second intifada, Kronish thinks the hope for peace in the near future has vanished among Israelis and that Palestinians are dominated by an “anti-normalization<sup>23</sup>” attitude which fears that dialogue will preserve the present situation and not lead to social change. In the interview Kronish explains how although ICCI is an educational organization they also support human rights organizations, and thus that both approaches were needed.

## **7.2 Activities and Cooperation**

The programs offered by ICCI are all conducted by highly qualified professional educators. The Director of ICCI, Rabbi Ron Kronish has a PhD in Education from Harvard University in addition to his rabbinical ordination. The Director of Educational initiatives, Ophir Yarden, and the Director of Youth and Young Adults, Avigail Moshe hold a Master`s degree in Middle Eastern Studies. The Program Coordinator, Wasim Biroumi, holds a Master degree in Clinical-Educational Psychology and has experience from facilitation and guidance of conflict groups. Biroumi coordinates a program called “From Memory to Reconciliation” for Youth and Young Adults. In addition, twelve other persons are part of the ICCI’s staff, with various experience and education in the region, which makes ICCI academically well qualified<sup>24</sup>. In

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ron Kronish.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Ron Kronish.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Ron Kronish.

<sup>24</sup> ICCI, Meet the ICCI Staff, online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=56](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=56) Retrieved October 15, 2009.

the interview Yarden explains how the goal is to have two facilitators behind each program, one Israeli and one Palestinian.

ICCI conducts five different programs, in addition to a list of publications<sup>25</sup>. The first program is called KEDEM, *Voices for Religious Reconciliation*, and consists of religious leaders from Judaism, Christianity and Islam living in Israel. The aim of the program is that the religious leaders shall find new ways to preach reconciliation within their own communities after participating in the three-year program of KEDEM<sup>26</sup>. The second is called Women's program, and consists of Jewish, Christian and Muslim women living in East and West Jerusalem. The aim of the women's program is to "strengthen the voice of women by empowering them to change the fabric of societal discourse in their respective communities"<sup>27</sup>. The Women's program has specifically focused on the future of Jerusalem and its historical and personal value for its religious inhabitants. The third program is developed for Youth and Young adults, specifically from East and West Jerusalem, from all the three Semitic religions. The Youth are invited to meet both locally and internationally, the last meeting was together with youth from other countries in conflict. In June 2007, these youth programs led to the foundation of a leadership program called The Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Council (JIYAC), which consists of young religious leaders from West and East Jerusalem. The fourth program is Study Tours, offered to groups and organizations interested in learning about the different religious communities in Israel and specifically about their affiliation with Jerusalem. Some of the tours are called "One City, Two Peoples, Three Religions", "Memory: Our Useable Past" or "Jewish, Christian and Muslim Education", which involve lectures and visits to the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities in Israel<sup>28</sup>. The fifth program is an offer of speakers and panels from ICCI to groups and organizations, both locally and abroad<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> See ICCI's publication list, online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=68](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=68) Retrieved October 15, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> The presentation of KEDEM is available at ICCI webpage, online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=63](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=63) Retrieved October 15, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> See presentation of ICCI's Women's program online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=64](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=64) Retrieved October 15, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> The presentation of the Study Tours of ICCI, online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=155&Itemid=184](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=155&Itemid=184) Retrieved October 15, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> The presentation of speakers, panels and workshops from ICCI are available online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=155&Itemid=184](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=155&Itemid=184) Retrieved October 16, 2009.

The educational programs of ICCI focus upon 5 principals. According to its own program these principles are: 1) Moving from Dialogue to Action, 2) Addressing the conflict, 3) Focus on communities rather than individuals, 4) Long-term programs and relationships and 5) Religion as part of the solution<sup>30</sup>. The first principal, Moving from Dialogue to Action, is explained by how “the programs combine facilitated dialogue, study, and action projects which demonstrate to the wider community the tangible benefits to be gained from working together towards common goals”<sup>31</sup>. In both *Kedem*, Women group and the Youth and Young Adults group, there is a focus upon how the members of the group are the ones to decide and plan the next step for the group to take, in relation to the issues they have discussed; thus the first principle is supposed to be a process where the participants themselves agree on how their dialogue should move to a specific action. One example is when the participants of the *Kedem* group of religious leaders decided that their goals should be to implement a plan concerning what religious leaders were to say to the media in times of crises, in order not to motivate individual religious people to violent action<sup>32</sup>. Among the youth group, a decision was made to engage in voluntary work in both East and West Jerusalem by renovating schools and organizing activities for underprivileged children. This activity was the result of a dialogue meeting in the summer of 2008<sup>33</sup>. A third example is the women group of ICCI. After a few sessions the Women Group decided that the product of their dialogue should be a book which explained their personal, religious and national affiliation with Jerusalem<sup>34</sup>. In June 2005 they published a book entitled *Women of the Book: A Jerusalem Collage*. The book highlights the difficulties experienced by the group after three years of dialogue. Each of the women has in addition created a collage on the theme of women’s lineage and portraits different connections to Jerusalem, the lived fear created by the conflict and the experience in raising children in the midst of conflict. The aim of the book is to be a:

<sup>30</sup> ICCI, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=52](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=52) Retrieved October 15, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> ICCI, “Programs”, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=62](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=62) Retrieved February 21, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> See examples of *Kedem* action projects online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=63](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=63) Retrieved February 22, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> “Interreligious Dialogue in the Service of Peace”, by Ron Kronish. *Crosscurrents*, 52.2, Summer 2008:239, a PHD version can be downloaded online: [http://english.icci.org.il/images/articles\\_new/crosscurrents%2058.2%20summer%202008%20ron%20kronish%20interreligious%20dialogue%20in%20the%20service%20of%20peace.pdf](http://english.icci.org.il/images/articles_new/crosscurrents%2058.2%20summer%202008%20ron%20kronish%20interreligious%20dialogue%20in%20the%20service%20of%20peace.pdf) Retrieved November 24, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> See ICCI Women’s Group, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=64](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=64) Retrieved February 22, 2011.

... tool for helping other people move beyond their fear and distrust of the other ... In order to do this, the women are organizing community reconciliation and peace-building workshops. Based on the book, these workshops focus on the promotion of tolerance, reconciliation and healing. In this way we hope to begin the work of breaking down the almost insurmountable barriers of bitterness, fear, and suspicion that divide Jerusalem<sup>35</sup>.

The second principal - *Addressing the conflict* – is related to how “all programs promote relationship-building, including frank and open exchanges of perspectives on subjects related to the local and regional conflict”<sup>36</sup>. Ophir Yarden has been the coordinator of a dialogue group on the issue of land<sup>37</sup>. In the interview Yarden explains how the participants of this dialogue group were asked to bring with them a text of their own choice which they saw as important for their own affiliation to the land. Yarden tells how some people chose traditional religious texts from the Quran, Bible, Talmud or Hadith, while others could bring essays from Zionists philosophers or a Palestinian poetry. Yarden further explains how this combination of bringing up both the national and religious identity of the other is important because of the longtime effect of the conflict on the two peoples:

... since two generations, the Palestinians have been the hostile enemy, it's only natural ... that people have come to think of the Arabs, who are Muslims for the most part, as the enemy and therefore they have a hostile attitude to Islam ... but we need to work to educate, to reeducate people. Which is exactly what our projects are all about. And the same goes the other way around, the Arabs, the Muslims, the Palestinians, the Christians equate Jews and Zionism and don't make a distinction between them<sup>38</sup>.

In the interview Yarden further explains how he believes it is important for Palestinian Christians and Muslims to understand the relationship between Judaism and Jewish identity, between Jewish identity and Zionism, and the diversity of opinion among Jews.

Another example is related to understanding the impact of the conflict in Jerusalem. In order to establish contact between Israelis and Palestinians in East and West Jerusalem, ICCI has organized three main groups, one for young adults, and another for women and a third for

<sup>35</sup> Interreligious Coordinating Council, “Women`s Programs”, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=64](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=64) Retrieved December 1, 2009. The Women group has been engaged in a new project, not yet published. See Kronish, Ron, “Interreligious Dialogue in the Service of Peace”, summer 2008, p. 14, online [http://www.seminary.wlu.ca/documents/Package8\\_000.pdf](http://www.seminary.wlu.ca/documents/Package8_000.pdf) Retrieved November 30, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> ICCI, Programs, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=62](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=62) Retrieved February 21, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> This dialogue group of land is also mentioned in Landau, Yehezkel, *Healing the Holy Land*, Peacework no. 51, United State Institute for Peace, 2003:26. This document can also be downloaded online: <http://www.usip.org/publications/healing-holy-land-interreligious-peacebuilding-israelpalestine> Retrieved February 24, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

religious leaders<sup>39</sup>. By organizing groups from East and West Jerusalem, ICCI invites a new understanding of the daily life of the *religious other* in Jerusalem. They visit each other's homes<sup>40</sup>, and learn by personal contact how the Separation Barrier and the disputed Qalandia Checkpoint<sup>41</sup> affect the lives of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem. On April 1, 2009 a joint group of Israelis and Palestinian learned how the Separation Barrier had divided a village in two, one in the domain of the Palestinian Authority and the other under the municipality of Jerusalem<sup>42</sup>. The experiences made by the different groups of Israelis and Palestinians are meant to promote "planning and implementation of action projects in both East and West Jerusalem"<sup>43</sup> within the different groups. In relation to Jerusalem ICCI conducts several programs. The first is by holding lectures and exhibitions to learn of the religious significance of Jerusalem for the two peoples and the three faiths. Sometimes these lectures or visits are conducted by a representatives of the religion themselves, while other times academic articles are given to inform about the Holiness of Jerusalem within the religious traditions.

The third principle *focus on communities rather than individuals* basically means that the participants are not ordinarily interested persons, but are either religious leaders or persons who might have an impact of their communities one day. On the other hand, Kronish explains in the interview how the idea is that leaders will have influence on their communities at large, although Kronish explains that it rarely is implemented on the communities afterwards:

... the idea is that a leader would have influence on other but it doesn't always work. We find that while the people involved get personally transformed, - they are very different people, they look at the other in a different way, they know the other, and we have jet to take major steps in bringing this to the next level of the community, their societies and their schools, synagogues, mosques. It rarely happens<sup>44</sup>.

The fourth principle is to have "Long-Term Programs and Relationships: all major programs are long-term so as to encourage the building of lasting relationships<sup>45</sup>". The *long-term* principle is demonstrated by the fact that participants in different programs are given follow up meetings after the courses have been implemented. The fifth principle –religion as part of

<sup>39</sup> See above.

<sup>40</sup> Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, "Annual Report 2007", online: <http://www.icci.org.il/2007annualreporticci.pdf> Retrieved November 23, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Haaretz, "Top reservists: Roadblocks in W. Bank do more harm than good", online: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/953534.html> Retrieved December 1, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, "Recent Events", online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=18&Itemid=154](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=18&Itemid=154) Retrieved August 26, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, "Annual Report 2007" page 8, online: <http://www.icci.org.il/2007annualreporticci.pdf> Retrieved August 25, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Excerpt from the interview with Ron Kronish.

<sup>45</sup> ICCI, Programs, online: see above

the solution – means that ICCI sees religion as an important dimension for understanding the other in this region.

In addition, ICCI also offers Study Tours to groups and organizations interested in learning about the different religious communities in Israel and specifically about their affiliation with Jerusalem<sup>46</sup>. These study tours have also led to contact between ICCI and other groups abroad. In the interview with Yarden he explains how he had conducted study tours with British Palestinian Muslims and British Jews, which he sees as important in order not to export the conflict to a struggle between Palestinians and Jews living abroad<sup>47</sup>.

The cooperation between ICCI and other organizations is quite impressive. The cooperation partners might be illustrated through three major connections. First of all ICCI is the chapter of World Religions for Peace, which in itself results in a massive international cooperation. ICCI attends meetings with leading persons from WCRP to discuss partnership and programs between ICCI and WCRP<sup>48</sup>. WCRP supports the programs of ICCI, both Kedem – the group of religious leaders, and the women`s group, and sees this cooperation as part of its assistance to ICCI<sup>49</sup>. During the war in Gaza January 2009, WCRP invited members of ICCI and their group Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Forum (JIYAF) to a “three-day emergency dialogue meeting in Paris to discuss the consequences of the recent war in Gaza and its implication for the future dialogue in the region”<sup>50</sup>. WCRP also sponsors a program for the Israeli and Palestinian youth groups together with a Buddhist youth group from Japan, where they discuss how they deal with memories from past traumas to promote reconciliation within their own faith<sup>51</sup>. The youth groups were introduced to the teaching of peace at *Rissho Kosei-kai*<sup>52</sup>. One of the themes was “Between Memory and Reconciliation: Individual Identity, Collective Memory and Narrative Implication for Conflict Transformation”. These courses have been conducted in cooperation with WCRP. They were also introduced to the teaching of *Rissho Kosei-kai*’s founder, Rev Nikkyo Niwano and his efforts for world peace through working for cooperation and

<sup>46</sup> See above.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Ophir Yarden.

<sup>48</sup> ICCI, Past Events, online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=23&Itemid=191](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=23&Itemid=191) Retrieved June 20, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> See Religions for Peace, online: <http://religionsforpeace.org/initiatives/violent-conflict/conflict-transformation/israel.html> Retrieved June 20, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> ICCI, Newsletter, online [http://icci.org.il/newsletters/ICCI\\_Newsletter\\_-\\_February\\_2009\\_\(English\).pdf](http://icci.org.il/newsletters/ICCI_Newsletter_-_February_2009_(English).pdf) Retrieved June 20, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> ICCI, Presentation of youth program, online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=65](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=65) , Retrieved February 12, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> See the webpage of *Rissho Kosei*, online: <http://rk-world.org/> Retrieved February 12, 2009.

interreligious dialogue. According to the resume of a visit to Tokyo in 2008, one of the aims of the project was to: encourage the youths to study ways of reconciliation reflected in Japan's culture and history, including, for example, the practice of the fundamental teachings of Buddhism"<sup>53</sup>. In this way ICCI is connected to an international network of religious peacebuilders.

Secondly, ICCI was established as an Israeli coordinating council in 1991, and has today about 75 member organizations. Among the organizations in this dissertation three are members of ICCI: RHR, JCJCR and JP. The fact that ICCI has so many member organizations also makes it a natural starting point for engagement with Israeli organizations generally. Several of the member organizations of ICCI are organizations with a Western Christian tradition, some even stand in contradiction to peacework, such as the International Christian Embassy, with pro- Israel Western Christian Zionists. But in the interview Yarden explains how ICCI does not have any contact with Christian Zionists and even has "a negative orientation to it"<sup>54</sup>. Two of the member organizations are specifically Muslim<sup>55</sup>, some are both Jewish, Muslim and Christian, while the majority are either Israeli Jewish or Christian. Although the cooperation between ICCI and its member organizations varies, it should also be mentioned that Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman from Rabbis for Human Rights is a chair person on the board of ICCI<sup>56</sup>. In the interview Kronish explains how ICCI is an educational organization, although they also are in favor of human rights organizations<sup>57</sup>. ICCI also has contact with members CRIHL. At the international conference in Jerusalem 2008, members of CRIHL were present, and the Jewish representative of CRIHL Rabbi David Rosen held a speech as well<sup>58</sup>.

The third connection is the outreach of ICCI towards Palestinian organizations and religious leaders. In the interview Kronish explains how difficult this cooperation is because of the ongoing political conflict and lack of agreements: "Since it's illegal for Israelis to go into the West bank, and it's so hard to get Palestinians to come into Jerusalem, we pretty much stands there for reasons of practicality... And then you have the separation wall, you

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<sup>53</sup> See Risho Kossei-Kai's News Achieves for 2008, online: <http://www.rk-world.org/> Retrieved May 20, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Ophir Yarden.

<sup>55</sup> Uzbek cultural Center and the Naqshabandi Center available at [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=56](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=56) and Al Qasemi College of Education available at <http://www.qsm.ac.il/> Retrieved October 15, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> See the list of the members of the board of ICCI online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54) Retrieved February 23, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Ron Kronish.

<sup>58</sup> See chapter 12.

have the mentality of separation, so separation is the mentality now"<sup>59</sup>. On the other hand, Kronish explains how they are about to develop cooperation with Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem<sup>60</sup>. Yarden also mentions the close cooperation between ICCI and Tantur Ecumenical Institute, which has contact with all the Palestinian Christian communities<sup>61</sup>. Yarden also mentions the cooperation with central Palestinian Christian leaders<sup>62</sup>.

In addition ICCI cooperates with a great number of international organizations<sup>63</sup>. The cooperation between the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel and organizations abroad is enormous, but all foreign organizations come from Western or Asian countries, although some are international with representatives from Middle Eastern countries as well. One example of such cooperation is when ICCI hosted the International Conference in Jerusalem for the International Council of Christian and Jews. (ICCJ)<sup>64</sup> in 2008, which focused on the theme "The Contribution of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue to Peace-Building in the Middle East." ICCJ serves as the umbrella organization of 38 national Jewish-Christian dialogue organizations world-wide. Yarden explains the close relationship between ICCI and ICCJ by how he coordinated the whole Conference, and how the vice chair member of ICCI, Debbie Weisman<sup>65</sup> is also the president of ICCJ. Over 180 people attended the conference from Australia, North and South America, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. The conference included site-visits to local institutions that promote interreligious and intercultural relations between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as text study, workshops, and panel discussions relating to contemporary issues in the fields of coexistence, peace-building, and Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations<sup>66</sup>.

ICCI also cooperates with Auburn Theological Seminary<sup>67</sup>, specifically through Face to Face/Faith to Faith programs -which bring together teenagers from Israel/Palestine, South Africa, Ireland, and the United States of America. ICCI is also engaged in the work of the

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Ron Kronish.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> One of the staff of Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Timothy Lowe, is also a member of the board of ICCI, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54) Retrieved February 23, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Ophir Yarden.

<sup>63</sup> See the link to international organizations at ICCI, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=73](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=73) Retrieved February 23, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> The homepage of the International Council of Christian and Jews is available at <http://iccj.org/en/index.php> Retrieved October 29, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> See the list of the member of the board of ICCI online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=54) Retrieved February 23, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> I participated myself at this Conference. See description of this Conference in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>67</sup> The homepage of Auburn Theological Seminary, online: <http://auburnsem.org/> Retrieved October 29, 2009.



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Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)<sup>68</sup>, an organization which was founded for reconciliation between Germany and Israel after the Second World War.

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<sup>68</sup> The homepage of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung is available at <http://www.kas.de/wf/en/> Retrieved October 29, 2009.

## 8 PASSIA – Religious Unit

*When I was a teenager, a Mediterranean club was established in the Musrara neighborhood of the city to bring Jews and Arabs together. But the man, who set up the club, while committed to social interaction, believed – in so far as I can recall – that all of Jerusalem should remain under Israeli control. The club didn't last long. It was outlived by a conflict that is not about social integration, but lost rights.*

*Extract from “Justice Must Come Before Dialogue”, by Mustafa Abu Sway, 1999.*

The Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs (PASSIA) was established in 1987 by Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi and a group of Palestinian academics and intellectual in Jerusalem, basically “to present the Palestinian question in its national, Arab and international contexts through academic research, dialogue and publication”<sup>1</sup>. PASSIA is an academic non-profit institution, with staff members and academic writers from several universities in both Palestine and Israel<sup>2</sup>. In 1998 PASSIA established a religious studies unit to promote religious dialogue among the three Monotheistic faiths. The religious studies unit of PASSIA is the focus of this chapter.

The data has been collected from three main sources: from the organization's website, from other publications of members active in the religious studies unit of PASSIA and from an interview with a contributor of PASSIA – Professor of Islamic Studies, Mustafa Abu Sway<sup>3</sup>, who has been an active peace activist these last two decades.

In order to present the religious studies unit of PASSIA, it is relevant to briefly present the whole academic society of PASSIA first – of which the religious studies unit is one part. PASSIA is a non-profit institution located in Jerusalem which is not affiliated with any government, political party or organization. PASSIA conducts projects on Diplomacy and Protocol, Strategic studies, the European Community and Education on Democracy. PASSIA explains how its “involvement in the question of Jerusalem remains extensive. It hosts regular

<sup>1</sup> See PASSIA, “About PASSIA”, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved October 14, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See PASSIA, “Board of Trustees” and “Administration and Staff” online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved October 14, 2009. On the board are professors from the Palestinian Universities: Bethlehem University, Al-Quds University and Birzeit University. The Hebrew University is represented through the writings of Yitzhak Reiter.

<sup>3</sup> Mustafa Abu Sway is a professor of Islamic Studies. He has written several articles published by PASSIA.

workshops which address different but inter-connected problems concerning the holy city such as access to information, holy sites, Israeli settlement, and viable future municipal arrangements as capital for the two States”<sup>4</sup>. PASSIA cooperates with other Palestinian institutions both inside and outside of the Palestinian territories. They are financed by several institutions and foreign governments<sup>5</sup>, in addition to the local sales of their publications. PASSIA is also a member of five networks and associations both in the Arab and Western world<sup>6</sup>. According to the founder of PASSIA, Mahdi F. Abdul Hadi, some of the challenges facing Palestinians today are:

The present crisis of leadership has deepened in the post-Arafat era with the rise of “representatives” and not leaders. They represent factions, i.e., Hamas and Fateh and the rest of the PLO factions, rather than the people and their cause. This has resulted in the second Nakba for the Palestinian people, dividing them geographically—Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Diaspora --, ideologically—secular vs. religious—and politically—negotiation or resistance—and thus shaking everyone’s identity. Today, an ordinary Palestinian cannot have harmony or dynamic chemistry in the four layers of his identity: 1) Religion, 2) Arab nationalism 3) Palestinian identity and 4) family<sup>7</sup>.

In this way PASSIA promotes unity among Palestinians in order to promote peace and a stable commitment to a political solution through nonviolence. As mentioned - PASSIA established the religious studies unit in 1998, which is the main interest in this chapter. Nevertheless, the religious studies unit must be seen as part of PASSIA`s work and ideology. The main interest of this presentation is to understand the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis in the work of the religious studies unit of PASSIA.

<sup>4</sup> PASSIA, ”About Us”, online: <http://passia.org/> Retrieved May 4, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> PASSIA is supported by: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Jerusalem, the Japanese Endowment Fund, the Finnish Representative Office in Ramallah, the Palestine Investment Fund (PIF), Ramallah, The Rockefeller Foundation, New York. In addition several projects have been supported in a limited time by different representatives. See the list of financial support online: <http://passia.org/> Retrieved May 4, 2009. PASSIA has also been central in research related to the future of Jerusalem in the aftermath of the Oslo Agreement. See Wasserstein: 2008: 303-304.

<sup>6</sup> PASSIA is a member of Arab Partner for Conflict Prevention and Human Security (APCPHS), online: <http://www.fcd.org/files/news6.htm> , Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), online: <http://www.pngo.net/> , Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (Euro-MeSCo), online: <http://www.euromesco.org/>, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANNND), online: <http://www.annnd.org/> and the Arab Social Science Research Network (ASSR) which consists of regional Arab Institutions from Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan, online: <http://www.assr.org/> All retrieved January 19, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> See PASSIA, Selected publications by Dr. Mahdi F. Abdul Hadi, “Palestinians have no leaders, only representatives”, October 2010, online: [http://passia.org](http://passia.org/) Retrieved May 4, 2009.

## **8.1 Mission and Motivation**

The objectives of the religious studies unit of PASSIA are presented through seven different goals:

1. to promote mutual understanding and further peaceful relations and respect between and among the people of different beliefs;
2. to provide a forum for and to facilitate open debate and free discussion between scholars, professionals and others interested in religious issues and aspects concerning the life and the people in the Holy Land;
3. to promote research into ways of developing inter-religious understanding, and find methods that allow different religions to work in harmony and on an equal footing;
4. to provide opportunities for learning about each other's faiths without prejudice;
5. to re-examine the meaning of the religious assumptions - particularly about one another - through careful and in-depth studies of each other's sacred writings and traditions;
6. to question the misconceptions that have contributed to historical conflict between the monotheistic religions and work towards mutual respect of each other's legitimacy and distinctiveness;
7. to achieve international recognition of the fact that religious belief in the Middle East is not the same as religious fundamentalism and thus not a threat as widely believed<sup>8</sup>.

These objectives thus focus on dialogue, research and a common commitment to combating misconception and gaining international recognition, which shows that religious belief is neither a threat nor the reason behind the political conflict. The objectives further bring forth an academic focus and context by seeking to provide a forum for scholars and professionals, and by promoting research to help develop mutual understanding. This forum is also open for "others interested on religious issues"<sup>9</sup>, but nevertheless the academic orientation is stated.

The motivation behind these mentioned goals –or mission –might be related to the explanation PASSIA gives for the establishment of the religious studies unit. According to PASSIA the religious studies unit was established to combat the use of religion in the political conflict:

In the case of the Middle East, tradition has it that the practices of the different religious communities frequently represent opposing political views and powers, which has not only led to hostilities and confrontations but also reinforced national, cultural and ethnic differences. Being aware that the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities in the region have enormous potential to either encourage peaceful coexistence or support sectarian hatred, PASSIA believes that religious dialogue can help in building bridges and dispelling existing stereotypes. After all, and despite the distinctiveness of the different religious traditions, the

<sup>8</sup> PASSIA, Religious Studies Unit: «Objectives». Online: <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/objectives.html> Retrieved November 11, 2009. I have added the numbers to the presentation.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

three monotheistic faiths have bases of unity among them and others may be discovered in the course of such a dialogue<sup>10</sup>.

In the same presentation the website emphasizes its role as to contribute “to the shaping of a pluralistic society where people of all faiths – and those of no faith – are respected ...”<sup>11</sup>. This statements is further explained by statements that say “religious differences can be enriching” and that religion lies at the heart of “nearly every human culture, shaping its identity, values, relationships, and actions ...”<sup>12</sup>.

There is also a general focus on how religion has “the power to divide and destroy”<sup>13</sup>, where the latter is presented as when “religion is being exploited to foster prejudices, and discrimination and religious emotions are used to promote other non-religious goals”<sup>14</sup>. In this way the religious unit of PASSIA presents their goal as follows:

By engaging in an open and sensitive dialogue among believers of the different faiths, each side can learn from the other and help promote better understanding and cooperation, while acknowledging their differences. This is particularly important in the case of Palestine and Israel, where the encounter between people of very different religious traditions – each inspired by a unique vision of the divine and with a distinct cultural identity - takes place in the close proximity of cities and neighborhoods. Here, dialogue can help in breaking down walls of fear and prejudice by addressing issues of conflict arising from religious and cultural differences. There will never be peace in the Middle East without peace between the religions, and peace between the religions can only be achieved through dialogue between the people<sup>15</sup>.

In this way the motivation behind bringing religion into the work for peace is to prevent religion or religious terminology from being used as part of political disagreement, and rather using it as an opening for dialogue and mutual respect for each other.

The religious studies unit of PASSIA seeks to provide a forum where Palestinian Muslims and Christians, and Israeli Jews can meet. Abdul Hadi explains the motivation behind this work:

My opinion was that the interfaith dialogue should take place alongside the political negotiations, but that it should in no way be regarded as a substitute, and that we should refrain from beginning by politicizing religion. I believed then - as I believe today - that whereas the battle to reach a political settlement promised to be lengthy and difficult, the

<sup>10</sup> PASSIA, Religious Studies Unit, «Background», online: <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/background.html> Retrieved November 11, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> PASSIA, Religious Studies Unit, «Background», online: <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/background.html> Retrieved November 8, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> PASSIA, Religious Studies Unit, “Background”, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

blessing of the religious people and their leaders for the idea of tolerance and coexistence would precede and even perhaps facilitate the reaching of this settlement<sup>16</sup>.

In this way the religious studies unit provides a forum for dialogue which is to be promoted parallel to the political negotiations. Abdul Hadi emphasizes how the religious values can be helpful along this way by bringing forth attitudes of tolerance and coexistence. By engaging in open interreligious dialogue Abdul Hadi hopes that this can<sup>17</sup> “light the way to our overcoming the challenge and lead the negotiations to a just solution<sup>18</sup>”. The interreligious dialogue between Muslim, Christian and Jews brings up issues related to common figures from the three Monotheistic faiths. In relation to a dialogue on Abraham in the three Monotheistic faith Abdul Hadi emphasizes how each dialogue partner should focus on making a presentation which would “enable the other participants to formulate a better idea of what Abraham means to them as a Muslim, Christian or Jew<sup>19</sup>”. Abdul Hadi concludes in this introduction as follows:

In spite of the numerous aspects of our political conflict, all of which require comprehensive solutions, I still believe that the best road the Palestinians can take on their way to freedom and independence is one that arrives at the venue of building the culture of justice and peace, which is the cornerstone of the three monotheistic religions. Therefore, the interfaith dialogue on freedom of religion and faith, as well as bringing people of the book to meet, talk and understand each other, is of great importance for all the Moslems, Jews and Christians of the region, especially here in Jerusalem<sup>20</sup>.

A central motivation for the religious unit of PASSIA is that “dialogue can break down walls of fear and prejudice by addressing issues of conflict arising from religious and cultural differences<sup>21</sup>”. One example of a conflicting issue is “how the concept of “the promised land” affects issues of history and nationality<sup>22</sup>”. Abdul Hadi explains how the main challenge is to read and see the ‘other’ as he wishes to be read and seen.

Religious narratives are also meant to be normative for the believers and advice to them on how to deal with crisis. In the foreword of *Joseph in the three monotheistic faiths* (2002)<sup>23</sup> Abdul Hadi shows an interest in “the various aspects of religion, especially the revival or religiosity witnessed amongst different communities and the ways in which religion in

<sup>16</sup> See the introduction to Abraham in the Three Monotheistic Faiths, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> See the introduction to “Religious Dialogue” online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> See “Ibrahim in the Torah, Bible and Quran” online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> This is one of the publications of PASSIA made in cooperation between Muslim, Christian and Jewish writers. See the list of publications, online: <http://www.passia.org> Retrieved May 14, 2009.

general, and this revival in particular, affect the stands they adopt in response to certain crises”<sup>24</sup>. Abdul Hadi gives an account of the story of Joseph by focusing on five major episodes in his life – the following account might illustrate the main motivation behind the religious unit of PASSIA work with interreligious dialogue. The first episode was regarding Joseph’s relationship with his father and “reflects, the extent to which most individuals are attached to their roots, heritage, family, history, and identity”<sup>25</sup>. The second episode was related to Joseph’s relationship between his brothers and “is concerned with the relationship between the individual and his or her destiny”<sup>26</sup>. The third episode is related to Joseph’s relationship with the wife of the Pharaoh, and “represents one’s ability to resist personal desires and impulses and accept the consequences”<sup>27</sup>. The fourth episode is related to how Joseph’s life was transformed from being imprisoned to becoming one of the political leaders of society, and thus Joseph is a “perfect example of the need for modesty, compassion and forgiveness”<sup>28</sup>, as he “remained modest, acknowledged his past and acted justly toward those who had sought to harm him, including his brothers, with whom he willingly shared his prosperity”<sup>29</sup>. And finally, Abdul Hadi argues that Joseph is an example of someone who had the “ability to interpret visions and dreams”<sup>30</sup>. Thus, writing during the second intifada Abdul Hadi concludes:

To discuss the story of Joseph in the context of the perspectives of the three monotheistic faiths is to learn about different interpretations of the same text, share its value and beauty, and fully understand God’s message that this is “the best of stories.” The fact that the three views were presented at a PASSIA meeting in the midst of a serious conflict shows that even when circumstances are less than ideal, religious dialogue is still possible. It also shows that there are still those who believe, with good reason, that in order to overcome crises, we need to focus not on our differences, but on the things that unite us<sup>31</sup>.

In the same manner Abdul Hadi writes about the responsibility of “scholars and religious leaders to explain their beliefs and positions, especially in times of crisis, and to resist the temptation to depict certain ideas in a negative if not distorted way”<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> See the introduction to Joseph in the Three Monotheistic Faiths, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> See the introduction to Moses in the Three Monotheistic Faiths, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

The religious studies unit also seeks to bring up the question of Jerusalem in an interreligious setting. The religious studies unit published a book called *Jerusalem Religious Aspects* in 2000, written by Muslims, Christians and Jews. But the religious studies unit also provides a political platform on the question of Jerusalem, which is brought forth in the setting of a dialogue:

Historically, Jerusalem has been part of Palestine and Palestinian heritage is deeply rooted in the city. Jerusalem is related to the land and people of Palestine, to their Muslim–Christian beliefs and holy places. For Muslim and Christian Palestinians, Jerusalem is of great importance not only as a holy city but also as the political, geographic, economic and cultural center of Palestine. It is the capital of the Palestinian people, for which thousands have sacrificed their lives to defend and protect; it is the symbol of Palestinian national identity and of their inalienable rights. Its Arabic roots go back 5,000 years to the time when the city of Arab Yabous (Jerusalem) was founded. As Islam had dominated the culture of the Middle East for centuries, it has dominated Jerusalem ... Against the background of centuries of Muslim rule and uninterrupted Arab presence in the city, no one can justify the policies and practices of 27 years of Israeli occupation and ignore 1,400 years of continuous Arab Muslim- Christian rule<sup>33</sup>.

On the other hand, the question of Jerusalem is also brought up in the context of a dialogue which seeks to include the other. Abdul Hadi encourages a common cooperation between the two peoples - specifically in Jerusalem:

Therefore, and for the sake of our coming generations, let us start living together *equally and separately* in our city of Jerusalem, let us together share its goods, preserve its holy places and historical monuments, and develop the city's economy. Let us work together for a better future!<sup>34</sup>

In this way they seek to give the three religious perspectives on these issues among Israelis and Palestinians as part of an interreligious dialogue. It should also be mentioned that several of the writers of “Jerusalem Religious Aspects”, published a new book called “Where Heaven and Earth Meet” in 2009<sup>35</sup>. Mustafa Abu Sway is among the authors of this book, and in the interview he explained how the aim of this book was to promote “a healthy relation to each other's holy places”<sup>36</sup>. The book was produced in cooperation with an Israeli, a Palestinian

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Sari Nuseibeh, President of Al-Quds University, and Yitzhak Reiter have written in this book. In addition Mustafa Abu Sway has written in this book, and also several of the articles and publications of the religious unit of PASSIA. See the three chapters: “1917 to the Present: *Al-Haram al-Sharif*/Temple Mount (*Har ha-Bayit*) and the Western Wall” by Yitzhak Reiter and Jon Seligman, “The Holy Land, Jerusalem, and the Asqa Mosque in the Islamic Sources”, by Mustafa Abu Sway, and “The Haram al-Sharif”, by Sari Nuseibeh, in Grabar, Oleg and Kedar, Benjamin Z. *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*. Israel, Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mustafa Abu Sway.



and a Dominican institute of higher learning, all located in Jerusalem<sup>37</sup>. The main objective of this book might be connected to the following statements by the editors:

We believe that the project we have embarked upon is bold, thrilling, and important. Its success could amount to a signal of great significance: if an Israeli university and a Palestinian one, aided by experts from abroad, are capable of co-producing a volume about the past and the present of this extremely emotion-laden Esplanade, less thorny enterprise may become feasible<sup>38</sup>.

Thus, members of the religious studies unit seek to cooperate on developing a common history of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, in the interview Mustafa Abu Sway specifically emphasizes the need of Israeli Rabbis to discuss the issues of the land, the occupation and the way this has influenced Palestinian lives these last 62 years<sup>39</sup>. According to Abu Sway the Israeli Rabbis specifically need to focus on the sacred commandment to love your neighbor: “when religion says for example, love your neighbor, it means also don’t occupy your neighbour. That’s one thing. When it says love your neighbor it says, if you live up to religion, if you live up to that ideal it means also don’t demolish the house of your neighbors”<sup>40</sup>.

The religious studies unit is also a forum where internal Islamic relations are brought up, or Palestinian issues which are related to both Palestinian Muslims and Christians. In relation to Islam the religious studies unit specifically seeks to establish unity among Palestinian Muslims. This can be exemplified by the writings of Abu Sway, where he explains how different Islamic interpretations – has had a dividing effect on the Palestinian people. In an article called “Salafism: From Theological Discourse to Political Activism” Abu Sway explains the diversity among Islamic theological and juridical schools, and the need to respect this plurality within Islam as emphasized by the Amman Message<sup>41</sup> of July 2005<sup>42</sup>. The

<sup>37</sup> These institutions were the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Research Centre it runs in common with Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, Al-Quds University and its Centre for Jerusalem Studies, and the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jerusalem.

<sup>38</sup> Grabar and Kedar: 2009:12.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Excerpt from the interview with Mustafa Abu Sway.

<sup>41</sup> The Amman Message was launched by H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan in 2004. In 2005 he convened an International Islamic Summit represented by 180 leading scholars representing 45 countries. The Amman Message emphasizes the common basic principles of Islam and calls for a recognition of all eight of the traditional schools of Islamic religious law, identifies the condition for issuing legitimate *fatwa* and condemns the practices known as *takfir* (calling other “apostates”). The official website of the Amman Message is online: [http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=30](http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=30) and the Amman Interfaith Message online: [http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=95&Itemid=54](http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=95&Itemid=54) Retrieved May 7, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Abu Sway, Mustafa: "Salafism: From Theological Discourse to Political Activism", p 6. Online: <http://www.passia.org/meetings/rsunit/Salafism.pdf> Retrieved October 27, 2010.

Amman Message put forward the basic principles of Islam in their faith in the oneness of God (*Tawhid Allah*) and the belief in the message of the Prophet:

Over history these (basic principles) have formed a strong and cohesive nation and a great civilization. They bear witness to noble principles and values that verify the good of humanity, whose foundation is the oneness of the human species, and that people are equal in rights and obligations, peace and justice, realizing comprehensive security, mutual social responsibility, being good to one's neighbor, protecting belongings and property, honoring pledges and more<sup>43</sup>

In this way the religious studies unit is a forum which seeks moderation and links itself to moderate Islamic voices internationally.

The religious studies unit is also a forum for dialogue between Palestinian Christians and Muslims. In recent years this dialogue has led to the publication of three books. The first is "Dialogue on Moslem Christian Relations"<sup>44</sup>, the second "Moslem Christian Dialogue in Jerusalem"<sup>45</sup>, and the third is a comparative approach called "Jesus in the Christian and Muslims Faiths"<sup>46</sup>. The latter is explained by Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi as part of a series of publications on the three Monotheistic faiths these last ten years<sup>47</sup>.

In this way the religious studies unit of PASSIA is a forum for moderate Muslim voices, for relationship building for Palestinian Christians and Muslims, and a forum for dialogue between religious leaders and academics, both Palestinians and Israelis.

## **8.2 Activities and Cooperation**

The activities of the religious studies unit at PASSIA can be divided into five categories: coordinating meetings, dialogue sessions, seminars, conferences and publications. PASSIA provides a list over all the activities conducted between 1998 and 2010. In the following I would like to present the activities in this period. The coordinating meetings from 1998 to 2010 can be further divided into seven different issues:

- 1) Jerusalem
- 2) Relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- 3) Muslim-Christian relations
- 4) Islam

<sup>43</sup> The Amman Message 2005:1. Online: [http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=30](http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=30) Retrieved May 7, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> This book was published in 1999 in Arabic, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> This book was published in 2001 in Arabic, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> This book was published in 2007 in English, online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

<sup>47</sup> See the introduction to "Jesus in the Christian and Muslim Faiths", online: <http://www.passia.org> Retrieved August 17, 2008.

- 5) Crisis
- 6) Contacts with the other organizations in this dissertation
- 7) Additional issues

In addition to these seven issues, six coordination meetings were held in 1998 related to the establishment of the religious studies unit of PASSIA together with members of the Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, Director of the Waqf, sheikhs and bishops<sup>48</sup>. In the period between 1998 and 2010 the religious studies unit conducted 43 coordination meetings related to the issue of Jerusalem. The topics of these meetings can be further divided into four main issues, in addition to three other underlying topics. The first main issue is related to Islamic perspectives on Jerusalem<sup>49</sup>, both in relation to the Waqf area and in relation with its religious significance. The second is the Jewish perspective on Jerusalem<sup>50</sup>, where the religious studies unit has invited Jewish scholar and rabbis to present these issues<sup>51</sup>. The third is the Christian perspective on Jerusalem<sup>52</sup>, which is represented by different Christian denominations in Jerusalem and is discussed in relation to Islam. The fourth main issue related to Jerusalem is the protection of Holy Places and the conflict over Jerusalem<sup>53</sup>. These meetings gathered representatives from the Muslim Community and Heads of Institutions, from Western and Middle Eastern countries<sup>54</sup> to discuss the challenges of protecting holy places and the future of Jerusalem. In addition three underlying issues have also been discussed on the coordinating meetings of PASSIA. These three are cooperation with WCC on Jerusalem<sup>55</sup>, cooperation with Palestinian Institutions in Jerusalem<sup>56</sup> and religious dialogue in Jerusalem<sup>57</sup>. In addition

<sup>48</sup> These meetings were held in 1998 on January 22, April 14, August 30, September 2, September 24 and October 4. See the list over coordination meetings at PASSIA 1998 online: <http://passia.org> Retrieved November 23, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> 1 February 1998, 1 June 2000 (joint paper by Jewish and Muslim participants), 2 July 2000, 6 December 2000, 10 March 2001, 22 June 2002 (The Three Monotheistic Faiths and the Question of Jerusalem), 1 February 2003 (Islamic Waqf Issue in the Old City), 5 July 2003, 28 August 2003, 31 October 2003, 4 February 2005 (Christians and Muslims together for Jerusalem, under Israeli occupation), 9 August 2004, 29 August 2007 (Muslim-Christian relations), 13 October 2009.

<sup>50</sup> 22 January 1999, 2 June 200 (joint paper by Jewish and Muslim), 10 March 2001, 19 April 2001, 22 June 2002 (The Three Monotheistic Faiths and the Question of Jerusalem).

<sup>51</sup> In January 1999 Dr. Barnett Rubin from the Council on Foreign Relation in New York was invited, in June 2000 Rabbi Menachem Frohman wrote on Jerusalem, Froham is a member of JP described in chapter 11.19 April 2001 Marc Gopin was invited.

<sup>52</sup> 24 March 2001, 22 June 2002 (The Three Monotheistic Faiths and the Question of Jerusalem), 1 February 2003 (Coptic), 24 July 2003 (Greek Orthodox Patriarch), 31 October 2003, 4 February 2005 (Christians and Muslims together for Jerusalem, under Israeli occupation), 29 August 2007 (Muslim-Christian relations)

<sup>53</sup> 24 May 1998, July 8 1999 on holy places, 3 January 2001 (two meetings, one on holy places, the other on threats to Al-Aqsa Mosque), 10 March 2001, 7 October 2002, 3 November 2002, 6 March 2003, 22 May 2003, 7 July 2003, 24 August 2004, 5 September 2007, 20 August 2007, 5 May 2007, 13 October 2009, 13 August 2009, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2010 (Jerusalem and the Religious Environment), 8 June 2010 (The Holy Places of Jerusalem: Emerging Actors & New Challenges since 2000), 14 April 2010 (The Question of Jerusalem 2010).

<sup>54</sup> See the footnote.

<sup>55</sup> November 13, 15 and 16 1998,

<sup>56</sup> February 5, 1998.

to these coordinating meetings the topic of Jerusalem has been brought up in the dialogue sessions, seminars, conference and publications of the religious studies unit of PASSIA. In the period from 1998 to 2010 the question of Jerusalem was brought up 16 times in the dialogue sessions<sup>58</sup>, four times at seminars<sup>59</sup>, four international conferences<sup>60</sup>. As mentioned above, in 2000 the religious studies unit published a book called *Jerusalem Religious Aspects*, written by Abdul Hadi, Sari Nuseibeh (President of Al-Quds University), Bernard Sabella (professor in sociology at Bethlehem University) and Yitzhak Reiter (Hebrew University).

The second issue in the activities of the religious studies unit of PASSIA is the relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which was brought up 15 times from 1998 to 2010. Ten times in relation to interreligious dialogue between the three Monotheistic religions<sup>61</sup>, and five times in relation to Jerusalem. The relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam is brought up 13 times in the dialogue sessions between 1998 and 2010<sup>62</sup>, five times during seminars<sup>63</sup>, none at conferences, but in three publications<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> 9 September 2004, 7 October 2004.

<sup>58</sup> 1998: Sept. 24-26 and Nov 9, 1999: March 17, October 6 and November 1, 2000: 21 March, 20 May, 29 August and 25 November, 2001: 22 January and 15 February, 2003: 29 April, 12 May, 14 June and July, and in 2005: 15 March.

<sup>59</sup> 1998: May 20, September 9 and November 14, 1999: January 22. According to the list no seminars have been held since 2002.

<sup>60</sup> 1998: October 26-28 (HE Archbishop Jean Louis Tauran, Foreign Minister of the Vatican; Apostolic Delegation), 1999: January 11-13 (International Congress organized by the Europe-Near East Center ENEC), 2000: 10-11 July (political representatives) and 2002: 7-8 June (organized by the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization ISESCO).

<sup>61</sup> In 1998: February 2 (The People of the Book: Their Prophets and Their Scriptures), April 3 (Ideas for Topics to be covered in the Triangle Interfaith Meeting), April 4 (Briefing on Bishop Sabah's Meeting with the Chief Rabbinate), April 5 (How can Intermediaries Assist in Interfaith Dialogue and September 6 (Religious Jewish Council in Jerusalem Exchanging Ideas). 2002: 5 October (Jewish Rabbis' Suggestions for Dialogue), 2003: 25 May (Benedictine Community of Hogia Maria Sion, Jeremy Milgrom Rabbi), 2006: 30 March (The Messiah/Jesus Christ in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Sources) 2009: 12 August (Interfaith Dialogue) and 2010: 16 June (The People of the Book: Between the Sacred Texts & Practical Life).

<sup>62</sup> 1998: February 12 (Briefing by Bishop Sabah on his meeting with the two Israeli Chief Rabbis), June 18 (How to maintain and proceed with interfaith dialogue), September 8 (Preparation of the Second Part of the Joint Academic Seminar on Abraham) and November 12 (Preliminary thought and ideas for the 1999 interfaith agenda). 1999: May 25 (Interfaith Dialogue on Muslim-Christian, Jewish Issues), August 24 (Interfaith dialogue on Muslim-Christian-Jewish Issues: A suggested statement from the Chief Rabbinate Addressing the Issue of the Holy Places in Jerusalem), October 21 (continuation of August 24 session), November 28 (Interfaith Dialogue on Muslim-Christian and Jewish Issues: Justice in the Sources of the Three Monotheistic faiths). 2001: 29 March (Judaism in the Holy Qur'an), 30 May (The prophet Mohammed in the Bible & Torah, An Islamic Reading), 25 June (Joseph/Youssef in the Holy Quran). In 2003 no Jewish representatives are mentioned. 2002: 28 October (Youssef (Joseph) in the three Monotheistic Faiths). 2003: July 2 (Musa/Moses in the Three Monotheistic Faiths).

<sup>63</sup> Four in 1998, and one in 1999.

<sup>64</sup> These three include the mentioned publication *Jerusalem Religious Aspects* 2000. In addition Abraham in the three Monotheistic Faiths 1998 and Youssef (Joseph) in the three Monotheistic Faiths 2002.

The third issue is the relationship between Muslims and Christians. In the period between 1998 and 2010 this relationship was taken up 15 times during the coordination meetings<sup>65</sup>, 27 times during the dialogue sessions<sup>66</sup>, at one seminar<sup>67</sup>, 11 conferences<sup>68</sup> and in three publications: Religious Dialogue – PASSIA meetings 1995-1998 (1999), On Muslim Christian Relations in Palestine (1999) and Jesus in the Muslim and Christian Faith (2007).

A fourth central issue is Islam, which is taken up as a single interest<sup>69</sup> 14 times during the coordination meetings between 1998 and 2010<sup>70</sup>. The issue of Islam is taken up mainly in 2007, where 7 of the coordination meetings discussed Hamas and the diversity within Islam, in addition 4 meetings were devoted to how to deal with crisis from an Islamic or religious perspective<sup>71</sup>. Islamic issues were brought up in 13 dialogue sessions<sup>72</sup>, at no seminars, but at 11 international conferences<sup>73</sup> and in one publication Sharia Personalities in Palestine (1999). Nevertheless, it must be clearly emphasized that these figures do not include all those activities where Islam is central, only those where Islam is singled out as the main interest and not in relation to other issues.

The fifth issue is related to a number of different issues which are all related to how to deal with crisis. The first coordinating meeting which dealt with this issue was held in 2001 entitled “Perspectives on Past, Present and Future Possibilities for Peace in the Region”<sup>74</sup>. In 2002 the religious studies unit held another coordination meeting entitled “The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Israeli Media”<sup>75</sup>. In 2003 two other coordination meetings were held on the issue of crisis: “The role of religious leaders and crisis”<sup>76</sup>, and “The role of religious dialogue in the Current Crisis in Palestine”<sup>77</sup>, where some Western international NGOs participated<sup>78</sup>. In 2004 two other meetings were held called “Nonviolence

<sup>65</sup> As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation and in this chapter, the main interest of this research is not internal relationships between Palestinians or internal relationships between Israelis. Nevertheless these findings are mentioned and figures because it helps us understanding the religious studies unit of PASSIA. The following numbers on dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Palestine (in addition Muslims and Christians have dialogues on issues related to Jerusalem and Palestine) are: 1998: 7, 2000: 9, 2001:1, 2002: 2, 2003:1, 2004:1, 2005: 2, 2007:1 and 2010:1.

<sup>66</sup> 1998:3, 1999: 9, 2000: 3, 2001: 4, 2002: 2, 2003: 1, 2004: 2 and 2005:1. In addition Muslims Christian relation might also be considered as part of those dialogue sessions dealing with Palestine generally.

<sup>67</sup> In 2000.

<sup>68</sup> 2001:2, 2002: 2, 2003:1, 2004: 4 and 2005:2.

<sup>69</sup> Islam is naturally taken up in relation to Jerusalem, or Judaism or Christianity in addition.

<sup>70</sup> 1999: 1, 2000:1, 2002: 2, 2007: 7, 2009: 1 and 2010:4.

<sup>71</sup> This will be discussed in the sixth issue “crisis” mentioned in the introduction of this section.

<sup>72</sup> 2000:1, 2001:3, 2002:1, 2003:1, 2004:6 and 2005:1.

<sup>73</sup> 1999:3, 2002:1, 2003:2, 2004:5.

<sup>74</sup> 27 July 2001.

<sup>75</sup> 4 March 2002. The interest for conflict resolution and media is also presented in 2.1.1.

<sup>76</sup> 31 July 2003.

<sup>77</sup> 20 November 2003.

<sup>78</sup> The World Council of Religious Leaders, New York, American Friends Service and Quaker Organization.

Theses and the Palestinian Case”, where representatives from United State Institute for Peace were present<sup>79</sup>, and “Nonviolence theses”, where Gandhi Institute for Non-violence were represented<sup>80</sup>. In 2007 three new coordination meetings on the issue of how to deal with crisis were held with the titles: “Islamic and Interfaith Religious Ethics in World Crisis” with representatives from the Center for Global Peace and Conflict Studies present<sup>81</sup>, “Psychology, Culture and Religion”<sup>82</sup> and “Non-Violence Political & Social Activism: Application to the Palestinian Case within its Political, Economic, Social and Religious Context”<sup>83</sup>. In 2008 a meeting called “Peace and Human Rights – A Multi-Faith Concept”<sup>84</sup>. And in 2009 a meeting called “The Day after Gaza”<sup>85</sup> was held together with several international religious organizations. No dialogue sessions, seminars, conferences or publications have brought this issue up.

A final interest related to the activities of the religious studies unit of PASSIA is to understand the contact between PASSIA and the other organizations in this dissertation. First of all, it is interesting to see that in 1998 the present convener of CRIHL, Trond Bakkevig, had six coordination meetings at the religious studies unit. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1998 Trond Bakkevig came to discuss “Idea for Topics to be Covered in the Triangle Interfaith Meeting”<sup>86</sup>. The day after, Trond Bakkevig and Bishop from the Latin Patriarch, Michel Sabah were invited to discuss “Briefing on Bishop Sabah’s Meeting with the Chief Rabbi of Israel”<sup>87</sup>. On 5<sup>th</sup> April 1998 Bakkevig came to discuss “How can intermediaries assist in Interfaith dialogue?” together with Faisal Husseini<sup>88</sup>. Bakkevig came three more times that year to discuss “Preparation for the Triangle Interfaith Agenda”<sup>89</sup>. Bakkevig was also present during two dialogue sessions in 1998 on the same topic<sup>90</sup>. Another prominent guest at the coordination meetings of PASSIA was Rabbi David Rosen who serves as the representative of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in CRIHL. In 1999 Rosen came to “Presenting the Idea of a Discussion

<sup>79</sup> The United State Institute for Peace has published several books on religion and peace, among them Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007.

<sup>80</sup> 29 July 2004.

<sup>81</sup> 12 December 2007, from University of California.

<sup>82</sup> 17 April 2007. With international academics.

<sup>83</sup> 6 February 2007.

<sup>84</sup> 31 April 2008.

<sup>85</sup> February 2009.

<sup>86</sup> See the list online: <http://passia.org> Retrieved March 23, 2009.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> In the document of PASSIA no title is given to Faisal Husseini.

<sup>89</sup> 18th of June, 3rd of August and 12th of November 1998.

<sup>90</sup> 18th June and 12th November 1998, the latter together with the Norwegian scholar Kari Vogt. It should also be mentioned that in 1998 the Norwegian Government organized an international conference for PASSIA.

Group on the Holy Places in Jerusalem”<sup>91</sup>, and in 2004 to discuss “Religious Dialogue in Jerusalem – Problems and Prospects” along with members from Al-Quds University, University of Toronto and Canadian Senior Scholar for Diplomacy<sup>92</sup>. Rosen was also invited in 2010 to give a Jewish reading at the coordination meeting on “The People of the Book: Between the Sacred Texts & Practical Life” together with the Head of the Religious Studies department at the Bethlehem University and a lecturer at Al-Quds University. Another organization in this dissertation which has cooperated with PASSIA is Sabeel. In 1999 they organized a conference called “Holy Land – Hollow Jubilee: God, Justice and the Palestinians”<sup>93</sup> and in 2010 the coordinator of Sabeel participated at the coordinating meeting “The Holy Places of Jerusalem: Emerging Actors & New Challenges since 2000”<sup>94</sup>. The staff member of ICCI Ophir Yarden was also invited to a coordination meeting in 2006 to discuss “The Messiah/Jesus Christ in the Jewish, Christian & Islamic Sources”<sup>95</sup>. In 2000 a paper written by Menachem Frohman, who is a peacemaker of JP<sup>96</sup>, was discussed at a coordination meeting<sup>97</sup>. It should further be mentioned that the publication “Jerusalem Religious Aspects” was reviewed and commented by Daniel Rossing, director of Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, before publishing<sup>98</sup>. Finally, it should be mentioned that a member rabbi of RHR has written a chapter in the publication of PASSIA *Youssef (Joseph) in the three Monotheistic Faiths* (2002).

In addition to the issues brought up here, it should be mentioned that the religious studies unit has held several international conferences with international religious leaders from the three Monotheistic faiths, academic scholars and official governments<sup>99</sup>.

The religious studies unit has published 12 books<sup>100</sup>. Among them five deal with the relationship between the three Monotheistic faiths, where several Muslim, Christian and Jewish writers contribute. In the book “Religious Dialogue”, Rabbi Michael Melchior wrote a chapter called “Secularism and Religion: Can They Exist Together? A Jewish Perspective”<sup>101</sup>. Melchior is well known as an Israeli Jewish peace activist, and in the early 90s he tried to

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<sup>91</sup> 8th July 1999.

<sup>92</sup> 9th September 2004.

<sup>93</sup> 15th of March 1999.

<sup>94</sup> 8th of June 2010, Nora Carmi, Sabeel Coordinator.

<sup>95</sup> 30th March 2006.

<sup>96</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>97</sup> June 2000.

<sup>98</sup> See footnote 15, in the book “Jerusalem Religious Aspects”.

<sup>99</sup> The list over activities from 1998 to 2010 names all the contacts.

<sup>100</sup> See the list of publications online: <http://www.passia.org/> Retrieved March 14, 2009. These books are also mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.

<sup>101</sup> See the list of contents of «Religious Dialogue», online: <http://www.pasia.org/> Retrieved March 14, 2009.

establish a political party which included religion as a resource for peace called Medina<sup>102</sup>. In “Abraham in the Three Monotheistic Faiths”, professor Avigdor Shinan has written the chapter on “the various faces of Abraham in ancient Judaism”<sup>103</sup>. Avigdor Shinan is a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem<sup>104</sup>. In “Joseph in the Three Monotheistic Faiths”, Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom has written the chapter which gives the Jewish perspective. Rabbi Milgrom also works for Rabbis for Human Rights<sup>105</sup>. The book “Moses in the Three Monotheistic Faiths” has a chapter of “Moses in the Jewish Tradition” which is written by Rabbi David Rosen, who is also a member of the Israeli Rabbinat, the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, and even earlier president for Religion for Peace (WCRP)<sup>106</sup>.

In the interview Abu Sway comments on the different organizations in this dissertation. Abu Sway shows great respect to the work done by RHR. In addition, Abu Sway mentions that the Kairos document of the Palestinian Christians Churches were important work, specifically because they held a “clear position<sup>107</sup>” in “favor of the issue of justice and Palestine”<sup>108</sup>.

All the activities conducted by the religious unit of PASSIA are made in cooperation with highly qualified academics or political persons. PASSIA cooperates with other academics in their research, lectures, publications, symposia and face-to-face encounters<sup>109</sup>. As mentioned, they also cooperate with the Palestinian Christian organization in this dissertation - Sabeel<sup>110</sup>. According to Abu Sway the main objective of these meetings should be to establish a “spiritual justice”<sup>111</sup>. But Abu Sway also explains how the religious unit of PASSIA still is not really systematically organized with regard to regular and frequent meetings<sup>112</sup>. Abu Sway also explains in the interview how the greatest challenge of the religious unit of PASSIA is to transform the interreligious dialogue among elites into a real grassroots movement. Abu Sway

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<sup>102</sup> See online: <http://www.meditina.org> Retrieved August 14, 2008.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> His most recent book is “Pirkeh Avoth – A New Israeli Commentary”, in which he outlines the ethical wisdom from the Mishnaic book Pirkeh Avoth, for contemporary Israelis. His book also gained interest, see Haaretz: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/the-art-of-succinct-statements-1.4551> Retrieved November 12, 2010.

<sup>105</sup> See Carnegie council, online: [http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/people/data/rabbi\\_jeremy\\_milgrom.html](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/people/data/rabbi_jeremy_milgrom.html)

<sup>106</sup> Rabbi David Rosen also has a webpage online: <http://www.rabbidavidrosen.net/> Retrieved November 12, 2010. The writings of Rabbi David Rosen will be described in more detail in chapter 12.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Abu Sway.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> See the list over activities by the religious unit of PASSIA, from 1998 until 2010 online: <http://passia.org/> Retrieved August 14, 2008.

<sup>110</sup> See activities in 2010 June 8, online: <http://passia.org/> Retrieved August 14, 2008.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Abu Sway.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



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says that most of the topics addressed derive from the interest of the elite, while “the real issues on the ground<sup>113</sup>”, which would engage the people, are not really dealt with.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

## 9 Interfaith Encounter Association

*The approach to overcome the conflict is not so much compromising your positions, but understanding that you will have your position better fulfilled, when you do it in cooperation with the other rather than doing it in conflict with the other ... Jewish settlement in the Holy land will be stronger, if it is done in cooperation with the Palestinians, the Palestinian situation in the Holy land will be better if it is done in cooperation with Israelis. This is my claim<sup>1</sup>.*

*Extract from the interview with Yehuda Stolov*

The Interfaith Encounter Association was founded in 2001 by Yehuda Stolov, who is an orthodox Jew with long experience in dialogue work. IEA describes its vision as follows:

The Interfaith Encounter Association is dedicated to promoting peace in the Middle East through interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural study. We believe that, rather than being a cause of the problem religion can and should be a source of the solution for conflicts that exist in the region and beyond<sup>2</sup>.

IEA works both locally in Israel, among Israelis and Palestinians and international, specifically addressing the Middle Eastern countries. IEA is working on the grassroots level, with interreligious dialogue in Israel, but also in part of the Palestinian territories on the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The webpage of IEA lists 38 different groups. Some of these groups are parts of three main projects of IEA: The first is to work with women - Women's Interfaith Encounter (WIE) – which consists of six groups, where one is also an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue group. The second project is to work with youth and young adults - Youth Interfaith Encounter (YIE) - which consists of six groups, where two are also part of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue group. The third project is Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue (IPD)

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov.

<sup>2</sup> See the Interfaith Encounter Association's webpage, online: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/> Retrieved September 12, 2009.

which is listed with eight groups<sup>3</sup>. Most of the information about the groups has been selected from two Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue (IPD) groups and three groups based in Jerusalem – one Youth group and one Women`s Interfaith Encounter group<sup>4</sup>. In addition to these groups, information has also been gathered from Israeli-Palestinian retreat or weekend seminars. The information below is also gathered from the official webpage of IEA, IEA`s Facebook<sup>5</sup> and an interview with the founder of IEA, Yehuda Stolov in Jerusalem, April 28, 2010. Most of the material was gathered in 2009, except the interview.

### **9.1 Mission and Motivation**

Although IEA was established during the second intifada, Stolov explains in the interview that the reason behind its establishment was basically dissatisfaction with interfaith gatherings conducted through lectures, where the participants were passive listeners. Stolov feels that the main effort should be to use interfaith gatherings as a platform where “people actually have dialogue with each other, in order to create bonds between people and therefore expose them to first hand interaction with the other, and in this way lead them to overcome prejudice and fears and replace these with real understanding and friendship”<sup>6</sup>.

Interreligious dialogue among Palestinians and Israelis is according to IEA meant to be the human component of peace. This can be more clearly understood by looking at IEA`s own perception of what peace is: “The IEA believes that peace is a stool that stands on three legs: human, economic, and political. The IEA is helping to create, encounter by encounter, the human component to that peace<sup>7</sup>”. Thus IEA does not engage itself in political debates, but rather seeks to establish the human encounter between Israelis and Palestinians which it hopes will result in peaceful and friendly relations. One important slogan for IEA is the following: «We believe that, rather than being the cause of the problem; religion can and should be a

<sup>3</sup> Eighteen of the groups are not listed according to these three key categories. They are basically Israeli groups. See the list of IEA`s groups online: <http://interfaithencounter.wordpress.com/groupseventsprojects/groups/> Retrieved March 7, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> The two IPD groups are ADAMA and Jerusalem-Hebron Young Adults group, while the other two groups are based in Jerusalem; Women`s Interfaith Encounter, Reut-Sadaqa and Jerusalem Youth Interfaith Encounter group.

<sup>5</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association on Facebook, online: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Interfaith-Encounter-Association/9834206915?ref=ts> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov.

<sup>7</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association “Philosophy & Methodology”, online: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/activities.htm> Retrieved November 26, 2009.

source of solution for conflicts that exist in the Middle East and beyond”<sup>8</sup>. Stolov explains his belief in the potential religion can have to promote peace as related to the large influence a religious worldview has on the believer’s life. Stolov explains how “religion is the whole area of the relationship between the human and the Divine, (and) a very powerful force in people’s lives”<sup>9</sup>.

In the interview Stolov says he does not see religion as the source of the conflict: “The source of the conflict is rather political power struggling over whom controls what. And politics I would say has more a tendency to link itself to conflict, it’s more superficial and it’s more zero-sum game”<sup>10</sup>. Stolov explains how the political debates have been inflamed by stereotypes, hostility and prejudice these last decades, in both the Israeli and Palestinian societies. To break this continuity of hostility within the political debates, Stolov thinks there is a need to develop a dialogue away from the political debate, where people can learn about *the other* from a religious perspective.

Stolov says the use of religious terminology in the conflict only reflects the political aspiration of the user and his or her engagement in recruiting followers for his cause. As mentioned in the excerpt at the opening of this chapter, Stolov claims “the approach to overcome the conflict is not so much compromising your positions, but understanding that you will have your position better fulfilled, when you do it in cooperation with the other rather than doing it in conflict with the other”<sup>11</sup>. Stolov tells that when people from different religious traditions meet they already know that they hold different points of view, and belong to different religious traditions. None of the participants would approve if anyone tried to convert *the other*; thus part of the context is to meet and understand the other and to be understood, without reaching an agreement: “We cannot reach an agreement, that is a given. And still we are able to have a good conversation even though you believe something different than me”<sup>12</sup>. In the interview Stolov tells about his meeting with other Israelis involved in peacework. Stolov positions himself against what he calls “the regular leftist organizations”<sup>13</sup> who use a slogan which says that “let’s first get rid of occupation and have the two states, and then worry about the relation between the two states”<sup>14</sup>. Stolov further explains how he thinks peacework which first tries to end the occupation as a first step,

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<sup>8</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Introduction to IEA’s Activities”, available at <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/activities.htm> Retrieved December 1, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

actually “prevents any second step”<sup>15</sup>. Stolov thus believes that past peacework (trying to end occupation) has failed because it is constantly destroyed by the hostility among the two peoples. Therefore, he argues, “we have no choice, first to work on the relationships and then worry about which political model to choose”<sup>16</sup>.

Stolov further explains his view of how religion can have a “huge potential”<sup>17</sup> in working for peace by building new relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. The method in Stolov’s organization is “to put political questions aside”<sup>18</sup> which he argues allows for a deeper interfaith encounter which helps “people connect very strongly and very quickly without any problems”<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, Stolov does not believe politics should be put aside permanently: “I don’t think you put it aside for ever. But you take it aside so it will not interfere with the relationship – when you are friends with the other you can talk about anything”<sup>20</sup>. Stolov thus views the interreligious dialogue as a process or as a “first step”<sup>21</sup> in order to build friendly relationships between Israeli and Palestinian individuals and through them between their communities. Stolov does not see this process as being completed after a few years, as he refers to the failure of the political peace process and says “there are no magic solutions that will bring peace in two years”<sup>22</sup>. Stolov believes political issues could be solved easily if both parties understood and respected each other on a human level:

This is why I believe that any political agreement won’t be sustainable without plowing both societies to overcome these negative stances: We need to turn to mutual understanding, respect, friendship and mutual trust – without these it is impossible really to maintain life together over an extended period of time ... when we have achieved these things, I think it will be possible to accomplish political agreements fairly easily and that they will be sustainable<sup>23</sup>.

Stolov further argues that the ongoing political conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has developed more towards a psychological conflict than rational disagreement. Stolov believes religion has the potential to change relationships:

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Just Vision, “Interview with Yehuda Stolov”, available at [http://www.justvision.org/en/profile/yehuda\\_stolov](http://www.justvision.org/en/profile/yehuda_stolov) Retrieved December 2, 2009. The article has also been published at IEA’s webpage, available at <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/whoswho.htm> Retrieved December 2, 2009.

The problem that we are facing in the Holy Land today is not a mathematical problem, on how to divide the land, it's a psychological problem. It's not part of the rational reality, it is part of the, what you say, the human reality. And I think this is where many peace organizations have gotten it wrong. And of course, many of the peace organizations are very secular oriented, and because of that they fail to see the potential of religion<sup>24</sup>.

Yehuda Stolov thinks one of the failures of the secular peace movement has been to exclude the “extremes”<sup>25</sup> from peace talks. Stolov argues that by excluding political issues from the dialogue, one can include all different streams from both Palestinians and Israelis in the dialogue:

I think that making peace at the level of the people must include all parts of society, both on the Palestinian and on the Israeli side; I think that they (the settlers) must not be excluded from this. Similarly but more extreme, Hamas members aren't banned; we've had Hamas members participate in our meetings<sup>26</sup>.

But Stolov is also critical towards a narrow focus on religious similarities instead of differences. Stolov believes that by exploring differences among one and the other the conflict can challenge the participants in a constructive way, where they learn more about themselves and the other:

I think it really happens, people feel, being forced in their own identity when they encounter people of a different identity. So, it is interesting, because you can call it a conflict, but it is a conflict which is not only destructive but can be constructive, and I think that religion offers that possibility which is impossible in the political sphere. And in my eyes, if we do the process for another twenty years, and then we invite the politicians to find some kind of agreement there will be peace, they will do it in a very short time, and it will be sustainable<sup>27</sup>.

IEA believes that they can help bring peace by arranging encounters between Jews, Christians and Muslims in the area:

... the IEA aims to change the dynamics of a society crystallized in a culture of war into a society embedded in a culture of humanized engagement ... By engaging ordinary people – not just their religious, spiritual, or political leaders – the IEA is creating extraordinary transformations in the

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Just Vision, “Interview with Yehuda Stolov”, online: [http://www.justvision.org/en/profile/yehuda\\_stolov](http://www.justvision.org/en/profile/yehuda_stolov) Retrieved December 2, 2009. The article has also been published at IEA's webpage, online: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/whoswho.htm> Retrieved December 2, 2009. In an interview with Just Vision, Yehuda Stolov said the following on the question of why he started working with interfaith dialogue among Israelis and Palestinians: “I think that the roots of my activity are in the writings of Rabbi Kook, which are very inclusive in spirit towards opinions and people. He says we must take care of the rest of the universe, including nature; it goes beyond humanity. That's what influenced me” See online: [http://justvision.org/en/profile/yehuda\\_stolov/interview#fn\\_54](http://justvision.org/en/profile/yehuda_stolov/interview#fn_54) Retrieved December 2, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov.

way grassroots people perceive and encounter the Other – the seeds of a new crystallization capable of transforming society as a whole<sup>28</sup>.

During the encounter between Jews, Muslims and Christians every dimension of religion<sup>29</sup> is explored in a personal setting. It is possible to categorize the themes in the encounters through the well-known seven dimension of religion suggested by Ninian Smart: 1) doctrinal, 2) mythological, 3) ethical, 4) ritual, 5) experiential, 6) institutional and 7) material<sup>30</sup>. In the following I will present the different themes through these seven dimensions.

*The doctrinal* or philosophical dimension of religion can be said to be part of the encounters when people learn about each other's faiths and doctrines in relation to religious understanding of sin and forgiveness<sup>31</sup>, tolerance and respect for the religious other<sup>32</sup>. The conversations are always characterized with the intention of promoting peaceful relations despite differences. One example is an encounter group where the theme was "Truth", and the participants agreed upon a common understanding of how to approach each other and the goal of their activities. The importance of accepting and understanding the other's faith and creating a peaceful society was held by both the Christian, Muslim and Jewish participants<sup>33</sup>.

*The mythological* or the sacred narratives of the three monotheistic religions can focus on common religious persons or topics of the stories. The stories of Abraham/Ibrahim seem to be a central in the encounter. During a joint retreat of Palestinians and Israeli in the Old City, they discussed the role of Abraham in the three religions and how he can be an inspiration for them. One of the concluding remarks was: "For Abraham – belief in God was the ultimate key for peace, as no nation would attack another if they really understood that God is the real source of what they will have"<sup>34</sup>. Common persons from the sacred narratives are also used as a platform for understanding other dimensions of the sacred texts, such as when one encounter group met to discuss "Transitions" within their respective religions, while focusing

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> With religious dimension I am referring to Ninian Smart's definition of religion.

<sup>30</sup> The definition of Ninian Smart is not used to present the mission of the other organizations of this dissertation, because IEA is the only one who only uses religion in their interreligious dialogue.

<sup>31</sup> Holiday greetings & Prayer-focus Interfaith Encounter group on the 2, online: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/685> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> TOLERANCE & RESPECT - ADAMA Interfaith Encounter group on January 21, online: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/631> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, "The Truth- Interfaith Conference in Mghar, 12-13 May 2006", online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/WR-Mghar%20May06.htm> Retrieved December 2, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, "Abraham – 25<sup>th</sup> Israeli-Palestinian Retreat of Interfaith Encounter, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> July 2009", available at <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/IPD-071609.htm> Retrieved December 2, 2009. See also Interfaith Encounter Association, "Jerusalem Women Interfaith Encounter on 17th March 2009", online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Report/WIE-031709.htm> Retrieved November 24, 2009.

upon how central figures in their Holy Scriptures had changed after a special call or change in their life, like Ruth, Joseph or Abraham<sup>35</sup>.

*The ethical* dimension of religion can be explored through the encounters when they seek to promote reconciliation by exploring the sacred texts and the significance of peace and reconciliation within their own Jewish, Muslim or Christian traditions<sup>36</sup>. Another example is when a group called the Jerusalem-Hebron Young Adult Group met in Jerusalem, to discuss common figures from their Holy Scriptures and the common ideal to combat extremism of religious interpretation<sup>37</sup>. But the themes of the encounter group can also move beyond the purely religious traditions, and move more into cultural traditions, as when they during one encounter explained the perception of violence in the Arab and Jewish sector and further were presented with the traditional Arab method of *Sulha*<sup>38</sup>.

*The rituals* within the three Semitic religions are explored among several encounter groups. Jewish and Muslim schoolchildren from Galilee have met to learn about the Jewish Holiday of Hanukkah and the Muslim Holiday Ramadan – which both involve elaborate traditional food and festivities<sup>39</sup>. But equally the holidays of Hanukkah, Christmas and Ramadan have been the theme of encounter groups of adults<sup>40</sup>. Other encounters, specifically represented by women from the three Semitic faiths, can occasionally center on themes such as various dishes from their religious and cultural tradition<sup>41</sup>, or meeting at a Coffee Shop in Jerusalem discussing their different jobs, celebration of Holydays or families<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Transitions – IEA Reut-Sadaqa on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2009”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-Reut%20081709.htm> Retrieved November 24, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Karmiel-Majd el-Krum Interfaith Encounter on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-Karmiel-112008.htm> 1 December 2009, or see “2 Encounters in March of Shabolot Interfaith Encounter”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-Mghar%20Shibolot%20Mar07.htm> Retrieved December 1, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Two Encounters of the Jerusalem-Hebron Young Adults Group – 26<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/YIE-Hebron%20Mar-May09.htm> Retrieved November 24, 2009. See also “Miriam-An Encounter of the Jerusalem-Hebron Young Adults Group 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-Hebron-Jan08.htm> Retrieved November 24, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Jerusalem Youth Interfaith Encounter group on April 28th, online: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/658> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, Annual Report 2008, p2

<sup>40</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “A Visitor’s View, IEA Reut-Sadaqa on 15th June 2009”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Report/GSS-Reut%20061509.htm> Retrieved November 27, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Interfaith Cooking Workshop – Jerusalem Women’s Interfaith Encounter on 8th May 2009”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/WIE-050809.htm> Retrieved November 27, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Jerusalem Women Interfaith Encounter on 17th March 2009”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Report/WIE-031709.htm> Retrieved November 24, 2009.



*The experiential* or emotional dimension of religion can play a central part in the encounter when the concept of prayer in the three Semitic faiths is meditated<sup>43</sup>.

*The Institutional* or social dimensions of religion is central when learning about the religious other and his/her practice of being a mother<sup>44</sup>, of marriage<sup>45</sup> having children<sup>46</sup> or the religious tradition's customs concerning death and mourning<sup>47</sup>.

*The material* dimension of religion has been a central part of the encounter through programs related to Holy Sites. During an encounter between Jewish settlers from Maaleh Adumim and Palestinians in Abu Dis, the dialogue could move into topics usually loaded with political disagreement, as in one of the encounters where they learned about each other's holy places in Israel and the Palestinian territories<sup>48</sup>. Similar encounters have brought up politically loaded questions within the context of a personal setting, like when the Women's Interfaith Encounter discussed *My Jerusalem* as viewed from the individual perspective of Christian, Muslim and Jewish women living in East and West Jerusalem. During this meeting personal stories can be told, such as when one member of the group retold how she came from a family who experienced escaping the massacre of Armenians by the Turks, or the religious significance of Jerusalem for the religious traditions put in contrast to the enmity of the City today<sup>49</sup>. IEA also conducts a program called "Cross-Cultural Study visits" which arranges different study visits to sacred sites for all the three monotheistic religions, for the different faith group to understand the religious significance of Holy places for the religious other. IEA works to form several encounter groups among Jews, Muslims and Christians living in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. The aims of the groups are to develop good relationships between Jews, Muslims and Christians in each community, and thus form a

<sup>43</sup> Two encounters of Reut-Sadaqa Interfaith Encounter group, online: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/659> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, "Galilee Women's Interfaith Encounter Renews its Activities on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2009", online: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/WIE-Galilee%20010409.htm> Retrieved December 2, 2009. See also discussion of the issue of not talking about politics in "Haifa University Interfaith Encounter Hits the Road ... July 2007", online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/YIE-Haifa%20July07.htm> Retrieved December 2, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Marriage - 30th Israeli-Palestinian interfaith encounter retreat. 10, online: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/672> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Population Growth - Circle of Light and Hope Interfaith Encounter group, available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/669> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Death and Mourning - ADAMA Interfaith Encounter group on July 29 2001, online: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/684> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Fieldwork at an encounter in Abu Dis April 2010. See also the report Interfaith Encounter Association, "Holy Sites in the Holy Land", ADAMA encounter group April 28, 2010, online: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/666> Retrieved September 14, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, "My Jerusalem- 3 Encounters of Jerusalem Women's Interfaith Encounter June, July and August 2008", online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/WIE-JunJulAug08.htm> Retrieved November 24, 2009.

mini-community characterized by mutual understanding and respect. The goals of these small communities are to improve the relationship between Jews, Muslims and Christians in the whole communities in which they live. The idea is that the work done in the Israeli state shall form an inner circle, while the dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis is the next circle, and further a dialogue between Israel and the Middle East another circle<sup>50</sup>:

Unlike most other dialogue organizations, we work with, rather than around, the deep cultural roots, beliefs, and traditions of the peoples of the Middle East. Each encounter is centered on a religious theme and features a carefully planned program of joint study and dialogue. The group then coalesces into a single community that respects the unique identity of each of its “sub communities” and participants, which helps create a long-term process of grassroots peace building. By constructively engaging with core religious and cultural values, while explicitly discouraging partisan bickering that might close off constructive dialogue, our approach successfully involves social and political groups that may feel very uncomfortable with other approaches<sup>51</sup>.

In this way IEA has a long-term project to transform the societies and relationships among members from the three Monotheistic faiths living in Israel, Palestine or the Middle East.

## **9.2 Activities and Cooperation**

As mentioned, IEA has 38 different encounter groups in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. In the annual report of 2008, IEA estimated that about four thousand people participated in different programs arranged by IEA. IEA has experienced a continuous growth since they started in 2001<sup>52</sup>. In the interview Stolov explains how the groups started out with a relatively small group of people, and in time grew into a larger group. Stolov further explains how the idea was to have as many different types of groups as possible so that everyone can find a group close to his or her house<sup>53</sup>.

The backbone of the encounter groups is the monthly sessions of joint study. Each encounter group has two facilitators, normally one Jewish and one Muslim/Christian. The joint study session is always divided into two parts, one study unit and the other social

<sup>50</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Philosophy and Method”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/activities.htm> Retrieved December 7, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, Annual Report 2008, online: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/2008%20Annual%20Report/2008Report.pdf> Retrieved December 7, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> See Annual Report 2008, online: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/2008%20Annual%20Report/DataSheet2008.pdf> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov.

interaction with a small meal<sup>54</sup>. During each encounter session equal time is given to listening to a Muslim, Christian and Jewish perspective on the theme. The encounter groups meet in principal either in a neutral place, or visit each other every second time. Sometimes the meeting place is decided according to what is most practical<sup>55</sup>.

As mentioned, some of the encounter groups are between Muslims, Christians and Jews living within the state of Israel. Other groups are between Israeli Jews and Muslims living within the Palestinian territories. In 2008 IEA started bringing together a group of Jewish settlers from Maaleh Adumim, just outside east Jerusalem, and Palestinians from Abu Dis, which lies on the border of Jerusalem. This was the first Palestinian/Jewish Settler based encounter called ADAMA<sup>56</sup>.

The main activity of the encounter group is as mentioned to conduct dialogue on religious issues. The encounter groups do not have any formal plans for action, but the idea is that action projects will be materialized through the friendship and relationships that develop in the group. Stolov mentions three examples of projects which had been made by the single groups. The first example is from the women`s group where one of the participants was a teacher and her school was neglected. After telling the group they decided to paint the school voluntarily. The second example is when a group became aware of the poverty among members of the communities, and they decided to give packages of food to the needy families<sup>57</sup>. The third example is from a group in Jerusalem just before the Jewish Holiday of Pesach, when Jews are to remove all the leavened products. The group decided to divide into two pairs, one Muslim and one Jew, and went to the Jewish neighborhoods to collect the leavened products for the poor in Jerusalem<sup>58</sup>.

The groups in IEA can also choose activities beyond textual studies, which merely are meant to help them overcome difficulties, like an art festival, music or poet who leads one`s thought to peace and relaxation<sup>59</sup>. One group of IEA also invited a social worker and psychotherapist to one of the encounters which allowed for a “conversation about the psychological aspects of the conflict – about the need to develop the relationships and to

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<sup>54</sup> Interfaith Encounters – Citizen Building Communities, online: <http://interfaithencounter.wordpress.com/groupseventsprojects/projects/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Stolov.

<sup>56</sup> IEA, Annual Report 2008.

<sup>57</sup> See also Interfaith Encounter Association, “Preparation for Al-Adha Holiday”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-Mghar-Jan%202006.htm> Retrieved December 8, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov.

<sup>59</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, “Chayim B`Yachad Interfaith Encounter Group of Wadi Ara on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2008”, online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-Chayim%20031408.htm> Retrieved December 1, 2009.

overcome the competition on who is a bigger victim<sup>60</sup>. There were also groups of IEA who continued to meet in spite of difficult times in Gaza<sup>61</sup>. Since the Palestinian participants must cross the Israeli checkpoints before attending the meetings in Jerusalem, the Israeli participants also learn of the difficulties and lack of movement their Palestinian friends' experience, like when meetings must be postponed because of the late arrival of the Palestinians<sup>62</sup>. IEA is also currently involved in a school project in Galilee between an Arab and a Jewish school<sup>63</sup>. In the interview Stolov explains how they are not planning to change the school system, but to make contact and face-to-face encounters among members of the different religious communities<sup>64</sup>.

IEA cooperates with several other Israeli and Palestinian organizations, both purely religious organizations and with more social organizations – where the religious dimension of their peacework plays a minor role. Among the Palestinian organizations is the Palestinian Society for Education and Peace<sup>65</sup> in Abu Dis, where one of the facilitators is a member of ADAMA<sup>66</sup>. The others are Dialogue for Development and Peace, Nablus Youth Federation, National Movement for Change and Peace and Equality Supporters Movement<sup>67</sup>. However, it is the Palestinian Peace Society which is the most frequent partner of IEA. An example of what they do is when IEA conducted an Israeli-Palestinian Retreat of Interfaith Encounter in Jerusalem and in cooperation with the Palestinian Peace Society<sup>68</sup>. IEA is also a partner with other Christian organizations in Israel, or humanitarian organizations in Israel<sup>69</sup>.

IEA is also a member of the Palestinian Israeli Peace NGOs forum (PIPNF), and part of their network of hundred organizations working for peace in Palestine and Israel<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, "Limud Veshiach Interfaith Encounter Group on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009", online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-031209.htm> Retrieved December 1, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> See for example "Tel Aviv University Youth Interfaith Encounter on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009", online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/YIE-TelAviv-010509.htm> Retrieved November 18, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. See also "Launch and Second Encounter of Jerusalem-Hebron Youth Interfaith Encounter, 2nd August and 9th September 2007", online: <http://interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/GSS-Hebron%20AugSep07.htm> Retrieved November 24, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Interfaith Encounter Association, Annual Report 2008, p2.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Yehuda Stolov.

<sup>65</sup> Online: <http://www.psed.ps/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> See above.

<sup>67</sup> The mentioned organizations do not have a webpage, but are mentioned on IEAs webpage, available at <http://interfaithencounter.wordpress.com/about/our-history/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> The Palestinian Peace Society does not have its own webpage, but is listed among the Israeli-Palestinian NGO forum online: <http://www.peacengo.org/organization.asp?ID=402> Retrieved November 27, 2009.

<sup>69</sup> See information online: <http://interfaithencounter.wordpress.com/about/our-history/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>70</sup> See the list of the Palestinian Israeli NGO's Peace Forum, online: <http://www.peacengo.org/organization.asp?ID=217> Retrieved October 26, 2009.

IEA is a member of five different international organizations, which all believe in the significant role religions can have in promoting peace. IEA is a member of the International Association for Religious freedom (IARF), which is an UK-based charity organization. IEA is a member group together with two other organizations in Israel<sup>71</sup> – Al-Liqa a Palestinian Christian organization<sup>72</sup> and House of Hope<sup>73</sup>, which is Israel based.

The Jerusalem program of IEA is a member of the Partner Cities Network of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR)<sup>74</sup>, which tries to improve relations and common good among different religious communities globally and has members from more than 80 countries<sup>75</sup>.

IEA is a member of Roots and Shoots of the Jane Goodall Institute<sup>76</sup>, which is a youth-driven global network, with members from 110 different countries<sup>77</sup>. The Institute is not only devoted to religious peacework, but all environmental work<sup>78</sup>.

IEA is a member of the Committee of Religious NGOs at UN<sup>79</sup>, which is a forum to inform about global challenges and the role the UN can play together with religious organizations in promoting peace<sup>80</sup>. IEA is also a founding member of the Partnership Committee for the United Nations Decade of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation for peace, which was established in 2006 after the UN declared 2011-2020 as “UN Decade of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace”<sup>81</sup>.

In addition IEA is a member of the Middle East Abrahamic Forum, where partners from Jordan, Egypt, Iran, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority also meet during annual conferences. The aim of the conferences is to discuss how they can improve acceptance and coexistence in the region<sup>82</sup>

<sup>71</sup> See the list of members in Europe, online:

<http://www.iarf.net/2008site/Members/EuropeandMiddleEast/Chaptersandgroups.htm> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> See Al Liqa Center for religious and heritage studies online: <http://www.al-liqacenter.org.ps/> Retrieved September 15, 2010. See also a short introduction to this organization in chapter 1.

<sup>73</sup> See Friend of Open House webpage, online: <http://www.friendsofopenhouse.org/story.php> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> See CPWR webpage online: <http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=1&sn=1> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>75</sup> See the 2009 Parliament, online: <http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=8&sn=12> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>76</sup> See the webpage online: <http://www.rootsandshoots.org/> Retrieved September 15, 2010

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> See the presentation of Roots and Shoot online: <http://www.rootsandshoots.org/aboutus/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Committee of Religious NGOs at UN, online: <http://www.trinity.net/rngo/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> See webpage online: <http://faithdecadeforpeace.net/history/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> See IEA's description online: <http://interfaithencounter.wordpress.com/about/our-history/> Retrieved September 15, 2010.



## 10 Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations

*Dialogue summons residents and visitors alike to seize the endless opportunities that Jerusalem offers to encounter the many “others” that populate the city. Only through the encounter with the “other” can we truly and fully fathom the infinite depths of our own unique otherness, our own particular memories and vision of the future.... Jerusalem pulsates with the life-blood of the between, and as such has the potential to infuse all who “join together and come to her” (Isaiah 60:4) with new life and new insights into the life of the between.*

*Extract from the essay “In between” by Daniel Rossing<sup>1</sup>*

Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR) was established in 2004 to improve relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinian and Arab Christians. According to themselves their main aim is the following:

The Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations is concerned with all aspects of the encounter of Jews and Christians in the Holy Land today. For the first time in two millennia, an empowered Jewish majority comes face-to-face with vulnerable Christian communities with a long history as minorities. The encounter is complicated by the fact that the national identity of the majority of local Christians is locked in conflict with the national identity of the majority of Israeli Jews. Palestinian Arab Christians and Israeli Jews are both engaged in a search for a meaningful communal identity that takes into account a mixture of historical, political, social, cultural, and religious factors that are difficult to disentangle<sup>2</sup>.

The data which will be presented in this chapter is based on the information available at JCJCR`s webpage, four articles written by the previous director of JCJCR, Daniel Rossing in

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<sup>1</sup> This extract is from an article written by the then director of JCJCR, Daniel Rossing called “In Between”. The article was given during a Seminar at the Hebrew University on “Conflict Resolution and Religious traditions”, January 6, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations webpage, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/about\\_ms.php](http://www.jcjr.org/about_ms.php) Retrieved October 14, 2009.

addition to a handout delivered at an International Conference in Jerusalem Summer 2008<sup>3</sup>. The data was collected in the period from 2008 until 2009. In April 2010 I also conducted an interview with two staff members of JCJCR, Daniel Rossing and Hana Bendcowsky.

JCJCR sees itself basically as an educational organization where religion is a resource for dialogue and genuine understanding of each other. The Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (JCJCR) is the only NGO in Israel devoted to the field of local Jewish-Christian relations. In a grant application submitted to the Swedish Church in July 2009, Rossing presents the rise in activities and participants at the courses of JCJCR from its foundation in 2004 until 2007. In 2004 JCJCR attracted some 900 Jews and Christians to their programs and encounters. In 2005 the number of participants increased to 1800, in 2006 to 2500, in 2007 to 3400. JCJCR works both on the grassroots- and mid-level.

The board of JCJCR consists of four representatives of the Jewish communities and three representatives of the Christian communities who all are working on the elite level of the religious communities. The staff of JCJCR consists of four representatives from the Israeli Jewish communities, all with lengthy experience in dialogue and three representatives from the Christian communities – the Roman Catholic, the Latin Catholic and Greek Catholic. In addition to the main staff, JCJCR have ten associates, where eight are Christian and two Jewish. JCJCR's office is at Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies, which is in many ways a meeting point for the many Christian communities in Jerusalem.

### **10.1 Mission and Motivation**

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the main mission of JCJCR is to develop a new kind of dialogue between Israeli Jews and Palestinian and Arab Christians. In this way JCJCR does not work with dialogue among Christians from Western countries and Jews in general, but focuses specifically on the relationship between Israeli Jews and indigenous Arab or Palestinian Christians<sup>4</sup>. The founder of JCJCR, Daniel Rossing, worked with interreligious relations for more than 35 years. Rossing was the Director of the Department for Christian Communities in the Israel Ministry for Religious Affairs, and later directed the Melitz Center

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Rossing died on November 3, 2010. The articles are: Rossing, Daniel: "In Between" Paper at Seminar at the Hebrew University on "Conflict Resolution and Religious traditions", January 6, 2009. Rossing, Daniel: "Faith, Interfaith and Israel". Rossing, Daniel: "Contextualizing and containing the conflict in Israel/Palestine", Sweden: *KHS Conference, Ljungskile Folkhogskola, 2-6 August, 2006*. Hand Out, given at the International Conference Summer 2008. Rossing, Daniel, "Interfaith Relations and Dialogue in Israel: Theory and Practice", in *Understanding One Another in the Israeli society*", Kronish, Ron (ed.) Jerusalem: ICCI, 1997: 46.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Daniel Rossing and Hana Bendcowsky.



for Interfaith Encounter for eight years, all prior to the foundation of JCJCR in 2004<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the years before JCJCR was founded, Daniel Rossing advised himself with longtime connections among the Palestinian Christian communities<sup>6</sup>. In the interview Rossing explains how he had seen the need for a new kind of dialogue between Israeli Jews and the indigenous Christian population in Jerusalem<sup>7</sup>. Although a dialogue between Israeli Jews and Christian from Western countries had existed for a long time, Rossing argued several years before the foundation of JCJCR that the model for the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue must base itself on its own soil, its own cultural, political, historical and religious roots. During a Conference in Israel 1997, Rossing said:

I have tried to make clear that I do not think that one should try to impose the Western model on the unique historic-cultural context of this land and this society. The historic-cultural experience of the inhabitants of this land is as unique as is the historic-cultural experience of the Western world, and therefore it requires that we develop an equally unique dialogue<sup>8</sup>.

In the interview Rossing explains how he thinks it would be meaningless to adopt the Western model of Jewish-Christian dialogue to the dialogue between Palestinian/Arab Christians and Israeli Jews because the majority-minority relationship is completely reversed. Rossing explains how he was familiar with the dialogue with Christians from Western countries, and how the dynamics of this dialogue was very clear. The Christians from the West are a majority, the Jews a minority. Rossing explains how the Christians will emphasize the Jewish roots of their Christians faith, the Jewishness of Jesus and they will examine their own Christian tradition in a critical way concerning their responsibility for the long anti-Semitism in Christian history which eventually led to the Holocaust. Rossing supports this dialogue, but explains how the relationship between the majority and minority is completely reversed in the relationship with Israeli Jews and Christians. Rossing says that he believes the aim of any dialogue is to establish better relations, but what is required in one setting is not necessarily required in another setting. Thus, Rossing argues that in the context of the Holy Land where the Jews in Israel now form the majority and are those in power, it is the Israeli Jews who now should be the ones to reach out to the minority. Rossing further explains that most of

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about the personnel of JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/about\\_staff.php](http://www.jcjr.org/about_staff.php) Retrieved October 14, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See JCJCR Strategy Plan, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/about\\_ms.php](http://www.jcjr.org/about_ms.php) Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Daniel Rossing and Hana Bendcowsky.

<sup>8</sup> Rossing, Daniel, "Interfaith Relations and Dialogue in Israel: Theory and Practice", in *Understanding One Another in the Israeli society*, Kronish, Ron (ed.) Jerusalem: ICCI, 1997:46. This is one of the publications of ICCI.

their work focused on educating the Jews, those in power, about the historical origin and daily life of their Christian minority.

In a lecture held by Daniel Rossing to the Church of Sweden in 2009 called “Religious Plurality – Danger or Possibility”<sup>9</sup>, Rossing argues that one’s approach to religious plurality in large measure can be determined by how one understands the concept of particularity and universality. Rossing sees these two concepts as generally being understood as a dichotomy within the western paradigm. According to Rossing, this dichotomy was also internalized among the founding fathers of Zionism and used “to construct an Israeli identity that in many respects involved the marginalization of certain groups within the Israeli-Jewish society”<sup>10</sup>. Thus, from one perspective Rossing argues that a particularism which is designed to withdraw the group from “the other”, whether this is religious or secular, Jews or Arabs, is a destructive element. As an example Rossing mentions those groups within Judaism who see Jewish nationalism and sovereignty as a messianic consummation of history, “and who thus feel they have a divine mission that justifies the use of any means to impose their particular exclusive messianism on Jews and Arabs alike”<sup>11</sup>. But, from another perspective Rossing also argues that a universalism which might emphasize equal values can also be negative if equality means to suppress all differences and otherness. Rossing further argues that both the particular and the universal dimensions of religious faith should be understood as complementary. Rossing also denies Huntington’s thesis about the “clash of civilizations”, and rather argues that there is a clash within civilizations and faiths. According to Rossing the clash within civilization means that there is a clash between those who use their religious faith as a resource for extremism and alienation from others, and those who see their religious faith as giving them responsibility to work together in interreligious cooperation and responsibility.

The focus of JCJCR is to explain the particular history of the indigenous Christians in Jerusalem. JCJCR has made a splendid presentation of the history and way of life of the different Christian and Jewish communities in Jerusalem. The aim of this presentation is:

... we must study in depth the particular historic experience of the Christian communities in Holy Land. Israeli Jews are familiar with some details of the history of Christianity in the West, but know nothing about the radically different historic experience of the local Christian communities<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> This lecture was sent to me by Daniel Rossing after our interview on April 28, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Rossing, Daniel: online: [http://www.jcjr.org/kyn\\_article\\_view.php?aid=27](http://www.jcjr.org/kyn_article_view.php?aid=27) Retrieved June 17, 2009.

According to Daniel Rossing, it is essential to understand how *the other* views his or her history in this region and specifically in Jerusalem. In the article “In Between”, Rossing reflects on the significance of Jerusalem for the religious communities in Jerusalem:

In many respects that which makes each community in Jerusalem distinct and different is its unique memory of the past. Jerusalem holds within it nearly 4,000 years of history. No one can recall each and every detail of his individual life history, let alone all the details of four millennia of history. Our memories are by nature and necessity always selective. What we choose to remember is what makes us distinct and different. And so it is also with the diverse groups in Jerusalem; each group remembers and observes different milestones along the long time-line of Jerusalem. As one moves about the city from community to community, you quickly sense, not only that Jerusalem is a world in a city, but also that you are traveling in an exhilarating time warp. In Jerusalem the centuries run concurrent rather than consecutive; the passion for past and future eras impregnates the present with meaning<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, according to Daniel Rossing, the aim of learning is to create an understanding of the meaning and value *the other* feels concerning living in the Holy Land and specifically Jerusalem.

During the interview with Daniel Rossing and his colleague Hana Bendcowsky they made it clear that none of them see the conflict itself as being a religious conflict, but rather as a basically territorial conflict with political, economic and religious dimensions which could not be disentangled. They think one of the main problems with the peace process as it had been conducted is that the Oslo Agreement were made by secular politicians which excluded the religious voices of the religious leaders. On the other hand they argue that the traditional western interreligious dialogue has excluded the political dimension, which is not preferable in the Holy Land. JCJCR believes one has to approach the conflict in a holistic way, where both the political and religious dimensions are recognized<sup>14</sup>. In the strategy plan for JCJCR Rossing explained how the political dimension must be a part of the religious dialogue to have a peace building effect<sup>15</sup>.

In the interview Rossing explains how the concept of the *promised Land* could be used by some in an extremely negative way, meaning that it only belonged to one group or the same concept could be used in a different and positive way to help resolve the conflict, meaning that one included the religious other:

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<sup>13</sup> Rossing, Daniel: “In Between” Paper at Seminar at the Hebrew University on “Conflict Resolution and Religious traditions”, 6 January 2009. See 4.1.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Rossing and Bendcowsky.

<sup>15</sup> Rossing, Daniel: “Preparing the way for a new Jewish-Christian relation in the Holy Land”, in Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, strategy plan 2004. Online: <http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/uf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20JCJCR%20Strategic%20Plan2.pdf> Retrieved November 11, 2008.

... take for example the concept of “promised land”. You could take that concept and you could use it as a creative, sustaining concept or you could use it in a very destructive way. And it all depends on who is using it. I trace a lot of the issue back to power, the use of power or restraining power. So, if we want to use the concept of the promised land, it’s a concept used by a persecuted, downtrodden minority as a resource - blacks people have used it as a source of hope, that there will be a better day, that there will be this promised land, which is physical, but it’s also a better world. Then it’s a very good concept and is a very necessary concept. On the other hand, if you take this concept and you are the majority - you have power, you are the majority and you use it as a titled deed – this land is mine because it was promised to me, you get out – then it’s a whole different thing. We use the word in two different ways. The difference to me is power and powerlessness<sup>16</sup>.

In this way Rossing emphasizes that it is not necessarily the way in which the concepts are interpreted which is the challenge, but the question of power or powerlessness among those who interpret those concepts. Rossing says that a concept such as *the promised land* can be a good concept if it generates hope and visions of a better world for the powerlessness, but if the very same concept is used to exclude others –specifically if that other is powerless – then it is a very negative concept.

On the other hand, JCJCR thinks the political conflict has had a negative impact on the religious communities in this region in specifically two ways. First of all, JCJCR believes that the conflict has placed the indigenous Christians in a difficult situation where they are a minority both among Palestinians where most are Muslims, and among Israelis where most are Jews. According to both Rossing and Bendcowsky it is difficult for them to firmly identify with either the Palestinian national identity or with the Israeli national identity. According to Bendcowsky this is particularly clear in the encounters between Christian Arabs, who are Israeli citizens but who still belong to the cultural context of the Palestinian people. Bendcowsky explained how many Christians in Jerusalem felt that if they had an Israeli citizenship, they were met with suspicion among Israeli Jews if and when they identified with the Palestinian people, because Israelis would fear that they identified with extremism or violent groups among Palestinians on the West Bank or Gaza. JCJCR is aware of this difficult situation for the Christians and therefore also supports dialogue among Christians and Muslims in this region. Rossing writes how “each side tends to see itself principally as an innocent victim and the other as an evil aggressor ... “<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Rossing and Bendcowsky.

<sup>17</sup> Rossing, Daniel: “Contextualizing and containing the conflict in Israel/Palestine”, Sweden: KHS Conference, Ljungskile Folkhögskola, 2-6 August, 2006.

## 10.2 Activities and Cooperation

JCJCR has four main activities: 1) designing educational programs, 2) arranging encounter groups, 3) running an information service and 4) supporting research and reports which can help improve relations between Israeli Jews and the indigenous Christians in Jerusalem.

The educational programs<sup>18</sup> are designed to educate the participants about the historical origins and religious activities of the Palestinian Christian minority living in Jerusalem. According to Rossing, there is a need to offer an additional program to the Israeli educational system: “The Israeli education system, however, has done little if anything to prepare a new generation of officials with any basic understanding of the Christian communities<sup>19</sup>”. For this reason JCJCR has developed an educational program which tries to:

- a) combat prejudices and negative stereotypes
- b) contribute to understanding and appreciation of the other’s, and of one’s own, history, traditions and composite identity
- c) create a spirit of cooperation by drawing on shared values to work toward common goals<sup>20</sup>.

JCJCR has started to work on books in Arabic on the Jewish festivals, and books in Hebrew on the Christian festivals. JCJCR is at present time (2009) about to develop educational material to be used in schools or different educational forums. In Arabic JCJCR is preparing two booklets. The first is on Jewish Holidays and practice, which is to be produced at the request of the Arab Christians members of JCJCR, who claim such books are sorely missing<sup>21</sup>. The other book in Arabic is about Jewish topics, such as explaining the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities in Israel, Jewish Holidays, Rites and concepts<sup>22</sup>. These books are already in use through the cooperation between JCJCR and the TALI chain. The Tali chain is an Israeli-Jewish initiative to improve education about Judaism in the Israeli secular school system<sup>23</sup>. The cooperation between JCJCR and TALI has led to several courses given to different students, specifically between the Galilee Arab Christians and Jews. This has led

<sup>18</sup> See Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations webpage, online:

[http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about\\_af.php#](http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about_af.php#) Retrieved October 14, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> JCJCR Strategy Plan, online: <http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/uf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20JCJCR%20Strategic%20Plan2.pdf> Retrieved October 14, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/about\\_ms.php](http://www.jcjr.org/about_ms.php) Retrieved October 14, 2009. See also previous chapter

<sup>21</sup> JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=64](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=64) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=94](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=94) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> The Tali chain is an Israeli Jewish initiative to improve the education of Judaism in the Israeli secular school system. The cooperation between JCJCR and Tali is basically an internal Israeli project; still since many of the students live in Jerusalem the cooperation influences both the Palestinian Christian population and those who have Israeli citizenship and might be considered as Israeli Arabs. The activity is described online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=180](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=180) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

to courses and encounters between teachers, principals, and children from 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The group consisting of TALI Teachers and Arab Christians is called “Educators Encounter Group”<sup>24</sup>, while the encounter between pupils is called “Youth Encounter Group”<sup>25</sup>. The focus on the encounter groups coordinated by JCJCR and TALI has been on “Dialogue and Identity”<sup>26</sup>. JCJCR also cooperates with other organization on specific programs. JCJCR cooperates with Beit Hagefen Arab Jewish Centre in Haifa<sup>27</sup>, which is a secular organization working for peaceful relations between Arabs and Israelis in Haifa.

JCJCR offers courses, short-term seminars, conferences and symposia all on issues related to the relationship between Israeli Jews and the indigenous Christians<sup>28</sup>. Some of the programs are conducted with Palestinian and Israeli audience together; while other courses are specifically developed for either a Jewish audience or a Christian audience:

The Center coordinates courses for Jewish audiences to familiarize participants with the local Christian communities and sensitize them to the vulnerability of Arab Christians as the smallest minority in the Holy Land. Courses for Christians provide information on Jewish tradition and insights into issues of Jewish identity in the setting of the State of Israel<sup>29</sup>.

In addition JCJCR cooperates closely with each of the religious communities they introduce in their courses, and often let the religious leaders themselves decide the content of the lectures when they bring groups to visit.

Some of the courses given by JCJCR are approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture to give the students education credits. A Course on the Christian Communities in the Holy Land for Christian and Jewish scholars from Gordon Teachers College in Haifa was given education credits<sup>30</sup>.

All the courses, including the written educational material from JCJCR, are given in Arabic, Hebrew and English<sup>31</sup>. JCJCR offers courses to different groups, both locally and to groups from abroad. JCJCR has courses locally for teachers, school children, women, facilitators, and different organizations and institutions. The educational programs have also

<sup>24</sup>JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activities\\_per\\_cat\\_view.php?cid=18](http://www.jcjr.org/activities_per_cat_view.php?cid=18) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>25</sup>JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=18](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=18) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Beit Hagefen, online: [http://www.beit-hagefen.com/En\\_Web/En\\_%20Home\\_Index.htm](http://www.beit-hagefen.com/En_Web/En_%20Home_Index.htm) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>28</sup>JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=505](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=505) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>29</sup>JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about\\_af.php#a](http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about_af.php#a) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>30</sup>JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=384](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=384) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>31</sup>JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about\\_af.php#a](http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about_af.php#a) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

been given to soldiers of the IDF<sup>32</sup>. In the interview Rossing further explains how what they teach to children, teachers and IDF soldiers could have a positive impact on many people not directly involved:

People who are not directly involved can also be affected by it. Also in terms of education – we try to work with people who influences other people ... training for educators in the Israeli Army, who are working with thousands and thousands of soldiers, who are working with them and educating them, sensitizing them to Who are the Christians – and again not only – what do they believe, but what group do they belong to, what is their reality in this land<sup>33</sup>.

The second activity is arranging encounter groups. These groups have included Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Christian women, children, educators or visits to each other's Church or Synagogue. The educational program mentioned above can also include an encounter with the other, and the main method of JCJCR is to work through face-to-face encounter:

Experience shows that there is no substitute for carefully planned and professionally facilitated face-to-face encounters and interaction in order to overcome ignorance and prejudice and to foster understanding and empathy between different cultural, ethnic, religious, or national groups. Thus one of the core activities of the Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations is to initiate and facilitate a range of Jewish-Christian encounter groups throughout the Holy Land<sup>34</sup>.

The groups are also often divided into groups which have something else in common, like gender, age, profession, geography, background or with a common concern, like environmental issues<sup>35</sup>. JCJCR explains which models they use and why in the following:

The group's meetings often incorporate different avenues for dialogue, such as the dialogue of life (reciprocal home visits or discussion of experienced political realities); cultural dialogue (sharing and comparing art, music, dance, and other cultural expressions); the dialogue of social action (discussing the basis for social action in each tradition combined with active cooperation in local issues), or interreligious dialogue (e.g. study of one another's religious texts and traditions)<sup>36</sup>.

The encounter groups of Israeli Jews and indigenous Christians are conducted both in Jewish areas as well as in Arab areas<sup>37</sup>. JCJCR also conducts encounter groups consisting of families. According to themselves this is an example of how JCJCR tries to reach out to all levels of society: "The group reflects JCJCR's concern to work not only with upper echelon officials,

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<sup>32</sup> See the local activities in 2008 of the JCJCR, online:

[http://www.jcjr.org/activities\\_per\\_cat\\_view.php?cid=129](http://www.jcjr.org/activities_per_cat_view.php?cid=129) Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Rossing and Bendcowsky.

<sup>34</sup> JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about\\_af.php#a](http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/about_af.php#a) Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=193](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=193) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

educators and opinion makers, but also to improve relations on the grass roots community level<sup>38</sup>.

The third activity of JCJCR is running an information service. This service is easily accessible on their webpage, which gives comprehensive information of all the Jewish and Christian religious communities in Israel, their historic origin in the area, their religious faith and practice<sup>39</sup>. In their webpage JCJCR has articles for each Christian domination in Jerusalem, which explain the beginning of their presence in Jerusalem – often dated back to the fourth century, their presence in the Old City and the Churches they have responsibility for. Three articles are written about the Christian Orthodox (Greek, Russian and Romanian), seven articles about the Christian Catholic (Latin, Greek, Maronite, Armenian, Coptic, Syrian and Chaldean), four articles about the Oriental Christian (Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox) and five articles about the Christian Protestant (Anglican, Lutheran, Scottish Presbyterian, Baptist and Other Protestant). Thus, a lot of work has been done to write these documents. On the webpage of JCJCR links have been made for similar presentations of four Jewish communities (Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Eastern, North Africa and Other), although only one article about the Jewish communities has been published<sup>40</sup>. JCJCR also presents customs, practice, holidays, basic concepts and information about the history and identity of the Christian<sup>41</sup> and Jewish communities, although the articles on the Christian communities are in the majority.

The fourth activity is connected to supporting research and reports which can help improve the relationship between the Israeli Jews and Palestinian Christians. One of the projects is to monitor the Hebrew and Arabic press, for any defamation of the religious communities. JCJCR also conducted a report on religious Israeli Jews in Jerusalem, and their attitudes towards Palestinian Christians<sup>42</sup>. The research is done by JCJCR in collaboration with the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS). The research was a phone survey conducted 2-3 March 2008. Among the findings, one was how “the vast majority of questions show that the

<sup>38</sup> JCJCR, online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=197](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=197) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> See “Know Your Neighbor”, online: <http://www.jcjr.org/> Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> It should be mentioned that this has basically been the situation all through the period of my gathering of data 2007-2009.

<sup>41</sup> It should be mentioned that an article called “Reflection on the Presence of the Church in the Holy Land” was written by the Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah. See the article online:

[http://www.jcjr.org/kyn\\_article\\_view.php?aid=26&Language=En](http://www.jcjr.org/kyn_article_view.php?aid=26&Language=En) Retrieved August 3, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Hand Out, given at the International Conference Summer 2008. See 4.1.



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higher the level of a person's religious observance the more negative is the person's attitudes toward Christianity and Christians"<sup>43</sup>.

JCJCR basically cooperates with Israeli and Palestinian religious organizations. Prior to the establishment of JCJCR, Rossing tells how he consulted more than 300 members of the clergy, formal and informal educators, government officials, lawyers, journalists, security personnel, students and representatives of relevant NGOs. JCJCR also has contact with and is founded by Christian organizations abroad, especially from Germany, Cyprus, Holland and the USA<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> See "A research on attitudes towards Christians", online: [http://www.jcjr.org/activity\\_view.php?aid=626](http://www.jcjr.org/activity_view.php?aid=626) . Retrieved December 2, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> JCJCR, Strategy Plan, online: <http://www.jcjr.org/Dev/uf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20JCJCR%20Strategic%20Plan2.pdf> Retrieved August 18, 2009.



## 11 Jerusalem Peacemakers

*We continue to bring dialogue, because we like people to understand our message – God wants us to help each other, not to kill each other. And God created us in this world, for one purpose to acknowledge God and to worship God. And why are we fighting if we only have one God? ...Because that territory, power, money? But when you die you don't take anything with you. ... God said you have limited time in this life, use it to do the best, not to do the worst.<sup>1</sup>*

*Extract from interview with Sheikh Bukhari*

Jerusalem Peacemakers was founded in 2004. It consists of members from Judaism and Islam, but also of secular Jews. JP is a network of six independent peace workers operating basically in Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>. Ibrahim Abu el-Hawa is a Palestinian Muslim living in the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, and who has been working with Jahalin Bedouin on the West Bank for many years, trying to give them hope for peace<sup>3</sup>. Sheik Bukhari is another leader. Bukhari is a Sufi Muslim, and descends from a family who has lived in Jerusalem since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from inviting people and groups to his home in the Old City of Jerusalem, he is often invited to speak at Universities and Congregations in Central Asia, Europe and USA<sup>4</sup>. The third leader of Jerusalem Peacemakers is Rabbi Menachem Frohman, one of the founders of Gush Emunim the 70s<sup>5</sup> – the religious Zionist movement which started the settlement of the West Bank. Frohman is still a religious Zionist, although he follows the teaching of the elder Rabbi

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>2</sup> JP also mentions a seventh leader, Ibrahim Issa, a Palestinian Muslim and principal of Hope Flowers School, a school which offers peace education, and supports help for children with war traumas . See Hope Flowers School, online: <http://www.mideastweb.org/hopeflowers/index.html> Retrieved October 19, 2009. But since there has not been any information about him nor Hopeflower school on the links of JP's webpage, I have decided not to write about him in this presentation.

<sup>3</sup> A presentation of Ibrahim Abu el-Hawa's work is available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/ibrahim/index.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> A presentation of the work of Sheikh Bukhari is available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/bukhari/index.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> See 1.2.2. See also the presentation of Menachem Frohman in Little, David (ed.): *Peacemakers in Action. Profiles of Religion in Conflict resolution*. United States: Cambridge University Press: 2007: 341-356.

Kook, who included the secular as being part of a redemptive act<sup>6</sup>. But today Frohman is known for his belief in reconciliation and dialogue with radical Islamic groups<sup>7</sup>. Frohman was also among the Rabbis who met in Alexandria 2002 to sign the Alexandrian Declaration among religious leaders in the Holy Land<sup>8</sup>. A fourth leader is Eliyahu McLean. McLean is the child of a mixed marriage, and presents his religious tour in his youth among the mystical streams of Islam and Judaism. Today he is an orthodox Jew who works with Palestinian peace activities in Bethlehem and the West Bank, as well as with his fellow orthodox friends in Jerusalem. McLean travels internationally to inform about their peacework<sup>9</sup>. The fifth leader is Ibtisam Mahameed, a Palestinian Muslim woman living in northern Israel. Mahameed has been active since 1988, working to improve the situation of the women in her Arab village. In 2002 Mahameed founded, together with an Israeli orthodox Jewish woman, Elena Rozenman, Women's Interfaith Encounter, and is working both local, national and internationally to improve the role of women in the region<sup>10</sup>. A sixth leader is Hagit Ra'anana, an Israeli secular Jew, who has been working for peace for many years. Before the Intifada she used to bring Israelis to the refugee camps, inviting them to learn about the situation of the Palestinians. She has continued this work in other locations<sup>11</sup>.

The work of JP is based on voluntary efforts. They describe their work as on the "sub-NGO level: people supporting people, with a humanitarian and interfaith emphasis"<sup>12</sup>. JP has no office, but consists of a network of independent peace workers<sup>13</sup>. JP pronounces its goal in the following way: "Our aim is to contribute to peace with justice and a decent life for all people in the Holy Land"<sup>14</sup>.

In this chapter I will present a selection of the data collected which can explain the mission, motivation, activities and cooperation characteristic for JP. It should be mentioned that none of the leaders of JP has written articles or published written material about their

<sup>6</sup> It was the son of Rabbi Kook who became more politically oriented in his teaching and is seen as a leading teacher of Gush Emunim. See Radvitzky, 1993:123.

<sup>7</sup> A Presentation of the work of Rabbi Menachem Frohman is available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/froman/home.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009. See also Little: 2007:341-356.

<sup>8</sup> See the next chapter on Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

<sup>9</sup> A presentation of the work of Eliyahu McLean is available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/eliyahu/home.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> A presentation of the work of Ibtisam Mahameed is available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/ibtisam/index.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> A presentation of the work of Hagit Ra'anana is available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/hagit/index.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> JP, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/intro.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

work themselves; the homepage of JP has been written and administrated by supporters of JP. In addition a project called Global Oneness has made several video clips of some of the work by JP which has been published on You Tube. In addition to this material I have visited Sheikh Bukhari's home three times. The first two visits were with a larger group<sup>15</sup>, while the third visit was alone when I did an interview with Sheikh Bukhari. A study has also been published called *Peacemakers in Actions* where Rabbi Frohman has been interviewed<sup>16</sup>. Based on these data I would like to present some of the work of Jerusalem Peacemakers, with special attention to the teaching of Sheikh Bukhari and Menachem Frohman.

### **11.1 Mission and Motivation**

In the following I would like to present the mission of JP through three main issues. The first is related to their mission of bringing people together. The second is related to Jerusalem and their belief in this Holy City's ability to unite people. The third issue is related to their conception of peace.

One mission of JP is to bring people together from both sides of the conflict. In the interview Sheikh Bukhari explains how he sees this as a message from God<sup>17</sup>. Sheikh Bukhari tells me why he talks with all interested parties, whether they come from Hamas, are Jewish settlers, ultra-Orthodox or others who are interested. Bukhari emphasizes the importance of speaking with those who do not seek peace:

I keep my door open to everybody, even for the most extremist one...in Sufi tradition, every person that is doing bad things he is like your son. If your son did something bad, what would you do? Would you lock him up, beat him up? No, you want to help him. So everybody in this world is like my own son. I would give him my hand, and I would try to get him out of this role ... because God says: I give you these words to benefit from, to reward - not destroy and harm each other<sup>18</sup>.

Even though Sheikh Bukhari has experienced harassments<sup>19</sup> he says "we have to continue to do this work, because that is the messages we have from God"<sup>20</sup>. Bringing people together from different parts of faith or locations is an essential mission behind their work, says Sheikh Bukhari.

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<sup>15</sup> International Conference summer 2008, and with the Hebrew University January 2009. See 4.1.

<sup>16</sup> Little, David (ed.): *Peacemakers in Action*, United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 341-356.

<sup>17</sup> See the extract in the introduction to this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>19</sup> In the interview Sheikh Bukhari explains how he has been spit on, had chairs thrown at him and insulted.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

According to Frohman another important task is to create a correct spiritual atmosphere based on the religious call to love your neighbor:

I am a rabbi and as such I strive to attain the correct spiritual atmosphere. I don't solve problems but I try to improve the basis upon which issues may be settled. I'm not a political person nor am I a subcontractor of politicians. I have pure religious interests in learning together with Muslims. This is the whole secret of religion – to meet the other side. "Love your neighbor" is the key to religion<sup>21</sup>.

McLean also emphasizes how bringing people together can put an end to prejudice and injustice caused by separation:

These peacemakers have taken a personal initiative. Many of them grew up in mixed-community circumstances or knew people on 'the other side' when they were young. They believe that separated, conflicted communities, prejudice and injustice need to end, and they're doing something about it<sup>22</sup>.

McLean also encourages a spiritual definition of the Holy Land that will bridge the two peoples:

When I am sitting with my settler friends, I only have to say «Palestinian National Movement' and the blood will start to boil, and there will be a lot of charged energy; and when I'm with my Palestinian friends, I only have to say «Zionist National Movement' and the blood will start to boil. But when I define the land as *Eretz ha-Shalom* in Hebrew, or *Ard ilSalam* in Arabic, the land of peace, all of a sudden there is a spiritual definition that bridges the two sides. Or *Ard il-Mukadisa*, the Holy Land. This is the Holy Land for both peoples<sup>23</sup>.

Thus, JP seeks to bring people from the two sides of the conflict together and create a basis of unity through their common attachment to the Holy Land. JP also often refers to itself as "the children of Abraham living in the land of the prophets"<sup>24</sup>. Another example is when McLean explains how he can visit friends in the settlement on the West Bank one Shabbat, and next visit his Palestinian friends in Bethlehem. McLean argues that the lack of political unity in the Holy Land should be replaced by religious unity:

<sup>21</sup>Chen, Joanne." Rabbi With a Cause. An interview with Rabbi Menachem Frohman", Newsweek International, 2001, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/froman/art-rabbiwithacause.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Jerusalem Peacemakers mission statements, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/home.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, Saida: " Interview with Eliyahu McLean", 2002, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/eliyahu/interview.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> JP, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/bukhari/bukhari-peacework.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

People always ask me: Are you left wing or right wing?' and I reply, 'It takes two wings to fly'. We've got to find underlying unity between people on all different sides. I go to *Shabbat* in the settlements on the West Bank, and that would maybe upset some of my left wing peace activist friends, and then I spend the next day with Palestinian peace activists in Bethlehem, and that might upset some friends in my Jewish community in Jerusalem. But I see the longing for wholeness, the longing to live in a deep connection with the Holy Land that unites all of us<sup>25</sup>.

The second mission of JP is their aim of making Jerusalem a city that unites, rather than divides the two peoples<sup>26</sup>. In the following I will present three perspectives on Jerusalem from the teaching of Sheikh Bukhari, a political proposal for Jerusalem by Frohman and finally a critique related to the living conditions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

In another interview with Sheik Bukhari published at JP's webpage, he argues that the fact that Jerusalem is Holy for all three Monotheistic religions should lead to a common engagement of keeping Jerusalem "spiritually clean"<sup>27</sup>. This means first of all that Jerusalem should be a city devoid of violence, weapons and political ambiguities<sup>28</sup>. Secondly, the city could be kept spiritually clean if people would acknowledge the other's attachment to the city: "... people of all religions are failing to keep Jerusalem spiritually clean ... Today the religious inhabitants of Jerusalem care about their own holy sites, but they allow the rest of the city to degenerate"<sup>29</sup>. The third perspective Sheikh Bukhari gives on Jerusalem is his use of a Hadith which says that judgment day will be in Jerusalem. According to Bukhari the judgment is not between different peoples or faiths, but between good and evil: "on the Day of Judgment, Jesus will return and lead all Muslims into heaven. At that time, there will be no conflicts between Jews, Christians and Muslims. There will, instead, be a battle between good and evil"<sup>30</sup>.

Frohman proposes a political solution for Jerusalem, which is that the city should be an international Holy city under UN

Isn't it only fitting that Jerusalem be the seat of the United Nations' cultural bodies, human rights organizations, and scholarly forums? Isn't it only proper that Jerusalem be the place

<sup>25</sup> Jerusalem Peacemakers, presentation of Eliyahu McLean, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/eliyahu/home.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>27</sup> Jerusalem Peacemakers, "Sheikh Aziz offer Peaceful words for Jerusalem", available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/bukhari/bukhari.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Jerusalem Peacemakers, "Sheikh Aziz offers peaceful words for Jerusalem", available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/bukhari/bukhari.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

where members of all faiths convene to renounce their breeding of prejudice, hostility, and war?<sup>31</sup>.

Thus, this proposal includes both humanitarian and religious/cultural activities under the auspices of UN.

But although JP focuses on unity in Jerusalem from a religious point of view, it also presents another reality on its webpage. One of the leaders of Jerusalem Peacemakers, Ibrahim Abu el-Hawa, is himself a Palestinian living in East Jerusalem. Al-Hawa explains the difficulties in living in East Jerusalem, where he needs a visa to travel to Mecca, where his children cannot travel abroad to study for fear of losing their right to move back to their childhood home in East Jerusalem:

We don't want the Israeli government to feed us honey and cake. But we need the freedom and right to live in our land. We ask the government to treat us as people who want to live here and give us rights, for example, for our children to go out to study and come back when they want<sup>32</sup>.

Thus, information of religious visions for Jerusalem does not deny the harsh reality for Palestinians living in East Jerusalem.

The third issue related to the mission of JP is their conception of peace. In the work of JP, peace can be perceived as both *inner peace* and *outer peace*<sup>33</sup>. These concepts are interrelated and mean that *inner peace* for the individual is the key to *outer peace* for the nations. The Sunni Muslim woman, Ibtisam Mahameed explains about her dialogue work with women:

We then started a nationwide non-political women's network in 1992 called the Peace Begins Within Association, where I was the director. The idea of the organization is that if I'm at peace within myself, I make peace with others. We have meetings once a month between women from every sector of society, with the aim of getting to know one another and breaking down the barriers of stereotypes which reduces fears and paves the way to real unity. It is the task of women to raise our children at home in an atmosphere of openness and acceptance<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Jerusalem Peacemakers, "Rabbi Menachem Frohman", available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/froman/home.html> Retrieved February 5, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Jerusalem Peacemakers, "Ibrahim Abu el-Hawa and family", available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/ibrahim/intro.html> Retrieved February 5, 2009. See also the Newsletters available online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers.org/uncategorized/ibrahim-abu-el-hawa/> Retrieved February 5, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> This they have in common with CHN, which will be described later in this chapter.

<sup>34</sup> JP, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/ibtisam/ibtisam-work.html> Retrieved February 5, 2009.



*Inner peace* is also a central term in the work of Hagit Ra'anan, who is a secular Jewish woman. She offers several courses on peace for Israeli school children, and hopes to increase her engagement to include the Palestinian schools in the future:

The projects I initiate involve many activities, dialogues and conversations, reflecting the inner peace approach from all aspects. This includes sharing the source, brain storming, responsibility, mutual respect, identifying the need and ability of the other, listening and providing a safe environment to share and more. The aspiration is to develop tools to recognize the inner peace and the individual's own responsibility for world peace: peace starts with me, it expands through peace in my family, between countries and with the environment<sup>35</sup>.

Another perception of peace is given by Sheikh Bukhari in the interview. First of all, Bukhari encourages people to take a stand on what he calls pro-peace, instead of taking sides in the conflict: "We want people to be pro-peace ... by being pro-Palestinian or pro-Israel they make tension and violence". Secondly, Bukhari also emphasizes the need for a peace between Israelis and Palestinians in order to be able to deal with the difficult issues of the conflict:

Our proposal to the peace efforts is let's make first a peace. After a whole year we can speak, working together, cooperating together, than we can work on the questions, on the Jerusalem issue, on the refugee issues on the wall issue. This is later after we've had peace for a whole year. But the problem right now is they talk about peace, and then they talk about the Jerusalem issue, the wall, the refugee, and everything becomes complicated and then peace fails. So I say let's make peace for a whole year. And after that we are friends, we have cooperation we can talk to each other, and we can compromise, we can give and take and we can find a way<sup>36</sup>.

A central focus of JP seems to be on spirituality, which can unite different religious traditions and individuals. McLean explains this unity between spiritual leaders in an interview:

This is the Holy Land for both peoples. In this approach we can bring together religious leaders, sheikhs and the rabbis. In particular I have been working with Palestinian Sufi Muslims, Israeli Orthodox Rabbis and Kabbalists, and these spiritual leaders are trying to bring religion and spirituality to be a bridge, a pathway to peace, and not, God forbid, an obstacle to peace. This is the essence of what we are trying to do in Ruach Shalom<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> JP, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/hagit/hagit6education.html> Retrieved February 5, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, Saida: "Interview with Eliyahu McLean", 2002, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/eliyahu/interview.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

McLean also gives examples of how he can be inspired by previous religious leaders who have promoted peace and how he believes other religions have wisdom to bring to humanity. In an interview McLean tells about the beginning of his work during the second intifada:

*We gather here every Friday at this hour since the outbreak of violence in September 2000," 33-year-old McLean says. "We started then with a three-day fast and prayer vigil for healing and mourning the loss of life on every side and we study the holy books of all wisdom traditions ... We pray for understanding, tolerance and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis"*<sup>38</sup>.

In the same interview McLean also tells how the group addressed the texts of religious leaders who have been outstanding for their peace campaigns. Specifically he mentions the Hindu teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the Christian Martin Luther King<sup>39</sup>. In the interview with Sheikh Bukhari similar information is given, when he tells of visits of Hindus and shiks<sup>40</sup>. This inclusive attitude towards the religious other is further explained by Sheikh Bukhari:

If you are Jewish, act like a Jewish person. In the Jewish religion it says, the ten commandments ... so I want you to do what God says. Not to change or convert your religion. The same thing for Christians, Jesus said turn your other chick. I'm not asking him to change his religion, I'm asking him to do as God says. Because all the orders from God, they are all the same ... the Bible, the Torah and the Quran. So these are the word of God<sup>41</sup>.

According to Sheik Bukhari, the practice of trying to make peace or even to help a fellow human being is considered as "worship of God"<sup>42</sup>. In the interview Sheikh Bukhari explains how religion is not a cause of the conflict, but is being misinterpreted:

Religion has been hijacked by many sources, and many times they use the word religion, when some killing and destruction are done. They say we are killing in the name of God and our religion says we have to kill. But, as our Scripture the Quran says, if you forgive you will be highly rewarded in Heaven ... No, which is better? To slap somebody who slapped you, or to get rewarded in heaven? For me as a religious person I prefer to get the reward in Heaven. But small minded persons, he wants to revenge, when somebody slaps him he wants to slap him back<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> JP, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/eliyahu/about.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> JP, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/eliyahu/interview.html> Retrieved June 17, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Jerusalem Peacemakers, "Sheikh Aziz offers Peaceful words for Jerusalem", available online:

<http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/bukhari/bukhari.html> Retrieved February 17, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

Frohman, who once was a member of Gush Emunim and still is a religious Zionist, also makes statements which clearly connect his work to his faith:

If the purpose of Zionism is to transform the sublime visions of our heritage into reality here on earth, wouldn't its true fulfillment be the realization of Isaiah's vision ... making Jerusalem into the capital of peace and home of a UN for all religions ... Jerusalem deserves to be more: a realization of our potential to rise above the narrow sense of nationalism<sup>44</sup>.

In this way Frohman connects his association with religious Zionism to his work for unity and cooperation between the two peoples<sup>45</sup>.

## **11.2 Activities and Cooperation**

The activities of Jerusalem Peacemakers can either be described by presenting all the different activities conducted by the six independent peacemakers of JP, or one can limit the presentation to those activities JP supports jointly. In this presentation I will limit the focus towards the latter. JP supports three projects: All Nations Café, the Sulha project and the Big Hug of Jerusalem<sup>46</sup>. Although the individual leaders of JP also have their own activities, I will focus on these three projects.

The project *All Nations Café* was initiated by one of the Palestinian peacemakers of JP Ibrahim Abu el Hawa. The project consists basically of thirteen Palestinians, Israelis and international individuals – several with musical or artistic background. All Nations Café has basically been engaged in four projects. The first is called “Gathering on the Israeli-Palestinian border”. The second is called “Planting a future”, the third “Springs and Terraces”. The fourth is called “Holy Land Caravans”. “The gathering on the Israeli-Palestinian border” means that the team invites to gatherings at the All Nations Café located on the border of East and West Jerusalem. They present their project as follows:

Our flagship project, All Nations Café at Ein Haniya, is not just a culture and arts community center, nor is it merely a Middle Eastern style café on the Bethlehem–Jerusalem road. It is

<sup>44</sup> Frohman, Menachem, A UN for all the Nations, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/froman/art-UNReligions.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> An even more detailed description of Frohman's beliefs in religious Zionism, and specifically the teaching of Rav Kook is explained in Little: 2007: 341-356.

<sup>46</sup> On the webpage of JP they also list the Hope Flower School as one of their projects, in addition to presenting Ibrahim Issa as part of their team. But since there is no further information given on the webpage, I am not writing about this project. During the interview with Sheikh Bukhari this project was not mentioned either.

indeed an open, friendly, non-intimidating meeting place in the midst of a war zone, right on the border of Israel and Palestine, where Israelis, including soldiers and settlers, children and adults, religious and secular, together with Palestinian refugees, farmers, politicians, youth and elderly people, and international visitors, tourists and volunteers communicate intimately, equally, humanely, carefully building understanding, trust and hope<sup>47</sup>.

The second project “Planting a future” is planting trees on the land between Jerusalem and Bethlehem<sup>48</sup>. While the third project “Springs and Terraces” means that groups assist farmers in the valleys and hills between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in restoring springs and rebuilding ancient pools to improve the fertility of the land<sup>49</sup>. The fourth project, “The Holy Land Caravans” is basically tours where the team present their music and artistic work. In 2004 the team went to Jordan and preformed their music<sup>50</sup>. In their report of this journey they explain how they felt: “After listening to the Palestinian reporters we sang to them and made it clear that music, as our friends from the Iraqi Maqam ensemble put it, is a universal language, beyond politics and prejudice”<sup>51</sup>. In 2005 the team travelled to Germany and Switzerland where they met with Palestinians from Gaza, Syria and Iraqis<sup>52</sup>. In addition to these projects *All Nations Café* joined an Arab-Hebrew theater group from Ein Karne Intercultural Center in West Jerusalem in 2006, with children from an Israeli Arab village Ein Rafa and Israeli kids from Jerusalem. The group has also joined summer camps, such as the Middle East Families Camp. *All Nations Café* has published several small documentaries on YouTube<sup>53</sup> and produced a CD of their music<sup>54</sup>.

The Sulha Peace Project is a grassroots organization based on the traditional Middle Eastern process of mediation. According to themselves they are “preparing people for peace from “bottom-up” and complementing peacemaking efforts that are undertaken at the governmental and diplomatic level”<sup>55</sup>. The vision of the Sulha Peace project is to gather Jews, Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians for “healing and reconciliation of the Children of Abraham,

<sup>47</sup> All Nations Café, online: <http://www.allnationscafe.org/ein-haniya.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> All Nations Café, online: <http://www.allnationscafe.org/trees.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> All Nations Café, online: <http://www.allnationscafe.org/springs.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> All Nations Café, online: <http://www.allnationscafe.org/JordanCaravan2004.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> All Nations Café, online: <http://www.allnationscafe.org/JordanCaravan2004.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> All Nations Café, online: <http://www.allnationscafe.org/europe2005.html> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> YouTube, online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDhqB9X9eUM&feature=related> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> All Nations Café, online: <http://www.allnationscafe.org/index.php> Retrieved February 19, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Sulha Peace Project, “About Us”, online: [http://www.sulha.com/showitem.asp?itemid>About\\_us](http://www.sulha.com/showitem.asp?itemid>About_us) Retrieved October 19, 2009.

rooted in the spirit of the prophetic voices from the Holy Land<sup>56</sup>. The Sulha Peace Project holds an annual "On the way to Sulha" gathering, Sulhita Youth Project, Local Sulha Day and ongoing workshops. In addition the Sulha Peace Project integrates "listening circles, multi-cultural workshops, sacred interfaith rituals, shared meals, and the Arts, from Arab and Jewish traditions"<sup>57</sup>. Eliyahu McLean is in the board of the Sulha Peace Project<sup>58</sup>. In the interview with Sheikh Bukhari he told about the Sulha Peace Projects, which is an annual gathering where people meet for three days. The Sulha Peace Project has developed a methodology for the gathering which reflects the following stages of healing:

Morning: "Heart opening" of deep trauma, pain and hopes on a personal level in listening circles.

Afternoon: Experiential and theoretical workshops, study of each other's culture on a national, religious and ethnic level.

Sunset: Interfaith prayers and rituals rooted in the different traditions.

Evening: Arts, Music and Dance - Integration of emotional and intellectual dimensions experienced throughout the day. Celebration of our two people through the Arts as a mean for healing and transformation<sup>59</sup>.

During the interview Sheik Bukhari explains about a meeting of parents from Parents Circle<sup>60</sup> and previous soldiers who suffered after difficult experiences during their service<sup>61</sup>. Sheikh Bukhari explains specifically how when parents had lost their children, the conflict had too high a price:

When we bring a Jewish mother and a Palestinian mother who lost their children and they cry, their tears are the same, and their sufferings are the same. And they say to each other: I lost my son, and she says I lost my son. And what we benefit? Nothing ... You see in wars there are none winners, both are losers ... And the only one who wins is the evil<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Sulha Peace Project, "Our Vision", online: <http://www.sulha.com/showitem.asp?itemid=vision> Retrieved October 19, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Sulha Peace Project, "Our Organization", online: [http://www.sulha.com/showitem.asp?itemid=Sulha\\_Organization](http://www.sulha.com/showitem.asp?itemid=Sulha_Organization) Retrieved October 19, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Sulha Peace Project, "Annual gathering", online: [http://www.sulha.com/ShowItem.asp?ItemId=about\\_annual\\_gathering](http://www.sulha.com/ShowItem.asp?ItemId=about_annual_gathering) Retrieved October 19, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> This is an organization for both Israeli and Palestinian parents who have lost one of their children because of the conflict. See their webpage online: <http://www.theparentscircle.com/> Retrieved December 2, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

In this way the gatherings allow parents from both sides of the conflict to meet and help each other through the process of grievance.

The annual gathering of the Sulha Peace projects has included thousands of individuals, women, children, Muslim, Christians, Jews, Druze, Bedouins, Palestinians and Israelis, both secular and religious<sup>63</sup>. The annual gatherings have also been documented by video recordings<sup>64</sup>.

The third project JP support is called “The Big Hug of Jerusalem”. In the interview Sheikh Bukhari tells about this gathering, where people from all parts of Israel, Palestinians, international peace activists, both religious and secular gather around the wall of the Old City. Sheikh Bukhari explains the idea behind this gathering:

We bring people together who has one thing in common, their love for Jerusalem, the Holy City. So we bring people from different faiths, different parts of the world. We`ve even had Buddha with us, we`ve had shiks with us... but they have one thing in common, they love Jerusalem. So we gather for a wall, we hug Jerusalem ... We find something that people like and we bring them together, to unite, not to divide<sup>65</sup>.

The gathering has also been recorded and published on You Tube<sup>66</sup>.

In the interview Sheikh Bukhari explains how JP sought to cooperate with everyone interested in peace. Bukhari thought that if the diverse NGOs did not cooperate they would reduce their strength:

We try to cooperate, to work together to inform of the projects we are doing to cooperate. Because most of the NGO`s work in their own circle, don`t work so much with the other, so we try to get all the people working for peace to cooperate, so that we can be heard... Unity is our strength, our power. When we are divided we have less strength<sup>67</sup>.

JP cooperates with several of the organizations mentioned in this dissertation too, like the Interfaith Encounter Association<sup>68</sup> and Rabbis for Human Rights<sup>69</sup> and the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel<sup>70</sup>. It also supports the work of the Council of Religious

<sup>63</sup> Sulha Peace Project, “On the way to Sulha Annual gathering”, online:

[http://www.sulha.com/ShowItem.asp?ItemId=about\\_annual\\_gathering](http://www.sulha.com/ShowItem.asp?ItemId=about_annual_gathering) Retrieved October 19, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Sulha Peace Project, “Video Gallery”, online: <http://www.sulha.com/video.asp> Retrieved October 19, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>66</sup> YouTube, “The Big Hug of Jerusalem”, online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9xVloQYZXw> Retrieved October 19, 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>68</sup> Yehuda Stolov, <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/reports/index.html> Retrieved October 16, 2009. See chapter 9.

<sup>69</sup> See chapter 6.

<sup>70</sup> My first two meetings with Sheikh Bukhari in 2008 and 2009 were both arranged by Ophir Yarden at ICCI. See chapter 4.

Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL)<sup>71</sup>. In the interview Sheikh Bukhari explains the importance of cooperation between religious leaders and politicians to promote peace as done by CRIHL:

We are not asking for a religious government ... politicians and religion need to work together, to help restore the countries and restore relationships. Because that's the real problem that politicians excluded religion, they exclude them from the decisions. So, they need to cooperate, they need to have something to do with the religious people, they need to work together to find a solution. You cannot do anything by yourself. We need two hands to hold things, and the government needs this too, they need to cooperate to hold this situation and make a solution<sup>72</sup>.

JP is also linked closely to an international network. JP was founded in 2004, during the second intifada. Their foundation was a result of meetings by individual peace workers during the second intifada in 2000, but it was first after a gathering in Glastonbury, UK, arranged by Creative Health Network<sup>73</sup> where two of the six independent peace workers – Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Bukhari met – that JP was officially founded<sup>74</sup>. Creative Health Network (CHN) is a small non-profit organization founded in 1992 which supports humanitarians working for peace. CHN works to link many of the Holy Land grassroots peacebuilders with a wider international community of peace workers and other like-minded organizations<sup>75</sup>. By “creative health” CHN believes “creative health to be a state of wholeness and wellbeing among individuals, groups, organizations and communities, and that our common experience is continuously being created by our individual and collective choices” and their focus on peace relates to “peace – both at the inner and outer level”<sup>76</sup>. Jerusalem Peacemakers had a special connection with the United Kingdom, specifically because it was founded in Glastonbury, UK in 2004, with one organization in Glastonbury and the other in Jerusalem. Not until 2006 did Jerusalem Peacemakers become the center, with extensive support from European and American donors<sup>77</sup>. But unlike the other organizations of this thesis, Jerusalem peacemakers has also made contact and cooperation with Middle Eastern

<sup>71</sup> See the next chapter.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>73</sup> Creative Health Network is an international organization based on voluntarily work. See xx Sam Perry from Britain is recognized as the founder of Jerusalem Peacemakers. The story of Pam Perry is presented on JP's webpage, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/chn/pam.html>. Retrieved October 8, 2009. Pam Perry died in 2007, see Main site, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/home.html>. Retrieved October 9, 2009.

<sup>74</sup> Our History, online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers.org/about/about-jerusalem-peacemakers/>

<sup>75</sup> See “About CHN” online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/chn/index.html>. Retrieved October 9, 2009.

<sup>76</sup> See <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/chn/index.html> Retrieved October 9, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> See the history behind the establishment of JP available at <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/intro.html> Retrieved October 26, 2009.

countries, specifically in Bagdad<sup>78</sup>. JP is also part of the Abrahamic Reunion, an organization consisting of moderate Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druze religious leaders. Jerusalem Peacemakers and the Abrahamic Reunion are both CC's (Cooperation Circle) of the URI, United Religions Initiative<sup>79</sup>.

This mission of bringing people together can be further understood by the belief JP has of the capacity of each person to participate in peacework. At the end of the interview with Sheikh Bukhari, I asked him if he wanted to add something, and his reply was a call for everyone to join in peacework:

Yes, I think everybody should be involved in the peacework. Because it's not only Jerusalem Peacemakers, or other organizations, I think everybody is responsible. Don't sit at home and listen to this and read about it, and say what can I do? You have to be involved. Everybody has to ... When peace comes everybody will benefit from it. War come everybody will suffer. So give us a hand and be part of our work, let your voice join our voices and tell everybody<sup>80</sup>.

In this way JP is an inclusive organization which works on the grassroots level, and encourages religious and secular alike to join JP or other projects for peace.

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<sup>78</sup> One of the leaders of Jerusalem Peacemakers, McLean, describes his tour to Bagdad in the article online: <http://jerusalempeacemakers2008.jerusalempeacemakers.org/reports/index.html> Retrieved October 26, 2009.

<sup>79</sup> The donors of JP are presented at <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/eliyahu-mclean/8/472/922> Retrieved October 26, 2009. See also the article at [http://www.uri.org/CC\\_News/Mid\\_East\\_%26\\_N.Africa/jerpec.html](http://www.uri.org/CC_News/Mid_East_%26_N.Africa/jerpec.html) Retrieved October 26, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.



## 12 Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land

*Holy Scriptures are dear to believers, and religious leaders have a guiding role in interpreting them. The need to remember and also to remind believers that even if in Holy Scriptures they can find arguments for war, conflict and no room for those of other faiths, the same Scriptures also teach respect, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. Interpretation of Holy Scriptures means making choices. Religious leaders need to clarify what principles and what clues are needed to read Holy Scriptures in support of peace and justice.*

*Excerpt from a lecture by Rev Dr. & Canon Trond Bakkevig at Georgetown University<sup>1</sup>.*

On January 21 and 22, 2002, fifteen religious leaders from Israel and Palestine gathered in Alexandria to declare an agreement between the three Semitic religions in the region concerning their common support to peace<sup>2</sup>. The meeting was initiated by the then Archbishop of Canterbury and hosted by the Grand Imam of Al Azhar. In the Alexandria Declaration the religious leaders from the Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities declared a common commitment to end violence and to promote respect for “the integrity of each other’s historical and religious inheritance”<sup>3</sup> in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The declaration addressed both the religious communities and the politicians. To ensure the continuity achieved through the Alexandria Declaration, the religious leaders who met in Alexandria organized themselves in the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL) in 2005. CRIHL is a consultative body representing the highest religious authorities in the Holy Land.

The following presentation is based on the material available on the official webpage of CRIHL, which presents their history, mission and goals, activities, in addition to public statements, CRIHL’s documents and a number of articles and speeches. In addition an

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<sup>1</sup> Bakkevig, Trond, “Religious Dialogue and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East”, (2010), available online: <http://crihl.org/content/religious-dialogue-and-quest-peace-middle-east> Retrieved September 1, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Landau, Yehezkel: “Healing the Holy Land. Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine”, in United States Institute for Peace, 2003, p. 16. Available at <http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks51.pdf>. 10. November 24, 2008. See also 1.2.1.

<sup>3</sup> The Alexandria Declaration, online: <http://crihl.org/content/alexandria-declaration> Retrieved November 19, 2010.

interview with the facilitator and convener of the Council, Rev Dr. & Canon Trond Bakkevig has been conducted.

### **12.1 Mission and Motivation**

CRIHL is a consultative body representing the highest official religious authorities in the Holy Land, encompassing two peoples and three religions. The member institutions of CRIHL are The Chief Rabbinate of Israel, The Heads of the local Churches of the Holy Land, The Minister of Islamic Waaqf at the Palestinian Authority, and the Islamic Sharia Court of the PA. The Council meets on a regular basis. In 2008 two executives were appointed to the secretariat in Jerusalem. The staffs of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land are: Rev. Dr. and Canon Trond Bakkevig, who has long experience with dialogue and human rights and who has been a personal advisor to the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs (1987-88). The other two were both born and raised in Jerusalem and hold MAs in conflict resolution. Keren Hendin is a co-director of the CRIHL with an MA in International Conflict and Coexistence. She has worked with communities and leadership from Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Fadi Rabieh is the other co-director and holds an MA in Conflict Transformation and Peace-building<sup>4</sup>. The Council is supported by the Norwegian Government<sup>5</sup>.

The mission and motivation behind the work of CRIHL can be found on the official webpage of CRIHL and includes the documents of CRIHL in addition to a number of articles and speeches by representatives of the member institutions and the convener of the Council Trond Bakkevig. The CRIHL presents its main task as follows:

As religious leaders of different faiths, who share the conviction in the one Creator, Lord of the Universe; we believe that the essence of religion is to worship G-d and respect the life and dignity of all human beings, regardless of religion, nationality and gender.

We accordingly commit ourselves to use our positions and good offices, to advance these sacred values, to prevent religion from being used as a source of conflict, and to promote mutual respect, a just and comprehensive peace and reconciliation between people of all faiths in the Holy Land and worldwide<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Staff of CRIHL, online: <http://crihl.org/content/crihl-staff> Retrieved April 19, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> CRIHL History, online: <http://crihl.org/content/crihl-history> Retrieved April 19, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> CRIHL, Mission and goals, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/crihl-mission-goals> Retrieved December 12, 2010.

This statement is further elaborated through five goals listed by CRIHL: 1) To be an open channel of communication between the Israeli and Palestinian institutional religious leadership, 2) to ensure a working relationship with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority<sup>7</sup>, 3) to promote mutual acceptance and respect among the religious communities through dialogue, education and the media, 4) to promote respect for the holy sites of each religious community and 5) to engage religious leaders internationally<sup>8</sup>.

The mission and goals of CRIHL are also to be found in the four documents by CRIHL: *The Alexandria Declaration* from 2002 was drawn up during the second intifada and specifically addresses a common statement that says “killing innocents in the name of God is a desecration of His Holy Name, and defames religion in the world”<sup>9</sup>. This declaration also states the need for cooperation between the religious leadership and the political authority in relation to holy sites and to end violence in the name of religion. As mentioned, CRIHL was established in 2005 and then they drew up the document the *Protocol for the formation of CRIHL* which further develops the ideas expressed in the *Alexandria Declaration* in addition to presenting a plan for the organization of the council<sup>10</sup>. In 2007 CRIHL produced a document in which they clarify some guiding rules behind the communication between the member institutions. The document enlists four such goals:

1. Ensuring that my statements emphasize the value of our collective effort and the fact that we are working to improve the atmosphere of dialogue between one another.
2. Avoid any public statement that could endanger our ability to work together.
3. Discuss the details of those matters upon which we most deeply disagree in our private meetings and not in public.
4. Emphasize the importance of our dialog and the good will between us despite our differences<sup>11</sup>.

In this way disagreements are not meant to reach the public sphere, only joint statements. In the interview with Trond Bakkevig he pointed out how this also constrained the possibilities of what CRIHL could or could not say<sup>12</sup>. Later that same year CRIHL met with among others

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<sup>7</sup> This means the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank, not Gaza.

<sup>8</sup> This list has been shortened down by me. The whole text is online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/crihl-mission-goals> Retrieved November 19, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> The Alexandria Declaration, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/alexandria-declaration> Retrieved November 19, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> The Protocol for the formation of CRIHL, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/protocol-formation-crihl> Retrieved November 19, 2010. The organization of CRIHL will be presented in 12.1.2.

<sup>11</sup> CRIHL Pledge 2007, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/crihl-pledge> Retrieved November 19, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Trond Bakkevig.

Condoleezza Rice in Jerusalem<sup>13</sup>, and they drew up the document *Washington Communiqué*<sup>14</sup>. This document emphasizes even more strongly the mission of CRIHL to use their “position of leadership... to prevent religion from being used as a source of conflict”<sup>15</sup> and further how “our respective Holy Places have become a major element in our conflict”<sup>16</sup>. According to this document, Holy places should be “dedicated to prayer and worship only, places where believers have free access and put themselves in the presence of the Creator. Holy places are there for believers to draw inspiration to strengthen their acceptance and love of Almighty and all His creatures, from all religions and all nationalities”<sup>17</sup>. The document further acknowledges the different need among Israeli and Palestinian by saying: “Palestinians yearn for the end to occupation and for what they see as their inalienable rights. Israelis long for the day when they can live in personal and national security. Together we must find ways of reaching these goals”<sup>18</sup>. The goals of this document are pretty much similar to the goals enlisted on CRIHL’s webpage, but one point needs to be brought out. In the *Washington Communiqué* CRIHL clearly pronounces their goal to “Together reflect on the future of Jerusalem, support the designation of the Old City of Jerusalem as a World Heritage Site, work to secure open access to the Old City for all communities, and seek a common vision for this city which all of us regard as holy”<sup>19</sup>. In this way CRIHL’s mission is to be the religious partner in the political peace process by giving advice on issues related to religion.

There are also several articles and speeches published on CRIHL’s official webpage which further explain the mission and motivation behind some of the member institutions. The articles and speeches by the member institutions represent individual perspectives, but may shed light on CRIHL’s work. Representative for the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, Rabbi David Rosen<sup>20</sup> and Oded Wiener<sup>21</sup> have encouraged religious leaders in Israel to unite in the pursuit of peace. Representatives from the Heads of the Churches of the Holy Land, Bishop Munib A

<sup>13</sup> Middle East Web: “AN Unprecedented Interreligious Council: Putting Faith in Annapolis”, 2007. Online: <http://www.mideastweb.org/log/archives/00000650.htm> Retrieved January 9, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> CRIHL, *Washington Communiqué*, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/washington-communication%C3%A9> Retrieved November 19, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* See point 3 of the document.

<sup>20</sup> Rosen has written “A Disturbing Desecration of Jewish Values” online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/disturbing-desecration-jewish-values> and “Religious leaders in Israel unite for a better future”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/religious-leaders-israel-unite-better-future> Both retrieved December 10, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Wiener has written “A World without violence: religions and culture in dialogue”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/world-without-violence-religions-and-cultures-dialogue> Retrieved December 10, 2010.

Younan<sup>22</sup> and Patriarch Michel Sabbah<sup>23</sup> have written several articles promoting dialogue and peace in Jerusalem. In addition the convener of CRIHL, Trond Bakkevig has also published several articles and speeches<sup>24</sup>. In the following I would like to briefly review these articles and speeches and what they can say about the mission and motivation behind the work of CRIHL. I will start by representing the articles from the Palestinian Christians, next the Israeli Jewish representatives and finally the convener Trond Bakkevig. There are no articles written by the Muslim representatives at present time<sup>25</sup>.

CRIHL has published a speech made by the Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah in Claremont September 23, 2009 called *Jerusalem, City of Peace*. In this speech Sabbah addresses the missing “ways of peace”<sup>26</sup> in contemporary Jerusalem. Some of the challenges facing Jerusalem today are according to Sabbah related to an exclusion of the other, as he thinks can be exemplified with the wall separating Jerusalem, confiscation of land and houses, replacement of inhabitants, building of new Jewish neighborhoods against lack of building permits for Palestinians, leading to homes demolished. Against this background Sabbah raises a critical voice against Israeli policy in Jerusalem:

Palestinians have claimed and claim until today that East Jerusalem is or will be the eternal capital of Palestine. It is their right, and it is not exclusive, as it claims only Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. Israel claims that all Jerusalem, East and West, is the eternal capital of Israel, accepting neither a shared city with shared sovereignty, nor a divided city with divided sovereignty: a status declared “null and void” by the international community, but still valid on the ground<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Younan has written three articles: “Reflections on the situation in the Middle East”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/reflections-situation-middle-east>, “Bring religion back to the front lines of peace”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/bring-religion-back-front-lines-peace> and “Role of religious leaders in enhancing commitment”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/role-religious-leaders-enhancing-commitment> See below.

<sup>23</sup> Sabbah has written: “Speech at the American Consulate, Jerusalem”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/speech-american-consulate-jerusalem>, “Christian and Moslem Relations in the Holy Land”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/christian-and-moslem-relation-holy-land> and “Jerusalem, City of Peace”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/jerusalem-city-peace> See below.

<sup>24</sup> Bakkevig has written “Address at interfaith event in honor of Pope Benedict XVI”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/address-interfaith-event-honor-pope-benedict-xvi>, “Religious Dialogue and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/religious-dialogue-and-quest-peace-middle-east>, “Religious dialogue in the service of citizenship”, online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/religious-dialogue-service-citizenship> and is the coauthor of “A New Presence at the Negotiating Table” online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/new-presence-negotiating-table>. See below.

<sup>25</sup> Writing in March 2011.

<sup>26</sup> CRIHL, “Jerusalem, City of Peace”, online: <http://crihl.org/content/jerusalem-city-peace> Retrieved January 23, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

In this way Sabbah argues that the political rights of the Palestinians are excluded and that access to holy sites is limited due to security measures. Sabbah also warns against falling “into a narrow, egoistic, nationalist, exclusivist view: a view that excludes others, along with their long history”<sup>28</sup>. Sabbah explains that CRIHL has not been able to agree on the issue of Jerusalem, except that it is holy for all parties. According to Sabbah the future of Jerusalem must be found through three principles “the holiness of the city, its universality as a place to be shared, and the priority of the human being – the religious and political question of Jerusalem should be solved”<sup>29</sup>. This means that Sabbah argues for “Jerusalem: as capital for the Palestinian state, as well as capital for the Israeli state, and as spiritual capital for humanity”<sup>30</sup>. CRIHL has also published another speech by Patriarch Michel Sabbah called *Speech at the American Consulate, Jerusalem*. In this speech Sabbah briefly explains the history of CRIHL, and the importance of their work<sup>31</sup>.

The Evangelical Lutheran bishop Munib Younan has published one article for CRIHL, *Role of religious leaders in enhancing commitment*<sup>32</sup>. The article is a speech delivered by Younan in Bangladesh, September 9, 2009. In this speech Younan dedicates himself as a Palestinian. Younan argues for a *prophetic dialogue for life* which addresses people’s suffering, challenges structures of injustice and builds a modern civil society. He further argues that religious leaders should be prophetic. He also encourages the centrality of two major issues in the dialogue between Muslims and Christians, which are: “a just end to the illegal Israeli occupation, which would include: two nations living side by side on 1967 borders; a shared Jerusalem; a stop to all settlement activity; a solution to the refugee issue; and the sharing of resources”<sup>33</sup>. Younan sees dialogue as a process in which “we are set free from a system of exclusive doctrinal claims in order to listen to each other, seek mutual understanding and, on this a foundation, to pursue our shared values. In this way, religion becomes a positive force in a broken world, seeking peace, justice, diaconal, acceptance,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Michel Sabbah has also written a speech called “Christian and Muslims in the Holy Land”, where he emphasized the main good relation between Christians and Muslims. This was posted in 2011 after I had gathered my data. Online: <http://crihl.org/content/christian-and-moslem-relation-holy-land> Retrieved January 23, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> CRIHL, “Speech at the American Consulate” by Michel Sabbah, online: <http://crihl.org/content/speech-american-consulate-jerusalem> Retrieved January 23, 2010. Since most of the information of the work of CRIHL will be described later in this chapter, I do not describe fully the content of this speech.

<sup>32</sup> In 2011 another article was published called “Reflections on the situation of the Middle East”. Because I already had gathered the data by then I decided not to review upcoming information.

<sup>33</sup> CRIHL. “Role of religious leaders in enhancing commitment, online: <http://crihl.org/content/role-religious-leaders-enhancing-commitment> Retrieved January 23, 2010.

coexistence, freedom and human rights for all". According to Younan this is the core task of CRIHL, and is to be implemented in their activities.

Rabbi David Rosen has written *A Disturbing Desecration of Jewish Values*, as a response to rabbi Eliyahu of Safed who persuaded Jews from selling or renting homes to non-Jews in Israel. According to Rosen, Eliyahu put forward claims that Arabs are seeking to take over the country, which can have a negative effect on relations between Jews and non-Jews in Israel. In the response Rosen emphasizes how the Chief Rabbinate of Israel "have disassociated themselves from it; and that many notable rabbinic figures have publicly condemned it"<sup>34</sup>. Rosen further argues that the statement by Eliyahu is "a narrow-minded interpretation of halakhic that completely disregards the enlightened interpretation of past chief rabbis of Israel"- followed by examples of how the rabbinate during the last century had ruled against such attitudes. Rosen concludes that "Rabbi Eliyahu and his colleagues represent not only a halakhic regression and a capitulation to scaremongering, but they are guilty of nothing less than a *chilul hashem* , a desecration of the Divine Name, and an embarrassment to our Jewish heritage". CRIHL has also published another article by Rabbi Rosen called *Religious leaders in Israel unite for a better future*, which describes a meeting of religious leaders from six different faiths who signed a pledge for interfaith cooperation and mutual respect "based upon a recognition of a common humanity flowing from the Faith in One Creator of All"<sup>35</sup>. The theme of the gathering at Bar Ilan University was "The Role of religious leaders in times of crises" and focused on how religious leaders could prevent strife in times of conflict. The gathering also included the highest official religious leadership and local political authorities. In this article Rosen also comments on the lack of media attention on successful gatherings:

Aside from recommendations regarding education and inter-communal cooperation, a general lament was voiced regarding how negative attitudes and incidents seem to enjoy widespread coverage and exposure as opposed to positive efforts to combat enmity and conflict. Indeed, this remarkable event itself received little or no coverage in the Israeli dailies. But for those of us who were present, it was an unforgettable scene<sup>36</sup>.

In this way Rosen also exemplifies how the media is needed in the effort of promoting peace by focusing on successful occasions as well as violent clashes.

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<sup>34</sup> CRIHL, "A Disturbing Desecration of Jewish Values" by Rabbi David Rosen, online: <http://crihl.org/content/disturbing-desecration-jewish-values> Retrieved January 23, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> CRIHL, "Religious leaders in Israel unite for a better future", by Rabbi David Rosen, online: <http://crihl.org/content/religious-leaders-israel-unite-better-future> Retrieved January 23, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

The website of CRIHL reprints an article by Oded Wiener, the General and coordinates interfaith dialogue for the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and member of CRIHL, called *A world without violence: religions and cultures in dialogue*. The main suggestion of this paper is that “a shared belief in one G-d should serve as a moral compass that could lead the people of the region to condemn violence and pursue a path of peaceful coexistence”<sup>37</sup>. On the other hand Wiener sees the “real danger in the rise of fundamentalism is that emotions can drag us into a religious war, the horrible consequences of which we can only guess”<sup>38</sup>. Wiener argues that religious leaders need “to condemn and pursue terrorists who in the name of G-d or religion murder innocent people and undermine the divine order of the world”<sup>39</sup>. Wiener emphasizes dialogue as essential, and bases this ideal on the writings of Rabbi Kook the elder:

There is a wonderful essay by the late Rabbi Kook, founder of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, on the issue of peace where he says that just as the beauty and the melody in a chorus or an orchestra does not come from uniform voices but from the different and varied voices that join into one harmony – so truth and world peace will be constructed from different thoughts and aspects, from different opinions and approaches – and all have a place in the harmony of life. It is precisely the unity of forces, contradictions and opposites that gives extra power, beauty and perfection to peace<sup>40</sup>.

In this way Wiener brings forth one of the founders of religious Zionism<sup>41</sup> as an example of someone who acknowledges the diversity and value of the other.

In the article *Religious Dialogue and the Quest for peace in the Middle East*, Bakkevig argues for the need for a political and religious dialogue because of the role religion plays in the identities of larger groups in this area. In this connection, religious leaders can play a role in promoting peace if they “rise above their own place, history or national politics, - they need to seek religious roots beyond their visible and immediately accessible identity”<sup>42</sup>. As the extract from the opening of this chapter said, how one interprets the scripture is essential in order to pursue peace in this region. Bakkevig argues that dialogue can promote “common vision and common ground”<sup>43</sup> and “create space for constructive solutions”<sup>44</sup> and further

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<sup>37</sup> CRIHL, “A world without violence: religions and cultures in dialogue”, by Oded Wiener, online: <http://crihl.org/content/world-without-violence-religions-and-cultures-dialogue> Retrieved January 23, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>42</sup> CRIHL, “Religious Dialogue and the Quest for Peace”, by Trond Bakkevig, online: <http://crihl.org/content/religious-dialogue-and-quest-peace-middle-east> Retrieved January 23, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



“clear the way for political decisions”<sup>45</sup>. Bakkevig further explains his own role in CRIHL and outlines some of the challenges facing CRIHL. First of all Bakkevig explains the different feelings of the conflict among Israelis and Palestinians. While Palestinians experience restrictions and are exposed to military power, Israelis feel a lack of security. This fact makes religious dialogue very difficult, according to Bakkevig. Secondly, Bakkevig emphasizes the importance of religion in this specific area called the Holy Land. This religious significance of the region is not only related to the local inhabitants of this land, but includes the whole international faith communities to some extent –specifically Jews, Christians and Muslims. According to Bakkevig these challenges require that:

Both Israelis and Palestinians should feel that they gain something by religious dialogue. Jews should feel that they are welcomed as people and with their faith, and that religious dialogue is an important contribution to their security. Palestinians must be given something to show the value of dialogue, and in a deeper sense, the value of non-violent efforts. The most obvious achievement would be easy access to their holy places – something which to a large degree is denied them today<sup>46</sup>.

Bakkevig concludes the paper by addressing the importance of religious leaders for the peace: “If religious dialogue is not taken seriously, religion can easily become the big spoiler of any peace effort. If it is taken seriously it can give formidable contributions to a lasting and sustainable peace in the Holy Land”<sup>47</sup>.

In another article called *Religious dialogue in the service of citizenship*, Bakkevig discusses the differences of accepting “a Jewish state”<sup>48</sup> or accepting “a state for the Jewish people”<sup>49</sup>, in which he favors the latter:

Citizenship needs to be conferred according to habitation and should not be linked to religious affiliation. I believe that the demand to call Israel a Jewish State reflects the need for better dialogue among the three faiths of the Holy Land. A healthy dialogue would build trust and confirm the constitutional rights of each partner. These rights must be secured both in Israel and in the future Palestinian state<sup>50</sup>.

In this way Bakkevig argues for accepting a state for the Jewish people through a constitution, rather than “a Jewish state” where religious affiliation is linked to citizenship. In an *Address at interfaith event in honor of Pope Benedict XVI*, Bakkevig explains his main vision as a convener of CRIHL:

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> CRIHL, “Religious dialogue in the service of citizenship”, online: <http://crihl.org/content/religious-dialogue-service-citizenship> Retrieved January 23, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

I have the dream that one day a sheikh, a rabbi and a bishop together can meet in Nablus and speak about the rich heritage of this land. That they together can walk along the beach of Haifa and share the riches of their own faith with each other. And that all three can go to the Holy city of Jerusalem and wish each other well when they go to their respective places of worship. Only peace, freedom, security and respect for the political freedom of the two peoples can provide for this<sup>51</sup>.

This vision behind the work of CRIHL might be a kind of illustration of the main mission and motivation behind the work of CRIHL.

## 12.2 Activities and Cooperation

CRIHL is currently conducting three public projects. The first project CRIHL is about to develop a *religious leaders program* in cooperation with *Search for Common Ground*<sup>52</sup>. The purpose of the program is to develop awareness and improve the leadership of religious leaders, to develop popular support among Israelis and Palestinians towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict. This program is being developed by well-educated persons within conflict resolution management<sup>53</sup>.

The second project is the *Israeli-Palestinian schoolbook Project* launched in August 2009, and which for the first time constitutes a joint Israeli/Palestinian research team to study the "Portrayal of the Other" in Palestinian and Israeli school books. The program is also followed up by a scientific advisory panel, consisting of European, American, Israeli and Palestinian experts. The study will focus upon all dimensions of *the other*, such as history, religion, personal and political dimensions<sup>54</sup>. The study has been funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of State and is meant to promote education for peace in the Israeli and Palestinian schools<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> CRIHL, "Address at interfaith event in honor of Pope Benedict XVI", online: <http://crihl.org/content/address-interfaith-event-honor-pope-benedict-xvi> Retrieved January 27, 2010. In addition to these articles Bakkevig is also the coauthor of another paper, which will be described under the paragraph 12.1.2.

<sup>52</sup> See Search for Common Ground's webpage, online:

[http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/jerusalem/programmes\\_jerusalem.html](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/jerusalem/programmes_jerusalem.html) Retrieved September 1, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> See "Emerging Religious Leaders program", online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/emerging-religious-leaders-program> Retrieved September 1, 2010.

<sup>54</sup> "Israeli-Palestinian Schoolbook Project", online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/israeli-palestinian-schoolbook-project> Retrieved September 1, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> The Jewish Daily Forward, «U.S. Funding Rigorous Study of Palestinian and Israeli Textbook Incitement», online: <http://forward.com/articles/139177/> Retrieved June 27, 2011.

The third project is to monitor the media for incitement through the publishing of derogatory statements by religious leaders, in order to avoid the negative impact the media can have on the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians<sup>56</sup>.

Another activity of CRIHL is to publish statements when events of a religious or interreligious nature occur. CRIHL has made seven such statements the last three years<sup>57</sup>. The public statements by the Council are based upon consensus. As mentioned earlier, when radical disagreements occur, the members conduct private meetings in order to avoid disagreement developing into a larger conflict. An example of this kind of cooperation is clearly stated through the messages published by the Council's Convener during the military actions in Gaza in January 2009:

While they, at this point in time, have not come out with a joint statement; I can say, without reservations, that they are all deeply concerned about the immense loss of human lives, especially of all the innocent and non-combatant victims before and during this war. They are concerned about all the wounded people and all the suffering which accompanies the violence<sup>58</sup>.

The Convener further explains how they as religious leaders are all part of their own peoples and share in their suffering of the people, which made a joint statement difficult to reach<sup>59</sup>.

CRIHL naturally is engaged in cooperation of different kinds. First of all, the member institutions of CRIHL represent themselves one kind of cooperation. As mentioned above, the document CRIHL pledged in 2007 enlisted some guiding rules for this cooperation. In order to establish a fruitful communication between the religious leaders of CRIHL they have agreed upon two main guidelines. First of all they do not discuss in public matters in which they strongly disagree. They rather have private meetings where they can discuss more openly issues of concerns. When they have come to an agreement they will publish joint statements. In this way they try to avoid being manipulated by the media. Trond Bakkevig also explains how the actors with whom the participants need to cooperate may be viewed as more than those present at the table:

A religious dialogue taking place in the midst of a conflict is constantly facing new challenges. Actors are not only those who are visible at the table, if these can even make it there in the

<sup>56</sup> "Media Monitoring", online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/media-monitoring> Retrieved September 1, 2010.

<sup>57</sup> CRIHL Statements in response to: 1) Friday violence in Itamar (14/3-2011) 2) Mosque vandalizing in Beit Fajar (4/10-2010) 3) In support of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiation (21/9-2010) 4) Statement regarding Jerusalem (13/11 2009) 5) Statement regarding Gaza by CRIHL Convener (7/1-2009) 6) Cease fire declaration 27/5 2008 and 7) Bible burning declaration 27/5 2008. See online: <http://www.crihl.org/view/statements> Retrieved December 10, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Online: <http://crihl.org/content/statement-regarding-gaza-crihl-convener> Retrieved November 19, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

first place. Actors and factors are: governments, bureaucrats, religious scholars of differing opinions about dialogue, a heard or almost secretive public opinion, outbursts of violence and ongoing violence. Participants often have feelings of humiliation, superiority, anger and not least a deep desire for being seen and heard. A facilitator has to deal with all these elements – often at the same time. Not only with what that happens or those who sit around the table. Wide networking is a necessary task and necessary ability<sup>60</sup>.

In this way the internal cooperation in CRIHL is also a challenge.

Secondly, CRIHL is basically a consultative body. CRIHL is basically concerned with being a communication channel between religious leaders among the Palestinian and Israeli people and a channel for communication between religious leaders and politicians, both nationally and internationally. CRIHL meets with Israeli and Palestinian Ministers of Religious Affairs<sup>61</sup>. In the interview with Bakkevig he explained how they have good contact with specifically the Palestinian Authority, although he did not consider the real success of their role as a communication channel between religious leaders and politicians until CRIHL was taken seriously by Mahmud Abbas and Benyamin Netanyahu<sup>62</sup>. According to Bakkevig this has yet to be achieved. But Bakkevig explained how CRIHL sought to be consultative for the political authorities when the question of Jerusalem was to be worked with<sup>63</sup>.

CRIHL also seeks to cooperate with international countries and actors for peace.. In the interview Bakkevig explains how CRIHL was supported by international actors from USA, England and Norway<sup>64</sup>.

CRIHL also has a number of cooperation partners behind their projects. The emerging religious leadership program has been planned in cooperation with the Jerusalem Office of Search for Common Ground<sup>65</sup>. The Israeli-Palestinian schoolbook project is conducted in cooperation with a joint Palestinian-Israeli research team from Tel Aviv University and Bethlehem University. The project also has a scientific advisory panel with experts from European, American, Palestinians and Israeli academics. The project was further funded by a grant from US Department of State and is supervised by Professor Bruce Wexler of Yale University and his NGO – A Different Future<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Bakkevig, Trond, "Religious Dialogue and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East", (2010), available online: <http://crihl.org/content/religious-dialogue-and-quest-peace-middle-east> Retrieved September 1, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> The information from these meetings is limited. See "CHRIL meeting with Israeli and Palestinian Minister of Religious Affairs", online: <http://crihl.org/content/crihl-meeting-israeli-and-palestinian-ministers-religious-affairs-mk-margi-minister-habbash> Retrieved January 27, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Trond Bakkevig.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Trond Bakkevig.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Trond Bakkevig.

<sup>65</sup> Search for Common ground was established in 1991, see their webpage online: <http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/jerusalem/index.html> Retrieved January 25, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> CRIHL, "Palestinian-Israeli school book projects", online: <http://crihl.org/content/israeli-palestinian-schoolbook-project> Retrieved January 25, 2010.

In addition, the member institutions of CRIHL also have a network of cooperation and contacts with faith communities both locally and abroad. Michel Sabbah is mentioned both by Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations<sup>67</sup> and by Sabeel<sup>68</sup>. Michel Sabbah is also the coauthor of the Palestinian Cairo's Documents<sup>69</sup>. Also Munib Younan is well known as the President of the Lutheran World Federation<sup>70</sup>. Rabbi David Rosen is also a well-known rabbi with an impressive network<sup>71</sup>. Rabbi Rosen is Director of the American Jewish Committee's International Department for Interreligious Affairs, President of the World Conference of Religion for Peace (WCRP), President of the International Jewish Committee for Inter-Religious Consultations, and a member of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's delegation for interreligious dialogue. Rosen has long-term experience with religious peacework, as he was a rabbi in Ireland for many years. Rosen is also the advisor on interfaith to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel<sup>72</sup>. Rosen is also on the board of JCJCR and ICCI<sup>73</sup>. Naturally, all the member institutions represent larger religious communities, and as such involve many people.

In the interview Bakkevig emphasized that CRIHL was not engaged or part of religious peacework on the grassroots level<sup>74</sup>, but worked on the high political level- which also constrained their ability to engage in specific activities. On the other hand, Bakkevig explained how CRIHL was well aware of the international interfaith organizations such as Religion for Peace and World Council of Churches. But CRIHL basically worked out the programs by themselves and according to their own initiatives<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> See chapter 10.

<sup>68</sup> See chapter 6.

<sup>69</sup> See the Kairos Palestine Document online: <http://kairospalestine.ps/?q=node/2> Retrieved January 27, 2010.

<sup>70</sup> See the webpage of the Lutheran World Federation, online: <http://www.lwf-assembly.org/experience/lwi-assembly-news/news-detail/article/520/8/> Retrieved January 27, 2010.

<sup>71</sup> See Rabbi David Rosen's webpage online: <http://www.rabbidavidrosen.net/> Retrieved May 14, 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Rabbi David Rosen awarded a CBE, available at <http://crihl.org/content/rabbi-david-rosen-awarded-cbe> April 19, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> See previous chapters.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Trond Bakkevig.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Trond Bakkevig.



## **Part III Analysis, Evaluation, and Conclusion**

## 13 Analysis

In this chapter the presented organizations, institution and council are to be analyzed. The analyses are firstly given for each organization before they are compared. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section seeks to analyze each organization in relation to the first analytical research questions, and next compare the organizations. The second section follows the same structure, but is related to the second analytical research question. The intention behind the two analytical research questions<sup>1</sup> is to understand the main research interest in this study: How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land?

### 13.1 What kind of organization is this?

The first analytical research question is asked in order to understand how peacework is organized. Three interests are related to this first analytical research question.

Firstly, we are interested in what kind of *religious peacebuilding* the organizations are engaged with. To analyze this we use Little and Appleby's definition of and criteria for being called *religious peacebuilding*<sup>2</sup>. An underlying interest is also to understand how *religious peacebuilding* is organized in relation to the four recommendations given by Little and Appleby for religious mediators to be successful. These four recommendations were: 1) knowledge of the language and culture of the people in conflict, 2) firsthand information about the conflict, 3) to draw upon political expertise and 4) to develop a long-term vision of peace<sup>3</sup>. Another underlying interest is how *religious peacebuilding* is organized in relation to Scott Appleby's five recommendations for effective *religious peacebuilding*, which are: 1) to identify how the religious traditions could encourage conflict resolution and peacebuilding, 2) access to the mystical dimension of the religious tradition, 3) engage different people who

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<sup>1</sup> This is of course also the interest behind the two critical research questions which will be the topic of the next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>3</sup> These recommendations are quoted in 2.1.1.



believe in conflict resolution as a normative commitment for the religious communities, 4) develop culturally derived methods of conflict resolution and 5) develop networks<sup>4</sup>.

Secondly, we are interested in what kind of *peacebuilding* these organizations are engaged in. As mentioned in previous chapters the concept of peacebuilding can be divided in three interests. *Cultural peacebuilding* means to build good relations between the groups on social levels. *Structural peacebuilding* means to change those structures of society which legitimate the conflict. Such structures can be unequal power relations, restrictions, lack of freedom of movement or other discriminating practices. The third approach to peacebuilding is *elite peacebuilding* – which is connected to the decision makers or negotiation partners among the political authorities<sup>5</sup>. While *cultural* and *structural peacebuilding* mainly is conducted on track two level, *elite peacebuilding* is only conducted on track one level. We seek to understand what kind of NGO these organizations are, by following the definition of NGOs presented by Peter Willetts, which is mainly related to their relationship to and independence of the political authorities<sup>6</sup>.

Thirdly, we are interested in understanding if there is a multi-track relationship between the different levels of peacework. Following Lederach the mid-level should ideally serve as a link between the grassroots and elite level of peacebuilding<sup>7</sup>. Thus we need to understand how the organizations cooperate with each other and other organizations on different levels of peacebuilding

### 13.1.1 Analyzing each organization

*Rabbis for Human Rights*: Although RHR basically started out as human rights activists, they have also developed into an educational organization with their own *Betih Midrash*. The work of RHR fits with the criteria for being called *religious peacebuilding*, as given by Little and Appleby, in that the members of RHR are “legal advocates of religious human rights”<sup>8</sup>, and seek both “building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence”<sup>9</sup>. In this way RHR is both engaged in cultural and structural peacebuilding. Their involvement in cultural peacebuilding is related to their educational work on the relationship between Judaism and human rights. As educators they offer courses

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<sup>4</sup> These recommendations are also quoted in 2.1.1.

<sup>5</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>6</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>7</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>8</sup> See the criteria for being called religious peacebuilding made by Little and Appleby described in 2.1.1.

<sup>9</sup> See 2.1.1.

to secular and religious public schools, educational tours, pre-army academies, the Israeli Army and police, in addition to having their own Beith Midrash. In this way RHR has a long-term vision for its peacework. In relation to structural peacebuilding it seeks to end the occupation and preserve the human rights of the minorities within the state of Israel. In this way it seeks to transform the conflict, which Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse describe as the main purpose of cultural and structural peacebuilding<sup>10</sup>.

Through its daily contact with Palestinians living in the occupied territories (specifically in East Jerusalem and the West Bank), and through its professional staff who work directly in the field, it also falls under the explanation of how Little and Appleby describe religious leaders engaged in peacework – as being inspired by prophetic ideals which “call out against injustice”<sup>11</sup> and by keeping “their ear to the ground”<sup>12</sup> and understanding the shifts in government policy or public opinion<sup>13</sup>.

RHR fulfills at least three of the four recommendations for religious mediators to be successful<sup>14</sup>. The first and the second can be related to its daily contact and continuous work in the field, its long-term vision of a society based on humanistic values combined with an acknowledgement of particularity. The political expertise is difficult to see clearly from the material presented.

The work of RHR also corresponds with at least three of the five recommendations for effective religious peacebuilding<sup>15</sup>. The presentation of RHR shows how RHR seeks the genius of their religious tradition and seeks to evoke its strength in peacebuilding (recommendation 1). RHR is engaged in developing new methods for reconciliation based on Judaism. According to RHR the Jewish pro- social and ethical values are seen as the greatest strength of developing a moral state which will protect the human rights of its citizens and those for whom the state has responsibility (those occupied). In this way these values are approached to promote peace in the specific local context of the conflict (recommendation 4). RHR also draws on a range of actors, networks and other NGOs in related areas (recommendation 5).

As we have seen, RHR was established in the aftermath of the first Palestinian intifada, during a time when several peace organizations were established<sup>16</sup>. RHR is a uninational and

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<sup>10</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>11</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See the introduction to this section, 13.1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See the writings of Kaminer: 1996 and Bar-On: 1996 presented in 1.2.1. and the historical background in 1.2.2.

unreligious organization, which means that it is Israeli and only has Jewish members. It is led by a director, but seems to have a rather low hierarchical structure, based on both paid and voluntary work. RHR is a non-governmental organization (NGO) which works on the track two level<sup>17</sup>. The members of RHR are all ordained rabbis from both the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox congregations. In this way RHR works mainly on the mid-level, in the way it is an organization for rabbis. On the other hand, RHR also seeks to change attitudes among the grassroots by offering educational programs to a series of institutions,.

Although RHR seeks contact with the higher levels of the authorities –such as writing to the mayor in Jerusalem, protesting against legal verdicts – it basically works on the ground and conduct demonstrations. On the other hand, the presentation cannot document any direct contact between RHR and the elite-level of peacebuilding; thus it is not necessarily part of a multi-track process<sup>18</sup>.

The presentation also documents contacts between RHR and ICCI through RHRs membership on the board of ICCI. It is also documented that RHR cooperates with JP by visiting injured at hospitals. RHR also cooperates with other human rights activists in Israel and Palestine. In this way RHR is an NGO which cooperates with other NGOs nationally - with Israeli peace organizations, regionally - with Palestinian peace activists and internationally - through its sister organization in North America<sup>19</sup>.

*Sabeel*: The work of Sabeel also fits with the criteria for being called *religious peacebuilding*, in the way Sabeel engages theologians to strengthen their tradition of non-violence<sup>20</sup>. As we have seen, the whole idea behind the establishment of Sabeel was to promote resistance through nonviolence. Sabeel also explains how it is– inspired by prophetic ideals which “call out against injustice”<sup>21</sup>, which is in correspondence with Little and Appleby`s description of religious peacebuilding. As *religious peacebuilders* its members specifically seek to change the situation for the Palestinians under occupation, and as such they are engaged in *structural peacebuilding*. It would be inaccurate to claim that Sabeel purely seeks to promote good relations between the two parties in conflict, since it seems to require an end of occupation through nonviolent resistance before real reconciliation and dialogue can emerge between mainstream Israelis and Palestinians. In this way Sabeel is mainly engaged in *structural peacebuilding* through nonviolent resistance, although it also is engaged in dialogue with

<sup>17</sup> See the definition of faith-based diplomacy by Brian Cox and Daniel Philpot in 2.1.1.

<sup>18</sup> See Lederach definition in 2.1.1.

<sup>19</sup> See Wilets description of NGOs in 2.1.1.

<sup>20</sup> Little and Appleby: 2004:6-20. See also 2.1.1.

<sup>21</sup> 2.1.1.

Palestinian Christians and Jews –both Israeli and American - who share an interest in ending the occupation.

Sabeel also corresponds with the recommendations for successful meditation<sup>22</sup>. Its members also have daily contact with the Palestinians in their communities and thereby keep “their ear to the ground<sup>23</sup>” and critically examine “shifts in government policy or public opinion”<sup>24</sup>. They also have an intimate and firsthand knowledge of the Palestinian people in both the West Bank and Gaza. And as we have seen, they invite well-educated professionals to hold lectures on political issues. Sabeel also seeks out the genius of the Christian tradition by developing a liberation theology of nonviolence, it has engaged scholars and theologians to develop this liberation theology who believe their religious communities have a normative commitment to pursue peace, and it has drawn on a range of networks in this process. This also corresponds with the recommendations for effective religious peacebuilding<sup>25</sup>. It is possible to argue that Sabeel is developing culturally derived methods of conflict resolution, in the way Sabeel has developed a Palestinian nonviolent liberation theology of resistance specifically related to the local context of the conflict. On the other hand, Sabeel adopts a human paradigm of reconciliation instead of a religious which would claim forgiveness without the requirement of justice first.

Sabeel was established after the first Palestinian intifada<sup>26</sup>, and is a non-governmental organization (NGO) which works on the track two level. Sabeel works on the grassroots-level with community building projects<sup>27</sup>, but also on the mid-level with the religious leaders of Churches in Palestine - specifically through Tantur Ecumenical Institute<sup>28</sup>. Although it would be accurate to say that Sabeel is basically a nonviolent liberation movement organization, it is also engaged in educational activities aimed to promote peace.

We have seen how Sabeel has invited two of the representatives of the member institutions of Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL) to hold speeches and write in their magazine Cornerstone – these persons were Michal Sabbah and Munib Younan<sup>29</sup>. In this

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<sup>22</sup> See the introduction to 13.1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>26</sup> See 1.2.1 and 1.2.2.

<sup>27</sup> According to Garfinkel the grassroots means individual citizens; in the case of Sabeel its programs are open for individual Palestinian Christians. See Garfinkel 2.1.1.

<sup>28</sup> See 1.2.2.

<sup>29</sup> See chapter 12.

way it is possible to say that Sabeel functions in a multi-track peace process among religious peacebuilders, by having contacts with those involved in elite-peacebuilding<sup>30</sup>.

Sabeel has also developed a network between themselves and other NGOs, such as through their cooperation with the Palestinian organization *The Independent Commission for Human Rights*<sup>31</sup> (ICHR), which is also a member of the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (ICC) of the United Nations. It also cooperates with the Palestine Forum on Peace and Justice in Nablus (PFPJ). In addition Sabeel also cooperates with World Council of Churches. Sabeel also has a network of cooperation with the international religious leaders who work with liberation theologies. We have seen the close relationship between Naim Ateek and others who have worked with liberation theology, specifically Desmond Tutu, but also Marc Elis, who has developed a Jewish liberation theology<sup>32</sup>. The cooperation between the director of Sabeel and Palestinian Church leaders is illustrated through their common writing of the Kairos Palestine Document – which is related to a similar document written in 1985 – the South African Kairos document based on the liberation theology developed in South Africa by among others Desmond Tutu<sup>33</sup>. Sabeel also started its work after a meeting at Tantur Ecumenical Institute, which is a network for Palestinian Christians leaders and international theologians in Jerusalem<sup>34</sup>. Sabeel has also established cooperation with western Christians through the “International Friends of Sabeel”.

*Interreligious Coordinating Council:* The work of ICCI is to do *religious peacebuilding* as it seeks to transform the conflict by “building social relations<sup>35</sup>” by an ethos of “tolerance and nonviolence<sup>36</sup>”. As an educational organization ICCI is engaged in cultural peacebuilding. According to Little and Appleby educators have a significant role to play “in the post-conflict phase of the process<sup>37</sup>”. ICCI is also engaged in what Little and Appleby call the greatest obstacle to a peace process – the hermeneutical gap<sup>38</sup> – in the way ICCI lets each person define him or herself in relation to national and religious identity despite the ongoing conflict. ICCI also fulfills the requirements for good meditation, in that its members know the

<sup>30</sup> According to Garfinkel elite peacebuilding involves those people in top-level positions in politics, religion or academia. See 2.1.1.

<sup>31</sup> The webpage of the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), online: <http://www.ichr.ps/>. Retrieved January 19, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> See 2.2.1.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Berryman, Phillip, *Liberation Theology*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1987: 165.

<sup>34</sup> Kairos Palestine: introduction.

<sup>35</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> 2.1.1.

<sup>38</sup> 2.1.1.

language and culture, and have first-hand information and a long-term vision of peace<sup>39</sup>. Although the material presented cannot document any political expertise behind the programs, as is suggested for good meditation. ICCI can also be related to the recommendations for effective religious peacebuilding. ICCI implements conflict resolution methods in its programs and seeks to develop new methods. Firstly, we have seen how ICCI is the chapter of WCRP who promote training and implementing of conflict resolution methods to transform the conflict. ICCI engages scholars, theologians and other officials who believe that conflict resolution is a normative commitment for their religious communities. As an educational organization ICCI has raised one of the most central issues in both conflict resolution theories and previous research on the conflict – here represented by Kelman, Bar-Tal and Teichman<sup>40</sup>, and also the main issue of the Oslo Agreement and the P2P programs – to break down prejudice and stereotypes and acknowledge the other as part of a people and a nation<sup>41</sup>. This dialogue is not limited to a purely secular dialogue on national identity, both also allows the religious dimension of the Holy Land and Jerusalem to be acknowledged. This corresponds to the recommendations given by Mollov, Meir and Lavie in relation to the specific need for interreligious dialogue in the Holy Land<sup>42</sup>. ICCI also implements conflict resolution methods which acknowledge past traumas, personal narratives and the whole context of the conflict in a dialogue setting by emphasizing emphatic listening. In this way ICCI is developing new local conflict resolution methods based on its long experience of peacework in this region. ICCI has developed a holistic approach to the conflict and educational programs which seek to create accurate understanding of the other.

ICCI is not directly engaged in structural peacebuilding, although it makes clear the urgent needs to reach a political agreement and for the national authorities to make changes promoting reconciliation in the schools and the whole societies. On the other hand, ICCI seeks to transform the social relationships and as such bring peace from below<sup>43</sup> through education. Thus, ICCI is basically engaged in cultural peacebuilding<sup>44</sup>. ICCI works specifically with religious issues and peacework. But the main obstacle to peace, according to ICCI seems not to be religion but the failure of the political leaders to reach a final peace agreement.

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<sup>39</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>40</sup> See 1.1.2.

<sup>41</sup> See the introduction to this dissertation. See 1.1.2.

<sup>42</sup> See 1.1.1.

<sup>43</sup> The growing interest for peacebuilding from below within conflict resolution theories is presented in 2.1.1.

<sup>44</sup> See 2.1.1.

ICCI was also established in the years following the first Palestinian intifada<sup>45</sup>, a period Kronish describes as a time when people believed in peace. As has been shown ICCI is an educational NGO who works on both the mid- and grassroots level. ICCI works on the mid-level in relation to its program for religious leaders – *Kedem*- and in relation to its coordinating role with other Israeli organizations.

ICCI has contacts with members from Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land – as we have seen in relation to the international summer conference in Jerusalem 2008, and in relation to the fact that the Israeli Jewish representative of CRIHL, Rabbi David Rosen wrote a chapter in a book published by ICCI as early as in 1999. In this way the peacework conducted by ICCI has the potential of functioning in a multi-track process. As Lederach points out, the mid-level should be the link between grassroots peacework and the elite<sup>46</sup>. Although there is no formalized cooperation between ICCI and CRIHL, the connections are clear and the possibilities exist. Thus, it is possible for ICCI to have a multi-track function between the grassroots and elite level, although no formalized cooperation has been documented.

ICCI is also an organization with extensive networking with other organizations, both through its coordinating function of its 75 member organizations, and thorough its contacts with regional and international NGOs, specifically in Western countries. Several of the programs of ICCI are sponsored by WCRP. ICCI is also sponsored by several other NGOs, foundations, governments and individuals, specifically from the western world<sup>47</sup>. In this way it is possible to understand ICCI as an organization with extensive cooperation and networking with international NGOs, international foundations, foreign governments and local NGOs working at the grassroots level<sup>48</sup>.

*PASSIA – the religious studies unit*: The religious studies unit of PASSIA is engaged in religious peacebuilding in the way it engages scholars “conducting research relevant to cross-cultural and interreligious dialogue”<sup>49</sup>. PASSIA is not basically a religious organization, although it has integrated religion as parts of its organizational work. PASSIA is basically an ideological organization which seeks to be an academic resource for Palestinians in their building up of a Palestinian state. Its interest in peacework is thus related to creating unity

<sup>45</sup> See 1.2.1 and 1.2.2. RHR and Sabeel were also established in this period. See chapter 5 and 6.

<sup>46</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>47</sup> ICCI, list of sponsors, online:

[http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=55](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=55)

<sup>48</sup> See Peter Willets description of NGOs presented in 2.1.1.

<sup>49</sup> See 2.1.1.

among Palestinians, both in Gaza and the West bank and among Muslims and Christians, in addition to seeking solutions to the future of Jerusalem. PASSIA supports the Palestinian claim on East Jerusalem. In this way the religious studies unit of PASSIA is part of an ideological and academic organization. As an ideological organization it is possible to argue that PASSIA is engaged in structural peacebuilding by seeking an end to occupation by providing information about the Palestinian experience to highly academic professionals as well as international actors. On the other hand the religious studies unit of PASSIA can be argued to be engaged in cultural peacebuilding, aimed at breaking down stereotypes and prejudice between the religious communities from the three Monotheistic faiths.

The religious studies unit of PASSIA also fulfills several of the recommendations for religious mediators. Its members know the language and culture of the people; they have firsthand information, political expertise and a long-term vision for peace<sup>50</sup>. The religious studies unit also corresponds with the recommendation for successful religious peacebuilding in the way that it identifies the genius of each religious tradition to promote peace, engage scholars, theologians and other officials who believe the religious communities have a normative commitment to peacebuilding. It also draws on a large network and cooperation. The unique contribution of the religious studies unit of PASSIA in developing new methods for conflict resolution related to religion and the local contexts is its textual study sessions where representatives of the three Monotheistic faiths develop ideas on how the sacred texts can encourage peace. A great example is the story of Joseph where Abdul Hadi points out how his response to crisis - modesty, compassion and willingness to offer forgiveness to those who had harmed him – could function as an example of how followers of the three Monotheistic faiths should respond. Another important issue in the textual study sessions is its exploration of a modest yet particular understanding of the significance of Jerusalem among the three Monotheistic faiths. The inclusion of highly academic professionals in this work challenges exclusive interpretations of sacred sites and denial of the religious other and his/her affiliation with the city. In addition, the religious studies unit has in recent years invited scholars to discuss the relationship between religion and conflict resolution in relation to how religious leaders should act in a crisis, how interreligious dialogue can deal with a crisis and how human rights can be protected. In this way the religious studies unit seeks out new methods to deal with conflicts in the religious and local context of the Holy Land.

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<sup>50</sup> See chapter 2.



PASSIA is an NGO which basically works on the elite level, as it is an academic organization<sup>51</sup>. As we have seen, it cooperates with both Palestinian and Israeli Universities. PASSIA receives financial support from NGOs both local and from European countries, the USA and Japan. It is also financed by its own local sales of local publication. PASSIA has a hierarchical structure<sup>52</sup>, where the director is also one of the founders of the institution. As has been presented, the staff members have an academic background. The religious studies unit has meetings with both religious leaders in the region and with international academics from both the West and Middle East.

The religious studies unit of PASSIA invites members from CRIHL- like Rabbi David Rosen and Trond Bakkevig. In this way there is a potential for a multi-track function, where PASSIA has contacts with CRIHL which also has contact with the political authorities. It has also invited members from Sabeel, JP, RHR, JCJCR and ICCI. In this way the potential for multi-track function is possible<sup>53</sup>. On the other hand, as pointed out by Abu Sway, it still needs to engage the grassroots. In this way one might argue that PASSIA is not really engaged in a multi-track process of conflict resolution in the way it basically has contacts with the elite and mid-level of peacebuilding. On the other hand an indirect contact might be present in the way PASSIA has contacts with organizations working on the mid-level which in turn also have contacts with the grassroots.

*Interfaith Encounter Association:* The goal of IEA is to be the human component of peacework through building good relations between members of the three Monotheistic faiths both inside the borders of Israel and between Israelis and Palestinians. In this way it is engaged in *religious peacebuilding*. IEA also supports political and economic peacework, but argues that this work should be conducted by politicians. In this way IEA mainly seeks to contribute to cultural peacebuilding. IEA does not engage in political issues, but nevertheless seeks a transformation of society with political implications – as mentioned several places – IEA believes that by building good social relations a sustainable peace will be possible.

IEA can also be compared to the recommendations for being good religious mediators, in the way it has knowledge of the language and culture, firsthand information and a long-term vision. As mentioned, IEA seeks to develop a “mini-community” in which good relations are built, and hopes this can function as an example for each community. IEA further seeks to develop these kinds of “mini communities” as close to home for the participants as possible.

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<sup>51</sup> See specifically the definition by Garfinkel in 2.1.1.

<sup>52</sup> See Peter Willets and NGOs 2.1.1.

<sup>53</sup> See Paul Lederach and multi-track function 2.1.1.

IEA has a long-term vision of how its work can bring peace from below<sup>54</sup> by developing several “mini communities” in a period of what Stolov suggests – twenty years, although he emphasizes that the decision not to discuss politics is only temporary.

The work of IEA also corresponds to the recommendations for religious peacebuilding. As we have seen through the themes of the encounter, a focus on ethical issues such as forgiveness, reconciliation, tolerance and the religious value of creating a peaceful society is emphasized. In this way it seeks to identify the genius of each religious tradition. IEA also draws on a network of other NGOs working for peace. IEA seeks to develop new methods for conflict resolution based on the local context of their work. One of the main motivations behind the work of IEA is to create an interreligious dialogue which clearly breaks with what Stolov described as “political power struggling”<sup>55</sup>, inflamed with stereotypes, hostility and prejudice. In this context Stolov argues for the need to develop a dialogue away from the political debate, in order to change the dynamics of a society crystallized in a culture of war into a society embedded in a culture of humanized engagement. It should be further emphasized that Stolov does not intend that politics shall be ignored permanently. The work of IEA is based on the belief that a sustainable political agreement will be possible to accomplish once both societies overcome these negative stances which the political conflict and debate has created, and that the work of IEA is only one of three, to be the human component of peace, leaving the two other –the political and economic - to politicians. We have also seen how IEA has managed to form encounter groups between Jewish settlers and Palestinians in Abu Dis, and how Stolov told that IEA has had Hamas members at its meetings. According to Stolov, the lack of political discussions made it easier to include the so-called “extreme” in the dialogue. As we have seen above, the main mission of IEA is to form a “mini-community” characterized by mutual understanding and respect for the religious other. The idea is for the communities inside Israel to form an inner circle, where the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians forms the next circle which again forms a new circle between Israel and the Middle Eastern countries.

IEA has a staff of 33 persons and 38 encounter groups. IEA is an NGO working on the grassroots level. According to Garfinkel, the grassroots level has the most direct impact on the individual level<sup>56</sup>. IEA is not dependent on any specific guidelines, but rather dependent on a vision. The director of IEA is also the founder of IEA. IEA receives funding from several

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<sup>54</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>55</sup> See 9.1.

<sup>56</sup> Garfinkel, Renee, “What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs”, Washington D.C: USIP Special Report 123, 2004.

other NGOs in mainly European countries or the USA. IEA cooperates with organizations on the grassroots level - like Jerusalem Peacemakers<sup>57</sup>, and also with international NGOs – like the Abrahamic Union and United Religious Initiatives. In this way it draws on both local and international networks. The work of IEA is also based on an understanding of conflict which resembles the suggestions by URI, although they also draw on local experience<sup>58</sup>.

There is no documentation in the presented material of cooperation or specific contacts between IEA and the higher level of religious authority; thus it cannot be documented from this presentation that IEA is located in a multi-track function.

*Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations:* JCJCR is an educational organization engaged in cultural peacebuilding. We have seen how JCJCR was established to create better relations between Israeli Jews and the indigenous Christian population in Jerusalem – which includes Christians who identify themselves as Israeli Arabs as well as those who identify themselves as Palestinians. JCJCR sees itself basically as an educational organization, engaged in *religious peacebuilding* with the goal of building good relations. In this way JCJCR is engaged in cultural peacebuilding. But the aim of building good social relations is not through a syncretism of the different communities; several places JCJCR emphasizes the importance its members see in preserving the particularity of the group at the same time as they are inclusive towards the other. Nor does JCJCR see the need for building better relationships as based on a *clash of civilization*, but rather a *clash within civilization* which does not involve a clash between different religious traditions, but rather a clash between those “who use their religious faith as a resource for extremism and alienation from others, and those who sees their religious faith as giving them responsibility to work together in interreligious cooperation and responsibility”<sup>59</sup>. It could also be said that JCJCR’s engagement in *religious peacebuilding* is characterized by being “guardians of orthodoxy and preserving the traditional faith and identity of their religious group”<sup>60</sup>. By bringing forth the different historical presence and religious significance of each single religious communities – as is clearly illustrated through the information service they run on their webpage – each community’s particularity and identity are preserved and sought to be acknowledged by the other.

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<sup>57</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Willett describes how NGOs work both locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. See 2.1.1.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted from Daniel Rossing, in 10.1.

<sup>60</sup> See 2.1.1.

JCJCR fulfills the recommendation for successful religious meditation in the way its members know the language and culture of the people in conflict, have first-hand information about the conflict and a long-term vision of peace. Although JCJCR conducts research to improve relations between Palestinian Christians and Israeli Jews its presentation cannot document direct drawing upon political expertise. JCJCR can also be said to fulfill four of the five recommendations for effective peacebuilding. Firstly, JCJCR encourages inclusive and constructive interpretations of religious concepts, such as the concept of the *promised land*<sup>61</sup>. Secondly, it engages different people who believe in conflict resolution as a normative commitment for their religious communities<sup>62</sup>. Thirdly, it has developed a unique approach to dialogue related to the local context and developed networks. JCJCR seeks to develop new methods for conflict resolution based on religious issues and the local context, by developing a new kind of dialogue among Israeli Jews and the indigenous Christian population in Jerusalem which takes into account the issue of majority and minority. Since the Christians are the minority the main goal becomes to empower the Christian communities and promote an inclusive attitude among religious Jews. The development of new methods is related to the main mission of JCJCR, which is to develop a new kind of dialogue between Israeli Jews and the indigenous Christians which takes into account the reversed relationship of who are the majority and the minority in the dialogue than is the case in the dialogue between Western Christians and Jews. JCJCR seeks to establish a dialogue which includes the mixture of historical, political, social, cultural, and religious factors by approaching the dialogue in a holistic way<sup>63</sup>.

JCJCR was founded in 2004 after the outbreak of the second intifada<sup>64</sup>. The staff of JCJCR consists of seven persons with some academic background, in addition to twelve associates. The board of JCJCR consists of seven persons as well. JCJCR follows a strategy plan, which was developed through dialogue with 80 different religious leaders, basically Christians. The founder of JCJCR is also the director, and there is a certain degree of hierarchy in its structure<sup>65</sup>. JCJCR is an NGO which works on both the mid-level<sup>66</sup>, by engaging in dialogue with the religious leaders of the Christian communities specifically and by offering educational programs and arranging encounter groups among school children, IDF soldiers, teachers, women and anyone interested in participating. JCJCR is mainly funded by

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<sup>61</sup> This will be discussed in relation to sacred space below.

<sup>62</sup> The cooperation between JCJCR and other organizations is discussed below.

<sup>63</sup> This will be further discussed in 13.2.1.

<sup>64</sup> See 1.2.2.

<sup>65</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>66</sup> Garfinkel's definition of the different levels is given in 2.1.1.

foundations, NGOs both locally, from European countries and the USA. JCJCR is also a member of ICCI. JCJCR also cooperates with an Israeli organization-the TALI-chain.

It should also be mentioned that one of the members of the board of JCJCR is also the representative of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in Israel in the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL)<sup>67</sup>. In addition it must be mentioned that one other representative from CRIHL, Michel Sabbah, also has written an article for JCJCR<sup>68</sup>. Although it is difficult to measure how these connections function in the relationship between JCJCR and CRIHL, it nevertheless illustrates a potential to function as a multi-track process, which means that there is cooperation between the mid-level and the elite-level of peacework<sup>69</sup>. JCJCR has also reviewed literature for PASSIA<sup>70</sup>, which documents one incident of cooperation between JCJCR and the other organization on the elite-level of peacebuilding in this dissertation.

*Jerusalem Peacemakers:* The activities of JP can be called religious peacebuilding in the way it seeks to build good relations between the religious communities. JP is mainly concerned with cultural peacebuilding<sup>71</sup>. Its close contact with people on the ground also resembles three of the four recommendations for religious mediators as its members understand the local people and their language, have first-hand information about the conflict and a long-term vision of peace. The fourth recommendation -to draw upon political expertise - is not central in the work of JP. It is possible to argue that JP fulfills all the five recommendations for effective religious peacebuilding. Its members approach their religious tradition to identify how it can promote conflict resolution and peace. They all belong to the mystical dimension of their religious tradition – Sufism and kabbalah. They engage different people who believe conflict resolution is a normative commitment of their religious tradition. We have also seen how they specifically seek to develop culturally derived methods of conflict resolution during the Sulha project, by developing their own methodology for stages of healing – and seek transformation. This development of methodology by individual religious peacemakers who also participate internationally is interesting because they develop methods based on their own local sources, and as such try to promote peace from below. JP also develops networks, both local and international.

By including several independent peacemakers and through cooperation with Creative Health Network specifically, JP has also gained international contacts with other individuals.

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<sup>67</sup> Rabbi David Rosen is presented in chapter 12.

<sup>68</sup> See chapter 12.

<sup>69</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>70</sup> See 8.2.

<sup>71</sup> 2.1.1.

This is clearly documented on the Global Oneness project which has recorded interviews of both Sheikh Bukhari and McLean and published them on YouTube. International meetings among them and people in other Middle Eastern countries (such as All Nations Café) show a grassroots organization who can cooperate with grassroots organizations and individuals internationally. JP does not have its own guidelines or strategy plan, and its members are better characterized as independent peace workers. On the other hand, they are also supported by Creative Health Network (CHN) and use the same terms as those characteristic for CNH – such as *inner peace* and *outer peace*. There is no official document on the financial support of JP, but it seems to be financed by Creative Health Network and individual donors or NGOs. JP seems to have a flat structure consisting of individual peacemakers.

JP is a grassroots organization, with no official office and further based on voluntary work mainly by six independent peacemakers. According to Rene Garfinkel, grassroots activities can have a great impact on individuals<sup>72</sup>. JP also cooperates with other NGOs locally – like RHR, IEA and ICCI. Rabbi Frohman has also made a political proposal concerning the future of Jerusalem. The impact of his activities cannot be measured. Frohman was as mentioned also one of those rabbis who met in Alexandria. He is also one of the authors of a document on Jerusalem taken up at the coordinating meeting of the religious studies unit of PASSIA<sup>73</sup>. Thus, one could say that JP - as a grassroots organization - seeks contact with the higher level, and as such seeks to be part of a multi-track relationship. The relationship between JP and the higher levels of peacebuilding can also be understood through the interview with Sheikh Bukhari, where he explains that JP does not want a religious government, but believes in cooperation between religious leaders and politicians<sup>74</sup>.

*Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land*: CRIHL promotes *religious peacebuilding* in the way they seek to change social relations and political institutions. Although CRIHL is not directly involved in education its members are definitely involved indirectly by conducting a schoolbook project which seeks to include the other both from the dimension of religion, politics and history. In this way they might influence what Little and Appleby have pointed out as the main obstacles to peace – the hermeneutical gap<sup>75</sup>. And as institutions builders they seek to be a consultative body between religious leaders and political authorities. CRIHL is based on the guidelines made by their documents. CRIHL is mainly

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<sup>72</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>73</sup> See 8.2.

<sup>74</sup> They also supported the work of CRIHL.

<sup>75</sup> See 2.1.1.

involved in cultural peacebuilding, but also partly in elite peacebuilding- as a consultative body for the political authorities.

The requirements for good religious mediators are also present in the work of CRIHL. Through the contact between the representatives of the member institutions of CRIHL and several organizations in this dissertation it could be argued that they have an intimate knowledge of the language and culture of the people, have firsthand information, draw on political expertise and have a long-term vision. Thus all the four requirements for good religious mediators seem to be fulfilled in the work of CRIHL.

CRIHL also seems to fulfill the recommendation of successful religious peacebuilding<sup>76</sup>. Firstly by identifying the genius of each religious tradition; as characterized in their writings and public statements when religious terminology is used to inflame the conflict or the religious other. Secondly by engaging the highest religious authorities in its work. Thirdly, by the employment of staff members with an academic background in conflict resolution methods. As we have seen in the presentation, two of the staff members have educational background in conflict resolution and conflict management. The project of monitoring the media also bears resemblance to issues relevant within contemporary conflict resolution<sup>77</sup>. The same applies to the schoolbook project and its emphasizing on acknowledging the other from different dimensions such as history, religion and politics<sup>78</sup>. Fourthly, by drawing on a range of actors, universities and experts in the field, CRIHL is developing new methods for conflict resolution based on religion and the local context of the conflict. CRIHL works with the highest official authorities as a consultative body between religious leaders and political authorities. Its members see a potential for using religion in their peacework specifically because religious interpretations can be used both in the service of war and in the service of peace. And in this relation they seek to communicate a message of peace from the religious authorities. Although Holy sites are considered as crucial for the future of a stable solution – the member institutions have still not been able to form a common statement on what the political solution should/could be. On the other hand, CRIHL represents the dominant religious authorities and as such can have a great positive effect when they encourage acceptance, respect and protection of Holy sites.

CRIHL is a consultative body of the highest official religious authorities in Israel and Palestine who give advice and opinions on issues related to religious affairs to the political

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<sup>76</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>77</sup> Chapter 2.

<sup>78</sup> See chapter 2.

authority. The staff of CRIHL consists of three persons. As mentioned, the Council is supported by the Norwegian government. The member institutions represent the Chief Rabbinate of Israel<sup>79</sup>, the Heads of the Local Churches<sup>80</sup>, the Ministry at the Islamic Waaqf at the Palestinian Authority<sup>81</sup> and the Islamic Sharia Court at PA. The member institutions have a hierarchical structure and the representatives are responsible for the leadership of these institutions. CRIHL works on the track-one level of diplomacy<sup>82</sup>, in the sense that it is an official consultative body between the highest religious authorities and the political authorities.

The convener of CRIHL acts as a third party or as a mediator<sup>83</sup>. The implementation of third-party intervention is a common approach within conflict resolution to help the parties communicate through a neutral party<sup>84</sup>. Two examples of how this works in CRIHL have been presented in this chapter. First in relation to the Israeli military campaign against Gaza, where the member institutions were unable to make a public statement; in this case the convener was given authority on behalf of the member institutions to express their common concern with all those who suffered. Another example is the article written by Bakkevig where he shows insight into the challenge of different experiences and feelings of the conflict by Palestinians and Israelis. The Palestinians experience restriction and military power, while the Israelis feel lack of security.

<sup>79</sup> The Rabbinate has jurisdiction over many aspects of life of Jews in Israel. Its jurisdiction includes personal status issues, such as Jewish marriages and Jewish divorce, as well as Jewish burials, Conversion to Judaism, Kashrut and kosher certification, olim, supervision of Jewish holy sites, working with various mikvaot and yeshivot, and overseeing Israeli Rabbinical courts. See the Jewish Virtual Library, "Ministry of Religious Affairs", online: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/relig.html> Retrieved January 8, 2010.

<sup>80</sup> The Heads of the Local Churches of the Holy Land consists of an executive committee and a consultative committee. The executive committee consists of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Latin Patriarchate, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate, the Anglican-Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. While the consultative committee consists of the Custody of the Holy Land, the Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, Ethiopian Orthodox, Greek Catholic (Melkite) Patriarchate, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate, Syrian Catholic Exarchate and the Armenian Patriarchal Vicariate. The CRIHL presents these dominations and gives a link to most of these Churches' webpages. See CRIHL, "Member Institutions" online: <http://crihl.org/content/crihl-member-institutions> Retrieved January 7, 2010.

<sup>81</sup> When the Palestinian National Authority assumed its responsibilities and requested to be entrusted with *Waaqf* affairs and the religious courts, the government in Jordan agreed to administrative and legal disengagement with religious courts and Islamic *Waaqf* in the West Bank. By this, the courts came under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian authority according to the laws and provisions in force at the time and before the agreement. Nevertheless, Jordan excluded eastern courts and *Waaqf* in Jerusalem from the disengagement agreement as the issue of Jerusalem was postponed until the time of the final negotiations. Up to this date, Jordanian laws regarding Islamic *Waaqf* in the holy city are still applied. See "Ministry of Waaqf Affairs and Holy Places", online:

<http://images.jordan.gov.jo/wps/wcm/connect/gov/eGov/Government+Ministries+ +Entities/Ministry+of+Awqaf+Islamic+Affairs+and+Holy+Places/General+Information/> Retrieved January 6, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>83</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.



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CRIHL works on the elite level of peacemaking and religion. According to Garfinkel, this level has the greatest impact on communities at large because it represents the official religious authorities<sup>85</sup>. Although Bakkevig explains in the interview that CRHIL does not engage itself in ordinary grassroots peace activism, many of the member institutions of CRIHL are represented by individuals who have a great network among grassroots, mid-level and elite peacebuilders. Contact between members of CRIHL and Sabeel, ICCI, JP, JCJCR and PASSIA has been documented in previous chapters. Although it is difficult to measure to what degree this multi-track channel functions in relation to CRIHL and the grassroots organizations, it is possible to say that the opportunities are there.

### 13.1.2 Comparative Approach

The analysis of the eight organizations shows how all the organizations in this dissertation are concerned with *religious peacebuilding* and specifically cultural peacebuilding in relation to how they try to build good relations between Israelis and Palestinians from the three Monotheistic traditions, although a distinction needs to be made for Sabeel and RHR. Both these two organizations seem to have a greater focus towards changing the structure of society by ending the occupation. In this way they are more engaged in structural peacebuilding. On the other hand, the analyses show that all the organizations long for an end to occupation or a final political peace agreement. The question seems to be whether structural peacebuilding should be sought out first, - that is if dialogue should only come after an end of occupation – or if cultural peacebuilding should plow the way for better relations, which would lead to structural changes – that is if dialogue should come before the occupation ends and a political peace agreement is reached. It seems as if Sabeel specifically believes dialogue can come after an end of occupation, while it seems like specifically IEA believes dialogue must come before a political agreement is reached in order to make peace sustainable. The other organizations seem to support a third option – that dialogue and political negotiation are parallel processes. The third option is most clearly voiced by PASSIA.

We also presented four recommendations for good religious mediators, and five recommendation for good religious peacebuilding by David Little and Scott Appleby. Concerning the requirements for good religious mediators all fulfill three of the four requirements: they all have an intimate knowledge of the language and culture, all enjoy access to firsthand information and all have developed a long-term vision of peace for the

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<sup>85</sup> See 2.1.1.1.

conflicted society. On the other hand, only Sabeel, PASSIA and CRIHL draw upon political expertise, if political expertise is understood as academics and politicians who are invited to participate on the meetings. On the other hand ICCI also invites scholars. All these organizations consist of highly academic professionals.

Concerning recommendations for good religious peacebuilding, all fulfill four of the five recommendations: identify the genius of each religious traditions, they engage scholars, theologians, hierarchs or other officials, develop culturally derived methods for conflict resolution and draw on a range of actors, networks, institutions and NGOs working in related areas. On the other hand, only JP provides access to the mystical, experiential, and syncretistic dimensions of the faith traditions.

We found that all the organizations have developed new methods for conflict resolution which are based on the religious and local context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and all of them differ to some extent. RHR has developed a theology of the land which seeks to be an inclusive religious Zionist voice, and which taps the pro-social values of Judaism in order to improve the situation for the Palestinians under occupation specifically, but also for the minorities in the Israeli state. Sabeel has developed a Palestinian liberation theology which seeks to empower the Palestinian Christian minorities and arrange for nonviolent resistance against the occupation. RHR and Sabeel have many similarities, but are distinguished in the way RHR represents the majority which reaches out to the minority, while Sabeel is the minority which protests against the majority. PASSIA is a unique example of a highly academic institution which seeks to improve relations between the three Monotheistic faiths and the two peoples and promote interreligious dialogue related to Jerusalem – based on academic research, dialogue and publications. ICCI started out with an ordinary interreligious dialogue but has in recent decades found it necessary to include conflicting issues – such as the relationship between national and religious identity- and conflict resolution methods meant to heal the traumas caused by the long conflict. IEA seeks to be a human component of peace, and challenge the exclusive political discourses and obstacles by ignoring them completely, and thereby showing how individuals can be friends even among the most extreme. JCJCR has developed a new kind of dialogue which considers the historical reversal relationship between Jews and Christians in Jerusalem where Jews now are the majority and the Christians the minority. JCJCR seeks to empower the Christian minority in Jerusalem. JP has developed methods of healing based on the Middle Eastern sulha method. JP explores the mystical traditions and unites people through the belief in spiritual unity. Finally, CRIHL

seeks to be a consultative body between the religious and political authorities because of the unique role of religion in the Holy Land.

Secondly, we paid attention to how the organizations cooperate with other NGOs and international actors. The analyses have shown how all the organizations in this dissertation cooperate with other NGOs both locally and internationally. Firstly, we have seen how all the organizations are funded by NGOs or governments from western countries. RHR has a sister organization in the United States. Sabeel has established “Friend of Sabeel” with cooperation with Christians from the western world like in North America, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherland, and the Scandinavian countries, France, Germany and Australia. ICCI is also sponsored by several other NGOs, foundations, governments and individuals from the western world. PASSIA is supported by NGOs both locally and from European countries, the USA and Japan. IEA receives funding from several other NGOs in mainly European countries or the USA. JCJCR is mainly funded by foundations, NGOs both locally, from European countries and USA. JP is mainly supported by Creative Health Network in the Britain. CRIHL is supported by some Western countries and international NGOs located in Western countries. On the other hand, only the two Palestinian organizations Sabeel and PASSIA receive support from Middle Eastern countries.

In addition the organizations naturally cooperate with other NGOs and academic institutions with which they share a common interest. Both RHR and Sabeel cooperate with Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations. ICCI is the chapter of WCRP and cooperates with other organizations engaged in dialogue and conflict resolution methods. PASSIA is in cooperation with academic NGOs in Western and Middle Eastern countries. IEA cooperates with international NGOs – like the Abrahamic Union and United Religious Initiatives which are also interested in grassroots and community peacebuilding. CRIHL cooperates with international NGOs. On the other hand, both JCJCR and JP seem mainly to cooperate with local NGOs, like JCJCR and the TALI-chain, and JP and the local All Nations Café, and the Sulha project.

Thirdly, the argument of Lederach is presented, which is that in order to work effectively for peace all levels of peacebuilding need to cooperate, or be engaged in what Lederach calls a multi-track process. Thus, there was a need to understand what level each of these organizations was working on, and how the contacts and cooperation between the organizations in this dissertation were. We also introduced the study of Rene Garfinkel which could explain the different levels within religious peacebuilding specifically and also give a framework for understanding the impact each of these levels could have on peacework. The

elite level can have a long-term, but more indirect influence. The mid-level works with religious leaders and can have an effect on the communities where these religious leaders work. The grassroots level has a more direct influence on individuals.

The analysis of the eight organizations shows how they work at different levels of peacebuilding. Two of them work at the elite level of peacebuilding – PASSIA and CRIHL. PASSIA is an academic institution with Professors from three Universities – Al- Quds University, Bethlehem University and the Hebrew University which seeks to promote academic dialogue, research and publications to promote peace and building up a Palestinian nation. Al-Quds seems to have played a role in the coordination of contacts between the latter founders of CRIHL. CRIHL also has contacts with the Palestinian and Israeli political authorities as a consultative body. The presented material shows how all the organizations in this dissertation which work on the mid-level also had contacts with PASSIA and CRIHL. These were RHR, Sabeel, ICCI and JCJCR. According to Lederach, the mid-level should ideally function as a link between the elite and the grassroots level in peace building. No real formalized or organized cooperation between the organizations on the elite level and those on the mid-level has been documented in this dissertation, although there are many examples of common participations on Conferences. The material shows how specifically Rabbi David Rosen, Bishop Michael Sabbah and Munib Younan are both representatives of the Israeli Rabbinate and the Heads of the local Churches of the Holy Land. Rabbi David Rosen is also represented in the board of JCJCR and his wife, Sharon Rosen is represented in the board of ICCI. Bishop Michael Sabbah has written articles for JCJCR and in the magazine Cornerstone of Sabeel. Munib Younan has participated in conferences arranged by Sabeel and also written in their magazine. Bishop Sabeel, Munib Younan and Naim Ateek are also co-authors of the Kairos Palestine Document. A member of RHR has also written a chapter in one of PASSIA`s publications. Thus, the potential for cooperation between the elite-level of religious peacebuilding and the mid-level is alive.

On the other hand, there seems to be less contact between the two organizations in this dissertation which work at the grassroots level and the other organizations. This study has not found any contacts between IEA and the organizations on the elite-level. On the other hand, Menachem Frohman had contact with CRIHL – as he was among those who signed the Alexandria Declaration in 2002. Frohman also wrote a document which was discussed during a coordination meeting in the religious studies unit of PASSIA. On the other hand, we have also seen cooperation between IEA and JP through dialogue sessions. We have also seen

cooperation between JP and RHR after the Operation Cast Leads in 2009, where representatives from the two organizations visited Palestinians and Israelis in hospitals. We have not found any documented reason why the organizations on the grassroots seem to have less contact with the elite level, but a difference between an academic and an individual level might be one factor.

### **13.2 How does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework?**

Behind the second analytical question we use a broad analytical framework based on the interest for religion and peacebuilding from a number of researchers: Smith and Burr, Abu-Nimer, Gopin, Ulstein and David Guinn, in addition supplemented with the two concepts *contested sacred space* developed by Chidester and Linenthal, and *sacred space* where Peter Burgess suggested an Eliadean approach. The theoretical recommendations for how religion could be effective in peacebuilding can be divided into three main interests: 1) the religious potential for peacework in the individual religious tradition, 2) the religious potential for peacework in an interreligious setting and 3) how to deal constructively with holy sites in order to avoid contest and strife over holy sites.

#### **13.2.1 Analysis of each organization**

*Rabbis for Human Rights*: As the presentation shows, RHR sees Judaism as a main resource in its peacework, the Principles of Faith relates to how the Judaic perception of Man, its pro-social values, the Judaic call to pursue peace and engage in social action are indeed activated by RHR. One of RHR's major concerns is to challenge the idea that the social values of Judaism only relate to fellow Jews, by using several texts from the Judaic scriptures which emphasize universal ethical values. By focusing on the ethical obligations of Judaism in relation to its fellow men, RHR argues that protecting human rights is primarily a religious expression. In this way it both preserves its own particular identity, while at the same time opening up for a religious-based social ethic which includes the other. This approach to religion in peacemaking corresponds to the suggestions of Gopin - to tap religion for its pro-social values, which only is possible if the other is included<sup>86</sup>. We have seen how RHR explores the rich Judaic literature to bring forth the pro-social values, in pretty much the same

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<sup>86</sup> See 2.2.1.

way as Gopin suggests that religious Jews should explore the “thousands of rabbinic sources on a broad range of ethical values”<sup>87</sup>.

Another central characteristic of RHR’s writing and work is to bring forth the issue of forgiveness, both by writing a letter to ask collectively for forgiveness of the sins conducted by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people, and by their response to the military actions *operation cast leads* where the rhetorical question – is this us? (in relation to a video record of the military actions) might be considered as a call for repentance. This also bears resemblance to Gopin’s suggestion on how exploring the “literature on repentance involves a range of activities designed to make peace between people, including confession of wrongdoing, commitment to a change of behavior in the future, asking of forgiveness, and offering of forgiveness”<sup>88</sup>.

The human rights activities of RHR among Palestinians in the occupied territories can also be understood as deeds aimed at repentance collectively; if so this is an example of what Gopin suggests when words are not enough – then acts of charity and social justice can serve as repentance for the injury caused to the other<sup>89</sup>. In this way RHR is involved in the suffering of others and takes responsibility to heal that suffering. This could be related to Gopin’s emphasis on how Judaism described social justice as a *mitzvah*<sup>90</sup>. We have also seen how RHR writes specifically of the Day of Atonement as a day to reflect on past sins against Palestinians and others. Gopin also suggests that the Day of Atonement should be a symbolic day for forgiveness and repentance in conflicts<sup>91</sup>. It is also interesting to notice that RHR cooperates with other secular human rights organization and thus manages to bridge the secular and religious divide, as Gopin also suggests<sup>92</sup>.

The presentation of RHR also reveals some similarities with liberation theology. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Ulstein presents a paradigm of liberation theology which profiles it through five characters<sup>93</sup>: The first characteristic is the focus of theology on social relations and on the group identified as the oppressed. As has been showed RHR identifies Palestinians living under occupation, the Bedouins and poor in Israel as those oppressed or suffering from violated human rights. Ulstein further explains how this requires that the social realities are viewed from the perspective of the oppressed. The presentation of RHR shows

<sup>87</sup> Gopin: 2000:77.

<sup>88</sup> 2.2.1.

<sup>89</sup> 2.2.1.

<sup>90</sup> Gopin, 2004:118-119.

<sup>91</sup> Gopin, 2003:117.

<sup>92</sup> Gopin: 2000:221.

<sup>93</sup> Other academics use four characteristics see Smith & Burr: 2007: 256. The presentation of this paradigm is given in 2.2.1.

how it seeks to understand how the Palestinians experience life under the occupation. The second characteristic of the paradigm of liberation theology is the conception of God, and the difference between true worship of God and idolatry. RHR writes several places that the real difference is whether Jews view their pro-social values as only including their own group or whether they see it as including all humanity. RHR also argues that the Judaic message is that the nation will be redeemed when Zion's sins end- meaning that the true worship of God is to improve the moral standard of the state. The third characteristic put forward by Ulstein is its focus on conflict analysis, and to develop a theology in that specific context. As we have seen, RHR seeks to develop a "political, social, and cultural philosophy that will be based on the bible and post-Biblical Jewish literature", in which political power can be based. RHR has also developed a Talmudic-style commentary on Israel's Declaration of Independence. In this way, RHR seeks to challenge the political system, specifically the dimension of occupation. The fourth characteristic in Ulstein's paradigm is the combination of social science and theology. Although the presentation cannot document direct contacts with social science, RHR cooperates with several secular human rights organization and it is reasonable to believe that they also read their reports. The fifth characteristic is the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, which means that "doing theology" is part of a hermeneutic circle where the theology is reflected theoretically before it motivates action. As we have seen in the presentation, RHR understands their call against injustice as derived from their sacred scriptures, and thus refers to them when Palestinian families have gotten their homes demolished or their olive trees uprooted.

Following Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty's models for interfaith dialogue, RHR falls under the category of the "model of social action and liberation theology"<sup>94</sup>. This can be related to how RHR itself basically engages in dialogue with the Palestinians under occupation in order to understand their situation and in this way be able to join with them in social actions. It should nevertheless be pointed out that RHR does not mainly focus on dialogue, but rather on human rights.

In relation to sacred space RHR promotes what Gopin will call symbolic gestures: sacred space is central, but contested sacred space is challenged by symbolic gestures of compassion. Thus, RHR writes to the mayor of Jerusalem and visits Palestinians in East Jerusalem who suffer under the occupation. RHR also seeks to be an alternative religious Zionist voice, to an exclusive religious Zionist voice, which Gopin suggests should emphasize the moral standard

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<sup>94</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:224.

of the state<sup>95</sup>. In this way sacred space is not a contest over territory but a place where religious moral values should be upheld<sup>96</sup>. On the other hand RHR does not take a clear political stand on the future status of Jerusalem.

Gopin also argues that Israeli policy must respect Palestinian identity, sacred sites and right to property<sup>97</sup>. Following the thoughts of Gopin that social justice needs to be brought forth as a *mitzvah* in Judaism, and that repentance can take place through concrete deeds – it might be possible to say that RHR seeks to act out these deeds of repentance by protesting against home demolition or the uprooting of olive trees.

*Sabeel*: The presentation shows how Sabeel connects the ethical values of Christianity to promote nonviolent resistance. The dignity of each human being, forgiveness of the oppressors, combined with a call for social action to help those who suffer – are all central values which are reflected in the writing of Naim Ateek and the Kairos Palestine Document<sup>98</sup>.

Following the paradigm of liberation theology presented by Ulstein, Sabeel shows similar characters as those describing liberation theology. Firstly, Sabeel has developed a theology of social relations and identifies with the suffering group. This characteristic is found in Sabeel's concern for the Palestinians under occupation, where the life of Jesus is viewed as a paradigm for how Palestinian Christians should address their situation as occupied. Ulstein further explains how this requires that the social realities are viewed from the perspective of the oppressed. In this way we see how Sabeel pays attention to common Palestinian concerns such as the Nakba, separation wall, checkpoints – but also by constructing a common enemy by calling the Israeli government an apartheid regime. Its members also focus on the traumas brought on the Palestinian children because of the occupation. Jesus' response to what they describe as the Roman occupation is understood as one who does not encourage violence, ignorance or cooperation with the occupant. Instead they encourage nonviolent resistance, where the oppressed raise their voices against what they consider is unjust. The second characteristic of the paradigm of liberation theology is their conception of God, and how the question is not about the existence of God, but the difference between true worship of God and idolatry. This focus can be seen in how Sabeel, and specially in Ateek's writings, emphasizes the importance of conceptualizing God as an inclusive and universal god, in contrast to how Ateek argues that Christian Zionist and some Jewish groups view God as an

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<sup>95</sup> Gopin: 2002: 126.

<sup>96</sup> See 2.1.2.

<sup>97</sup> Gopin: 2002:80.

<sup>98</sup> See 2.2.1.



exclusive and particular God. Since the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in many ways is a conflict over land, land theology and the theology of Jerusalem become central issues for Sabeel. Again the question is how to perceive God as inclusive, where the land and Jerusalem do not belong to any specific ethnic group, but rather to all believers. The third characteristic is the focus of conflict analysis, and to develop a theology in that specific context. This is also a characteristic of Sabeel, which sees the occupation as the main problem, and also views Palestinian violence as a direct reaction to Israeli occupation<sup>99</sup>. As we have seen, Sabeel emphasizes its two-dimensional ministry as one prophetic and one of peacebuilding. The prophetic dimension means to protest against social injustice, while the peacemaking ministry calls the believers to do so in a nonviolent way. The fourth characteristic is the combination of social science and theology. This is also central for Sabeel, as we have seen through its invitations of guests and writers in *Cornerstone* from different social disciplines such as psychology, archeology, historians and prominent leaders of human rights organizations – Israeli, Palestinian and international. The fifth characteristic is the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, where doing theology is part of a hermeneutic circle where the theology is reflected theoretically before it motivates action. This can be related to how Sabeel sees the life of Jesus as one under occupation, and how his reaction to the Roman oppressor is a picture of how Palestinian Christians should respond to the occupation – neither by violence nor ignorance, but by nonviolent resistance.

Sabeel also falls under the category of the “model of social action and liberation theology”<sup>100</sup> according to Abu-Nimer, Houry and Welty’s models for interfaith dialogue. On the other hand, Sabeel does not focus on dialogue in order to understand the religious other, but rather the suffering other – or the suffering of their people<sup>101</sup>. Thus, in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Sabeel does not focus on dialogue but non-violent resistance. In this way religion provides the strength to explore pro-social values and care for the oppressed. On the other hand, Sabeel is also engaged in interreligious dialogue with Palestinian Muslims, which connects them to another dialogue model – the national unity model, where common national identity connects the Palestinian Christians and Palestinian Muslims<sup>102</sup>.

In relation to sacred space Sabeel seeks to develop an inclusive theology of the land, but its members also seek to challenge exclusive interpretation by the religious other. On the other

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<sup>99</sup> See 6.1.

<sup>100</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>101</sup> See 3.2.2. This will be further discussed in the evaluation below.

<sup>102</sup> This is further explained by Sabeel’s cooperation with another Palestinian organization, PASSIA in chapter 8. See 8.2.

hand it should be pointed out that Sabeel also cooperates with Israeli Jews and American Jews who share their opinion on the danger of positioning an exclusive interpretation of the land. Ateek has clearly pointed out how he thinks Christian Zionists and some Jewish groups (basically referring to Jewish religious Zionist or the Settlers) use religion to construct an exclusive, and even racist, perception of God. In this way it is possible to say that Sabeel's counter-voice is to form a perception of God which is inclusive both towards man, land and Jerusalem. One could say that Sabeel seeks to find an alternative to what we earlier have described as *contested sacred space*<sup>103</sup> through its critique of those texts from the Old Testament which can be interpreted exclusively, and through their presentation of alternative inclusive texts about the land and Jerusalem in the Old Testament. The complete inclusive theology of sacred space is presented in the many texts in the New Testament which reveal a universal message of redemption. Sabeel also takes a political stand in relation to the future of Jerusalem by making several suggestions: Jerusalem can be divided between Israel and a Palestinian state or eventually be the capital of a federation of four states: Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel. In this way Sabeel challenges the atmosphere of *contested sacred space*<sup>104</sup>.

*Interreligious Coordinating Council:* In relation to how it works with the individual religious traditions I would like to point out three specific targets. Firstly, to harness the teaching to combat any form of extremism. Secondly, ICCI seeks to bring forth common values. However, common values alone are not seen as adequate to promote peace. As the presentation shows, ICCI started out with traditional interfaith dialogue, with the aim of finding common values. The focus on common values in the 90s is clearly exemplified by the publication of ICCI *Common values – different sources* (1999) where Jews, Muslims and Christians emphasize their respective traditions in relation to the call for peace and justice in the sacred literature. The focus of this book has several connotations to the advice from several academics like Burr, Smith, Gopin and Abu-Nimer<sup>105</sup>. On the other hand, since the end of the 90s and the beginning of 2000 ICCI has also integrated controversial texts into its study groups to challenge the negative images of the religious others in the old sacred texts. In this way religion becomes a resource for peacebuilding in that it can help the parties to understand each other correctly, not only as religious persons but also as people belonging to different national and collective narratives, with different experienced past traumas. In this

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<sup>103</sup> See 2.1.2.

<sup>104</sup> See 2.1.2.

<sup>105</sup> See 2.2.2.

way the individual religious traditions are not dealt with in isolation and read in the light of conflict resolution theories like Gopin and Abu-Nimer suggest<sup>106</sup>; instead religion is seen as one dimension of the individuals and communities in addition to other dimensions such as national affiliation, past traumas and experiences.

ICCI is mainly an interreligious organization, and as such is doing peacework in an interreligious setting. As mentioned in previous chapters, Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty suggest that there are seven different levels of interfaith dialogue in the Middle East. In the following I will discuss four of these models in which the work of ICCI can be categorized<sup>107</sup>. The first model is the national unity model. Although my focus is on the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, ICCI also works to establish dialogue among Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs<sup>108</sup>. The second model, the harmony model, where the participants focus on common values, has been replaced by ICCI in the last decade by the conflict and diversity model, which explores differences and conflicting views in an interfaith dialogue setting on either religious or also political issues<sup>109</sup>. In relation to religion this has been shown through its work with sacred texts which describe the other in a negative way. But in relation to political issues, its members basically emphasize issues related to national identity and the role of religion, as we see through their work with the land-based group. One of the five principals of ICCI is to “move dialogue into action”, and the examples presented are how to address the media in times of crisis, the women’s group wrote a book presenting their personal narratives from living in Jerusalem, and the youth group who conducted voluntarily work in schools in East Jerusalem. These activities might fall under the fourth model of what Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty call social action and liberation theology model, if we disregard the fact that they do not engage in liberation theology. The work of ICCI resemblance the theology model of Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, which is theological dialogue where the participants focus on sacred texts and religious beliefs, although as described through the interview with Yarden the theological dialogue always took place in the context of the ongoing political conflict.

In relation to sacred space ICCI conducts interreligious textual studies to understand each other’s holy sites from the perspective of the other. This approach also corresponds with the suggestions of Gopin<sup>110</sup>. ICCI also uses what it calls a holistic approach to holy sites by

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. It should nevertheless be pointed out that Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty also encourage inclusion in the larger context. See Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:66 .

<sup>107</sup> All these seven models are mentioned in 2.2.2.

<sup>108</sup> Although Yarden mentioned in the interview that the distinction between Israeli Arabs and Palestinians was only made during the last decade, and is not necessarily accurate for everyone.

<sup>109</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>110</sup> See 2.2.2.

allowing national affiliation and religious sentiments for sacred space to enter the dialogue. As mentioned by Yarden in the interview, Palestinian national poets, early Zionist literature and sacred texts related to the Holy land are brought up in the same setting. As the presentation shows, the Women`s group of ICCI is an excellent example of an holistic approach to holy sites, where personal memories of living in Jerusalem are part of the study. ICCI also opens up for the possibility of the groups learning the daily experience of the people living in Jerusalem – East and West- and encourages the development of social action projects in Jerusalem. In this way ICCI also challenges the ongoing *contested sacred space* by acknowledging and understanding each group`s affiliation to holy sites. On the other hand, ICCI neither takes a political stand on holy sites generally, nor on Jerusalem specifically, but rather leaves this decision to the policy makers. But ICCI also promotes understanding of the daily life of the people in Jerusalem, specifically the Palestinians and their experience with the separation wall, checkpoints and other security measures.

*PASSIA – the religious studies unit:* PASSIA explains the establishments of the religious studies unit as a result of the religious potential for either “encourage peaceful coexistence or support sectarian hatred”<sup>111</sup>. In this way it understands the ambivalence of the sacred<sup>112</sup> and seeks to find ways of how the religious tradition can encourage peaceful coexistence. It also sees religion as a central dimension of shaping peoples identities, values, relations and actions. As we have seen the religious studies unit is interested in three relations: between Muslims –mainly Palestinians, between Palestinians Christians and Muslims, and between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims and Christians. In relation to how its members seek to activate the religious potential for peace within the individual religious traditions, I would like to discuss their dealing with Islam. Firstly, we have seen how the religious studies unit support the Amman Messages. The excerpt presented from the Amman message shows how the moral principles of Islam encourage peace among people. In the Amman message<sup>113</sup> the Islamic perception of Man, the pro-social values, the call to pursue peace and engage in social action are central and correspond with the writings of Abu-Nimer, which suggests that these Islamic values have the potential of developing conflict resolution methods<sup>114</sup>. Another example is also to be found in the writings of Abu Sway, where he explains the Islamic

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<sup>111</sup> See 8.1.

<sup>112</sup> See the introduction to chapter 2.

<sup>113</sup> The Amman message is a document which deepens the meaning of the excerpt presented in this chapter. On the other hand it is beyond the scope of this presentation to analyze the whole Amman message, since the focus here is on the religious studies unit of PASSIA.

<sup>114</sup> See 2.2.1.

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principal behind the concept of *Hudna*, and shows how this concept does not legitimate breaking agreements, but how they only can be broken when the other part has broken them.

Although the main work on the individual religious traditions is done in relation to Islam, Abu Sway also emphasizes the challenges of rabbis to question the occupation in relation to the ethical moral values of Judaism.

The religious studies unit also seeks to activate the religious potential for peacework in an interreligious setting<sup>115</sup>. The interreligious dialogue focuses on two settings. Firstly between Palestinian Christians and Muslims, which is unination, but interreligious. Secondly, between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Christians and Muslims, which is both bi-national and interreligious.

Is it possible to find similarity between the dialogue conducted by the religious unit of PASSIA and the interfaith models presented by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty?<sup>116</sup> First of all it uses the national unity model, in the dialogue between Palestinians whether they come from the Christian or Muslim tradition. The national unity model can also be related to its interest in creating unity among Palestinians; as seen in the introduction in the presentation the director of PASSIA Abdul Hadi expresses concern for the development of two factions among Palestinians – Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West bank and calls this the “second Nakba” or a catastrophe. Secondly, its members use the harmony model, in the way they focus on common values among the three Monotheistic faiths. Thirdly, they use the conflict and diversity model, in the sense that they seek to preserve the distinctiveness of each religious tradition and discuss issues which can cause conflict – such as the concept *the promised land*. Fourthly, they use the theological model by reading sacred texts together. Fifthly, PASSIA mainly conducts interreligious dialogue on the elite-level, which relates its work to the intellectual/cognitive and informational model presented by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty.

A central approach to interreligious dialogue in PASSIA is shared study sessions. The significance of shared study session between Muslims and Jews specifically is pointed out by Gopin<sup>117</sup>. As we have seen, the publications of books which reveal the Jewish, Christian and Muslim understanding of Abraham, Joseph and Moses/Musa is the result of coordination meetings and dialogue sessions among highly academic or religious leaders. All these publications emphasize the moral values of peace and justice from the sacred texts of

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<sup>115</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>116</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>117</sup> See 2.2.2.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abdul Hadi specifically mentions how Joseph can be a symbol of how man should respond to crisis. On the other hand, by emphasizing these values the distinctiveness of each religious tradition is also meant to be preserved.

The textual study sessions are conducted by academics from mainly Al-Quds, Bethlehem and the Hebrew University, in addition to religious leaders among the three Monotheistic faiths, both locally and internationally. As has been shown, the main objectives of PASSIA are to establish research, dialogue and publications – in the context of interreligious dialogue the publications are a result of interreligious dialogue. These objectives are further outlined through the earlier mentioned seven goals of the religious studies unit<sup>118</sup>. In this way the religious studies unite provides coordination meetings, dialogue sessions, seminars and conferences where issues are brought up and later develop into a publication by authors who represent the three Monotheistic faiths.

The religious studies unit of PASSIA specifically seeks to address issues of conflict which have arisen from religious and cultural differences. Thus, it has developed unique publications on religious aspects of Jerusalem, written by prominent academic scholars representing the three Monotheistic faiths. This publication stands out as a unique expression of study sessions on the sacredness of land – as emphasized by Gopin as a significant way to approach the contest of Jerusalem. As we have seen in the presentation, the religious studies unit of PASSIA has organized 43 coordination meetings on the issue of Jerusalem, in addition to several dialogue sessions and conferences. This testifies to the academic quality of this publication. On the other hand, the religious studies unit takes a clear political stand in its statement on Jerusalem. This statement corresponds with the general Palestinian claim that Jerusalem must be divided in relation to political power. On the other hand, Abdul Hadi emphasizes the possibilities of Jerusalem to become an open city through cooperation between the two peoples. Abdul Hadi suggests starting “living together *equally and separately* in our city of Jerusalem”<sup>119</sup>. In this way the contest over sacred sites is challenged<sup>120</sup> at the same time as the distinctiveness of each religious tradition and its relationship with Jerusalem is preserved. In this way an Eliadean perspective of the symbolic meaning of sacred space is respected at the same time as the contest is challenged<sup>121</sup>. It is also interesting to see how several of the writers of the PASSIA publication also are among the

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<sup>118</sup> See 8.1.

<sup>119</sup> See 8.1.

<sup>120</sup> See 2.1.2.

<sup>121</sup> See Peter Burgess and the Eliadean perspective in 2.1.2.

coauthors of the volume *Where Heaven and Earth Meet*<sup>122</sup>. This volume is unique in the way that it seeks to give an Israeli-Palestinian account of the history of Jerusalem. In this way it challenges the well-known different historical understandings among Israelis and Palestinians generally<sup>123</sup>. Although the connection between PASSIA and the mentioned volume is not clearly outspoken, it nevertheless represent the same spirit<sup>124</sup>. PASSIA forms a counter-discourse to those who demise the sacred shrines and religious narrative of the other. As stated in the volume *When Heaven and Earth Meet*:

... while Jewish extremists hope for the destruction of the Muslims shrines standing since the late seventh and early eight century, a growing number of Palestinians and Arabs deny that the Solomonic and Herodian temples had ever stood there; Yasser Arafat said as much during the Camp David peace talks of 2000. This widespread denial of the Jewish shrines of the past is a mirror image of the extremists` wish to erase the Muslim shrines of the present<sup>125</sup>.

Thus, concerning the issue of Jerusalem, the religious studies unit of PASSIA is a bold attempt to establish mutual understanding and respect of the other without degenerating one`s own ideological and religious point of view. It does not challenge ideologies or faiths as such – only attitudes.

*Interfaith Encounter Association*: In relation to the religious potential within each religious tradition we have seen how IEA conducts interreligious dialogue related to each of the seven dimensions of religion<sup>126</sup>. We have seen how IEA brings up issues of peace, forgiveness, tolerance, and respect within each of the religious traditions. In this way IEA emphasizes the religious moral values in religion as suggested by Abu-Nimer and Gopin<sup>127</sup>. We have also seen how it welcomes individual initiatives of social action, although all the work is focused around the interreligious setting of the peacework.

If we look at Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty`s seven models for interfaith dialogue<sup>128</sup> I will argue that the work of IEA has several connotations to five of these models. In relation to the first model – the national unity model – IEA also brings people from different religious communities in Israel together; this dialogue is called the inner circle of its work. Concerning the next two models IEA both focuses on what the religious communities have in common

<sup>122</sup> See 8.2.

<sup>123</sup> The importance of this approach will be discussed in the evaluation below in relation to the writings of Kelman in 1.1.2.

<sup>124</sup> See for example the introduction written by the editors of *Where Heaven and Earth Meet*, and the writings of Mahdi Abdul Hadi mentioned in chapter 8.

<sup>125</sup> Grabar and Kedar: 2009:9.

<sup>126</sup> As mentioned in the presentation of IEA I have used a definition of religion as put forward by Ninian Smart.

<sup>127</sup> See 2.2.1.

<sup>128</sup> See 2.2.2.

(harmony model), but at the same time explores religious differences (conflict and diversity model), both by addressing the problems of extremism in its own religious traditions, and by viewing differences – as for example a different religious perception of holy sites . Thus, Stolov explains how differences and conflicts are viewed as something constructive rather than destructive. IEA also resembles the dialogue of life model, by conducting personal action projects in the communities. IEA is also engaged in theological dialogue which focuses on sacred texts and religious belief.

Where IEA differs from the other organizations in this dissertation is through its work with individuals on the grassroots level, and by excluding the political dimension of the conflict in the interfaith dialogue setting. It is possible to say that these differences express the main goal of IEA, to change relations and conduct peacework from below, and to construct a counter-discourse against the political debate by forming groups of individuals from different groups and faiths who cooperate and understand differences – basically religious and cultural differences – and cooperate despite these. IEA has also managed to form an encounter group between Jewish settlers and Palestinians in Abu Dis.

IEA also conducts cross-cultural visits to each other's Holy sites, and speaks about the religious significance of Jerusalem in contrast to the enmity of the city today. In this way it is also aware of how contested sacred space can be a problem. Gopin suggests textual studies in an interreligious setting on holy sites as a way of challenging the *contested sacred space*<sup>129</sup>. From the examples shown in the presentation, IEA works mostly with sacred space or holy sites through what can be called an Eliadean conception – that is understanding the holy sites of the religious other as a metaphor or religious symbol which enriches his/her faith<sup>130</sup>. In this way the “enmity of the city today”<sup>131</sup> resembles to the concept *contested sacred space* as something negative. This illustrates a tendency in the work of IEA to challenge the contest over sacred space by presenting an Eliadean conception of sacred space, where sacred space is a common – though different – religious symbol which can be enriching through dialogue and understanding of the different significance Jerusalem has for the faith of the respective believers.

*Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations:* JCJCR is an interreligious organization, and JCJCR emphasizes how both common values and differences need to be acknowledged by Jews and Palestinian Christians. Nevertheless, its main interest is not to activate the

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<sup>129</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>130</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>131</sup> This description is given by one of the encounter groups of IEA. See 9.1.



religious potential for peacework from each individual religion<sup>132</sup>, but rather through building relations in an interreligious context.

On the other hand we have seen how JCJCR defines clearly what kind of dialogue models it uses: dialogue of life, cultural dialogue, dialogue of social action and interreligious dialogue. But it is possible to say that JCJCR is also engaged in an additional kind of dialogue model called “national unity”. In the way its members are also engaged in creating dialogue among Israeli Jews and Christian Arabs living in the state of Israel, through their cooperation with the TALI-chain – but also with an understanding of how the definition of who is a Palestinian Christian and who is an Israeli Arab Christian is rather fluid and individual<sup>133</sup>. They also basically use the term “Holy Land” instead of the state of Israel, or the Palestinian (occupied) territories.

It should also be commented that while Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty perhaps would prefer to understand the dialogue of social action model, as one which engages in a more kind of “nonviolent action and concrete resistance”<sup>134</sup>, JCJCR refers to itself as involved in the dialogue of social action in relation to how it is “discussing the basis for social action in each tradition combined with active cooperation in local issues”<sup>135</sup>. I would argue that the engagement of JCJCR in monitoring the Hebrew and Arabic press for evidence of demonizing the religious other, and their research on Jewish attitudes toward indigenous Christians, might be considered as nonviolent action to improve relations and specifically empower the Christian communities. It also illustrates an understanding of contemporary conflict resolution methods<sup>136</sup>. On the other hand, JCJCR is basically an educational organization which seeks to change attitudes through information. Nevertheless, it is possible to claim that JCJCR is involved in the national unity model, harmony model, conflict and diversity model, social action model and dialogue for life<sup>137</sup>. In addition JCJCR describes its engagement in cultural dialogue, which might refer to its inclusion of history and national identity as part of the dialogue between the religious communities. We have also seen how JCJCR approaches dialogue in a holistic way and uses several different dialogue models to achieve this goal.

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<sup>132</sup> See 2.2.1.

<sup>133</sup> This is also explained by Sabeel.

<sup>134</sup> Abu-Nimer:2007:224

<sup>135</sup> See 10.1.

<sup>136</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>137</sup> See 2.2.2.

The extract from Rossing's article *In Between*<sup>138</sup>, sums up the way JCJCR deals with *sacred space* and how it seeks to build social relations in the Holy City. First of all, the extract shows an inclusive approach to the many others who populate the city. The encounter of the other is also seen as a way of understanding one's own "particular memories and vision of the future"<sup>139</sup>. And Rossing further wrote in this article how "the passion for past and future eras impregnates the present with meaning". In this way the acknowledgement of the other is seen through the lens of an Eliadean conception of sacred space as connected to the mythical story of how things were in the beginning, which gives vision for the future<sup>140</sup>. But it is not only the mission of JCJCR to educate about the religious significant of Jerusalem for Jews and Christians, but also to acknowledge the historical presence of these communities. Although the focus of JCJCR is to educate about the religious communities' place, both historically and religiously in Jerusalem, it also seeks to combat tendencies towards what could be called *contested sacred space*. First of all, we have seen examples of this from the presented material, when Rossing explains how the very same concept of *promised land* can be used positively when it gives hopes and visions of a better future among people who are depressed – but equally how this concept can be used in a very negative way when it is used to exclude the other. Secondly, we have also seen how Rossing raises a critical voice to how he thinks Zionism from its early beginning introduced the dichotomy of particular versus universal, in a particular way and as such constructed an exclusive Israeli identity which marginalized certain groups in their society. We also saw from the extract from Rossing's article "Faith, Interfaith and Israel", that he wrote how redemption is not for Israel alone, but for all nations. In this way Rossing raises a critical voice against an exclusive form of Zionism without neglecting the Jewish national movement as such. The avoidance of exclusive interpretations of Zionism and the Holy Land is also emphasized by Gopin<sup>141</sup>. Thus, in this way it is possible to say that JCJCR as an educational organization basically seeks to change attitudes that are exclusive in relation to their focus on their own holy sites into attitudes which include the other and his or her particular communal identity and understanding of these holy sites as a religious symbol or metaphor in an Eliadean perspective.

As an educational organization JCJCR encourages an acknowledgment and understanding of the existence of the different religious communities in Jerusalem. And as such it approaches the problems with *contested sacred space* through emphasizing an inclusive

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<sup>138</sup> In the opening of chapter 10.

<sup>139</sup> See above.

<sup>140</sup> See 2.1.2.

<sup>141</sup> See 2.2.2.

attitude –specifically among the majority of Israeli Jews. On the other hand it must be pointed out that JCJCR does not take a political stand of the future of Jerusalem.

*Jerusalem Peacemakers:* In relation to how each religious tradition is dealt with to activate the religious potential in peacework, I would like to focus on its base in the mystical dimension of the religious traditions of Islam and Judaism but which also includes the secular. Appleby suggests that the mystical traditions should be an enriching alternative<sup>142</sup> in peacebuilding settings. The mystical dimensions of the religious traditions are first of all represented in the teaching of Sheikh Bukhari, Rabbi Frohman and McLean. As seen in the presentation, Sheikh Bukhari relates to the Sufi tradition when he explains his engagement in helping people who acted badly in their community, because the Sufi teaching taught him to treat everyone as his own son – even if this person insulted him. We have also seen how Menachem Frohman is a religious Zionist who chooses to dedicate himself (or even develop) to the teaching of Rabbi Kook the elder, who did not exclude the secular from being participants in a redemptive plan and thus could acknowledge the other as partners in that process<sup>143</sup>. In this way Frohman includes other faiths by seeking to create a spiritual atmosphere among them based on what he calls the key to religion – love your neighbor. In this way both Bukhari and Frohman clearly emphasize their specific religious identification with one faith traditions. Another example in this presentation is when Bukhari in the interview explains how his aim is not to convert anyone but rather to encourage them to live by their faith – meaning if you are a Jew, act like one (and the same for Christians and Muslims). In addition it should be mentioned that during one of the sessions in the Sulha workshop, the people gathered to study each other`s culture on a national, religious and ethnic level. In this way the integrity of each individual and his/her identification with a specific religious tradition, nation or ethnicity is not ignored. In this way although JP supports unity among men, it still preserves its own religious identity, and as such also becomes what Little and Appleby call “guardians of orthodoxy and preserving the traditional faith and identity of their religious group”<sup>144</sup>. Its members encourage the pro-social moral values of their religious traditions to promote peace as suggested by Gopin and Abu-Nimer<sup>145</sup>.

On the other hand, mystical orientation in JP can also mean an inclusive identity component. McLean – who has studied different mystical traditions – is an orthodox Jew

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<sup>142</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>143</sup> See the introduction in chapter 11.

<sup>144</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>145</sup> See 2.2.1.

today, but thinks spirituality should be a bridge to peace. Thus McLean suggests avoiding terms like *Zionism* or *Palestinian national movement* by replacing them with a spiritual definition of the Holy Land which unites both peoples<sup>146</sup>. McLean also suggests calling Palestinians and Israelis “children of Abraham living in the land of the prophet”<sup>147</sup>. In the presentation we also have seen how McLean gathers groups to study books of all wisdom traditions. In this way people who consider themselves more outside of religious communities or more secularly oriented are included through a common spiritual interest. According to Gopin the divide between secular and religious is also part of the complexity of the conflict<sup>148</sup>; thus JP shows an ability to unite religious and secular through spirituality. As mentioned, a central term for the work of JP is *inner peace* - which is considered central in order to gain national peace. The understanding of *inner peace* seems to be both cross-cultural and cross-religious – it unities both religious and secular. The goal of encouraging people on both sides to be pro-peace, and to stress the message that there is no other winner in war than evil, can connect people from different spheres. In addition, *sulha* is a Middle Eastern tradition of mediating conflicts which can be inclusive for both religious and secular. The other project JP supports – All Nations Café – can also add a universal dimension to the complex identity of a person. By bringing musicians together it speak about “a universal language, beyond politics and prejudice”<sup>149</sup>.

It is a clear tendency among the leaders of JP to view the conflict as a battle between *good* and *evil*. The *evil* side is not related to people or religious traditions but to a mentality which seeks revenge, judgment of others, and exclusive care of one’s own interests. This can be clearly exemplified through the interview with Sheikh Bukhari, where he sees religion as being “hijacked”<sup>150</sup> when used to fuel the conflict –and further how judgment day is not one between the religious traditions, but between good and evil. This leads us to the next focus on what is good – which is also the normative dimension of how things should be.

The extract from my interview with Sheikh Bukhari in the opening of chapter 11 in many ways exposes the main motivation behind Jerusalem Peacemakers – their religious message. Thus, religion is a resource because their faith is in a God who urges the believers to “help each other”<sup>151</sup> and “to do the best, not to do the worst”<sup>152</sup> during the limited lifetime each

<sup>146</sup> This will be discussed further below.

<sup>147</sup> See 11.1.

<sup>148</sup> Gopin: 2000: 115-138.

<sup>149</sup> See 11.2.

<sup>150</sup> See the excerpt from the interview in 11.1.

<sup>151</sup> See the excerpt in the opening of chapter 11.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

person has. Their understanding of God is not exclusive to one particular religious tradition, but their faith is in one God – as the excerpt from Sheik Bukhari exemplifies: “And why are we fighting if we only have one God?”<sup>153</sup> In this way JP sees religion as a resource for creating unity among people. But Sheikh Bukhari further emphasizes his religious belief as motivating him to promote peace among individuals<sup>154</sup>. In the excerpt from my interview with Sheikh Bukhari, he explains his commitment and belief in a God who calls man to love all human beings – and pursue a good, clean and loving heart. Sheikh Bukhari also says that trying to make peace could be considered as “worship of God”.

By looking at the seven different models of interfaith dialogue constructed by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, the work of JP might be said to relate itself to four of the dialogue models. First of all, they can be related to the harmony model – in the way they call for unity through spirituality. Secondly, it relates to the model of dialogue for life - specifically through its support and engagement in the Sulha Project and All Nations Café. While the Sulha Project includes dialogue over issues related to past traumas –such as meeting between parents who have lost a child during the conflict, or military veterans who have participated in the conflict and need some help after these experiences<sup>155</sup>. All Nations Café includes projects such as the planting of trees in the valley between Jerusalem and Bethlehem or cultivation of land. But also on a more individual basis, by visiting individuals from both sides of the conflict in hospitals - as was the case after the military campaign against Gaza. This might resemble Gopin`s suggestion to engage in symbolic social action of compassion<sup>156</sup>. Thirdly, JP can be said to conduct a kind of social action – not through demonstrations<sup>157</sup> but through gatherings – such as the Big Hug of Jerusalem. And finally, they are related to the theological dialogue, as they focus on their religious belief and sacred texts<sup>158</sup>.

Although JP basically works with dialogue and gathering, it resembles religious human rights, in the way it supports humanitarian aid – described as part of the dialogue for life model, and how this humanitarian aid is motivated by the faith of its members<sup>159</sup>.

Concerning sacred space JP offers an alternative to the lack of political unity, which is religious unity; as McLean explains he sees “the longing for wholeness, the longing to live in

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> See 2.2.1.

<sup>155</sup> See the interest of working with past traumas in conflict resolution methods mentioned in 2.1.1.

<sup>156</sup> See 2.2.1.

<sup>157</sup> Something Bukhari explained in the interview could be understood as negative, involving anger.

<sup>158</sup> The following is a brief review of the comparative perspective of the research, made by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty in *Unity in Diversity, Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*. Washington DC.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2007:219-228.

<sup>159</sup> See the discussion above on the normative dimensions of religion.

a deep connection with the Holy Land ... unties all of us”<sup>160</sup>. Sheikh Bukhari also explains how the Big Hug of Jerusalem is meant to find common boundaries which could unite rather than divide. The call of Bukhari to keep the city spiritually clean is done by suggesting that weapons should not be allowed in Jerusalem and by acknowledging the other’s sacred sites. We have also seen how JP considers the sanctity of Jerusalem as a divine request to work for peace. Frohman even suggests that Jerusalem should have an international status as a Holy City under UN – “the seat of the United Nations `cultural bodies, human rights organizations, and scholarly forums”<sup>161</sup>. Frohman also argues that Zionism needs to rise above narrow nationalism and include the other. In this way it is possible to describe JP as an organization which seeks to construct a discourse on peace and inclusion among Israelis and Palestinians, based on their religious mystical beliefs.

*Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land:* Although CRIHL is mainly a consultative body representing the highest religious authorities its members also seek out the common ethical values in the religious traditions. In the presentation four documents were presented, the latest in 2007 called the Washington Communiqué. In this document the way CRIHL activates the religious potentials in its work for peace is clarified, and further explained as two main goals: to promote mutual acceptance and respect among the religious communities through dialogue, education and media, and to promote respect for the holy sites of each religious communities<sup>162</sup>.

In order to understand how CRIHL engages in dialogue it is possible to say that this can be related to three different dialogue models: intellectual/cognitive and informational model, harmony model and dialogue of life model. The *intellectual/cognitive and informational model* is related to the fact that the CRIHL consists of members from the highest religious authorities. CRIHL also cooperates with academics from the elite-level. *Harmony model* is used in relation to how CRIHL does not make any statements in public unless it has gained an agreement. In this way it seeks not to fuel the conflict in the media. On the other hand, when its members do not agree – as during the Israeli military campaign against Gaza - they earnestly explain the disagreement and make clear that they have a common statement concerning their empathy with the suffering on both sides. Another way that the harmony model can be exemplified is through their common perspective of how to interpret sacred

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<sup>160</sup> See 11.1.

<sup>161</sup> See 11.1

<sup>162</sup> This list has been shortened down by me. The whole text is online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/crihl-mission-goals> Retrieved November 19, 2010.

texts. This is highlighted in the extract from Bakkevig in the opening of this chapter, where Bakkevig emphasizes the responsibility of religious leaders in guiding their adherence concerning what “principles and what clues are needed to read Holy Scriptures in support of peace and justice”<sup>163</sup>. Bakkevig also argues that religion needs to be taken seriously in this conflict because of its possibility to become either “the spoiler of any peace effort”<sup>164</sup> or if taken seriously to give “formidable contributions to a lasting and sustainable peace”<sup>165</sup>. The emphasis on how religion can both be used for the purpose of supporting violence as it can be used to promote peace is also clearly stated in the “Missions and goals” of CRIHL, where the member institutions commit themselves to using their positions to advance sacred values and “prevent religion from being used as a source of conflict”<sup>166</sup>. In order to combat these negative interpretations three examples can be mentioned from the presented material. First the Alexandria Declaration –which really became the starting point for the process of establishing CRIHL where they declared: “killing innocents in the name of God is a desecration of His Holy Name, and defames religion in the world”<sup>167</sup>. A second example is when Rabbi Rosen responded against Rabbi Eliyahu of Safed, who encouraged Jews not to sell or rent homes to Arabs. Rosen called this “a narrow-minded interpretation”<sup>168</sup> and “a desecration of the Divine Name”<sup>169</sup>. A third example is how both Rabbi Rosen and Oded Wiener present tolerant interpretations from the Israeli Chief Rabbinate as a norm. In this way CRIHL’s understanding of religious interpretations corresponds with the phrasing of Scott Appleby, where he writes about *the ambivalence of the sacred* and the potential of religion to motivate both acts of violence and acts of charity<sup>170</sup>. It also corresponds with the understanding of Marc Gopin and how an “infinite hermeneutic variability of religious traditions”<sup>171</sup> is possible and therefore needs to be addressed by peacemakers. The *Dialogue of life* is used when CRIHL seeks to improve relations concerning common issues where religion is involved. Examples of this are two of the projects conducted by CRIHL – the school book projects and the monitoring of the media. Although Younan also called for a *prophetic dialogue of life* where structures of injustice were to be challenge –such an

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<sup>163</sup> See the extract from the opening of chapter 12.

<sup>164</sup> See 12.1.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Quotation from the Alexandrian Declaration. See 12.1.

<sup>168</sup> See 12.1.

<sup>169</sup> See 12.1.

<sup>170</sup> See the introduction to chapter 2.

<sup>171</sup> Gopin, 2000:5.

approach seems to require a more firmly political stance than what CRIHL is capable of taking on the level it works at.

CRIHL also seeks to promote respect for the holy sites of each religious community<sup>172</sup>. Both the Alexandria Declaration and the Washington Communiqué address how Holy sites have been part of the conflict. The Alexandria Declaration emphasizes the need to respect each other's integrity in the Land. The Washington Communiqué refers to an ambivalence of Holy sites as part of the conflict because of their sacredness, although meant to be an "inspiration to strengthen their acceptance and love of Almighty and all His creatures, from all religions and all nationalities"<sup>173</sup>. When CRIHL seeks to be a consultative body on among other the question of Jerusalem, it is in line with those academics that encourage how a final settlement of the question of Jerusalem needs to consider the religious dimensions of Jerusalem – as pointed out by for example David Guinn<sup>174</sup> and Peter Burgess<sup>175</sup>. It is possible to argue that CRIHL understands the role sacred sites can play as *contested sacred space*<sup>176</sup> and seeks to break this cycle of mentality towards acknowledging each other sacred sites and lets them be a religious symbol of inspiration through an Eliadean perception.

While looking at the material the issue of Holy sites is basically brought up by the two Christian representatives of CRIHL, Michel Sabbah and Munib Younan, but also by the convener of CRIHL Trond Bakkevig. Both Sabbah and Younan raise a critical voice against Israeli policy related to the Palestinian experience of both Israeli security measurements and more demographic issues. In this way they challenge policy which seems related to the concept *contested sacred space* by Israeli policy<sup>177</sup>. Sabbah clearly states that the Palestinians are excluded in Jerusalem through Israeli policy and warns against falling "into a narrow, egoistic, nationalist, exclusivist view: a view that excludes others, along with their long history"<sup>178</sup>. Both Sabbah and Younan encourage a solution to the question of Jerusalem. Sabbah challenges Israeli policy which neither accepts "a shared city with shared sovereignty, nor a divided city with divided sovereignty"<sup>179</sup>. Younan suggests going back to the 1967-borders. On the other hand, both Sabbah and Younan represents the Heads of the local

<sup>172</sup> This list has been shortened by me. The whole text is online: <http://www.crihl.org/content/crihl-mission-goals> Retrieved February 12, 2010.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Guinn, David E., *Protecting Jerusalem's Holy Sites. A Strategy for Negotiating a Sacred Peace*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>175</sup> Burgess, J. Peter. "The Religious Site in Civil Space: Meaning and Function of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif", in *Social Identities* 3/2004: 311-323.

<sup>176</sup> Chidester and Linenthal: 1995. See 2.1.2.

<sup>177</sup> See 2.1.2.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.



Churches of the Holy Land when they make their statements, and representative from the Chief Rabbinate do not make similar statements on these issues.

Bakkevig also writes of how religion plays a specific role for the identities of larger groups in this region where history and national politics also are infused. Although most of the writings of Bakkevig correspond to the messages of the documents of CRIHL, he also puts forward a suggestion which might satisfy both sides, when he suggests delinking religious affiliation with citizenship in Israel, and rather accepting a state for the Jewish people in the constitution.

On the other hand, when Weiner points to Kook the elder as an example of tolerance, it is possible that he is seeking to illustrate how the infusion of religion and national identity need not be exclusive. Since this is not clearly stated in the article by Weiner it must be left as an open question. But it would then correspond to what Mollov, Meir and Lavie write on the close relationship between religious narratives and national identity<sup>180</sup>. And to Gopin's suggestion of how mythologies could be based on the exclusion and inclusion dichotomy and thus needed to be reread to promote peace<sup>181</sup>.

### 13.2.2 Comparative approach

In relation to the first interest, the religious potential for peacework in the individual religious tradition, we found that all the organizations seek to promote moderate inclusive interpretations and ethical moral values from their religious traditions. In this connection it is important to point out an essential difference between two of the organizations and the others. Sabeel and RHR are unireligious, while the others are interreligious (IEA, ICCL, JCJCR, PASSIA, JP and CRIHL). This basically means that both Sabeel and RHR relate themselves to one religious tradition as they seek out the religion potential in them. On the other hand, the others are interreligious and in this way they seek out the religious potential in an interfaith dialogue setting.

Sabeel and RHR also differ from the other organizations as they both can be analyzed in relation to the five characteristics of liberation theology – following the paradigm presented by Ulstein . In this way they explore their religious tradition for its potential for the peacework they conduct – for protecting human rights or for developing a liberation theology. On the other hand JP and IEA also distinguish themselves in their active exploration of

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<sup>180</sup> See 1.1.1.

<sup>181</sup> See 2.2.2.

religious moral values. Is it possible to see a tendency from the material which suggests that there exist a distinction between those organizations who see their work as a divine call, and those who see more practical reasons for introducing religion into the dialogue? This does not mean that those who use religion as part of the dialogue for more practical reasons are not motivated by their faith, something which would be impossible to measure, but it means that as an organization these motivations can be different. In the following I would like to discuss these tendencies.

First of all, the two unireligious and faith-based organizations – Sabeel and RHR- can explore the religious potential of peacework in a unique way. Sabeel, as we have seen, has developed a Palestinian liberation theology specifically to address the Palestinian experience and their Christian faith. Sabeel also emphasizes the moral ethical values to be found in Christianity, in relation to forgiveness and love of the enemy as emphasized by Smith and Burr. In this way religion has the potential of empowering the minority, giving them hope of a better future and trust in an understanding God. In the context of continuing Palestinian resistance against occupation, the Christian faith guides them to follow a nonviolent path, as Jesus did. The Christian faith also encourages them to forgive and seek reconciliation, although we have also seen that Ateek suggests a human paradigm for reconciliation. RHR can explore the pro-social values of Judaism, the prophetic call for social justice in the Holy Land, and by this develop an inclusive form of religious Zionism. RHR also practices symbolic deeds of action by going directly out in the field helping Palestinian under occupation, an approach also recommended by Marc Gopin. Both Sabeel and RHR go deep into the soil of their religious tradition, which they can by being unireligious.

Secondly, the two interreligious and faith-based organizations, JP and IEA, can explore interreligious dialogue in another unique way. While JP explores interreligious dialogue through the mystical traditions of Islam and Judaism and through a spiritual approach which believes in the spiritual unity of all men – they can explore the wisdom of all faith traditions and include secular people in their sphere. When faith is related to having inner peace and a clean heart and not the correct cognitive conception of faith, people are united across boundaries in a special way. IEA can also be considered as a faith-based interreligious organization, although this is not as explicitly outspoken as in the case of JP. First of all, we have seen how IEA has decided to exclude the political conflict from the interreligious dialogue. The main reason for that choice seems to be a faith in the religious potential of creating bonds between people through face to face encounters with the religious other and all

dimensions of his/her faith. In this way IEA explores all the seven dimensions of religion and relates them to issues of tolerance, peace, forgiveness and the like.

It should be stated that the differences between doing religious peacebuilding out of faith versus doing religious peacebuilding for practical reasons most probably overlap and is individual. Nevertheless, as I have argued, there are some tendencies in the material which suggest such a distinction.

In relation to the second interest, the religious potential for peacework in an interreligious setting, we found that all the organizations could be categorized within one of the seven models for interreligious dialogue suggested by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty. Two of the organizations are related to the *intellectual/cognitive and informational* model. Both PASSIA and CRIHL consist of professionals from either the highest religious authorities or academies. The greatest challenge is then to implement their work for people at the grassroots level. Five of the organizations in this dissertation are related to the national unity model, which means that they seek to improve internal relations between the religious communities. These Palestinian organizations are Sabeel and PASSIA, while the Israeli organizations are ICCI IEA and JCJCR. On the other hand, each one – except Sabeel – is also engaged in dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians from the three Monotheistic faiths. Most of the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinian seems to be located either in Jerusalem or the West bank. Specifically Jerusalem seems to be a natural link between Israelis and Palestinians from East and West Jerusalem, where distance and less security limitations seem to play a role in making contact easier.

All the organizations seem to combine – in different ways – the two models called the harmony model and the conflict and diversity model. Although IEA does not include politics in its interreligious dialogue, it nevertheless explores differences in its faith. Though all seek to find common values based on their religious traditions, while the interest in exploring conflict and diversities differs between the organizations. CRIHL acknowledges differences, but does not allow disagreements to enter the public sphere. PASSIA, ICCI and JCJCR explore differences and conflicts related to religion, historical narratives and national identities. Specifically ICCI, but also the religious studies unit of PASSIA, bring up negative images of the other in the sacred texts.

The relationship between the social action and liberation theology model and the organizations is most visible in relation to Sabeel and RHR. On the other hand, ICCI, IEA, JCJCR and JP have projects which are related to social action. IEA believes social action should be implemented naturally as friendships develop between the members of the group.

Thus, the director of IEA does not arrange for social action but lets the groups decide what they want to do. ICCI has as one of its principals a sentence which says that dialogue shall move to social action which the members of the group plan for themselves. JCJCR also has programs which seek to find local action projects related to the religious traditions. JP is engaged in social action through what Gopin might call social action of compassion. The way these social action projects are conducted sometimes overlaps with the dialogue of life model which focuses on common concerns of social interest. Four organizations in this dissertation seem to use the dialogue of life model. CRIHL has projects concerning school text books and monitors the media to avoid negative exclusive utterance by religious leaders specifically. JCJCR does the same, in addition to arranging research aimed at improving relations between Israeli Jews and indigenous Christians. JP supports both the Sulha project and All Nations Café. The Sulha projects seek to heal the traumas of the conflict through dialogue based on the Middle Eastern tradition of sulha, while All Nations Café helps Bedouins by planting trees and digging for water in the valley between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. All the organizations in this dissertation engage a theological model in their work. As we see from this comparison between the organizations, a distinction needs to be made between the interreligious organizations and the two unireligious organizations. Sabeel and RHR are basically engaged in the social action and liberation theology model. The main reason is basically because these two organizations are unireligious while the others are interreligious. However, as we have seen, they both adhere to a liberation theology – either as a majority (RHR) or as a minority (Sabeel) – and liberation theology has many similarities with the different dialogue models although they appear in an unireligious setting.

In relation to holy sites we found that all the organizations are engaged in some form of activity which seeks to improve relations in or in relation to Jerusalem. Six of the organizations are in different ways engaged in some kind of interreligious textual study session, which also is recommended by Gopin. PASSIA has brought together academics from the two peoples and three Monotheistic faiths to write a joint book about the different religious aspects of Jerusalem in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect. JCJCR and ICCI are engaged in textual study sessions about Jerusalem which include religious, historical and personal dimensions. IEA is engaged in textual studies and visits to each other's holy sites. JP seeks to make Jerusalem a city of peace by drawing people from religious traditions to the city in friendly gatherings. Both Sabeel and RHR explore their sacred scriptures and find inclusive interpretations which at the same time preserve their particular attachment to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. CRIHL distinguishes itself from the other

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organizations in that it seeks to be a consultative body for the political authorities in relation to Holy sites. All the organizations seem to warn against exclusive interpretations of holy sites. In this way they seek to end the contest of sacred space and acknowledge an Eliadean approach which respects the particular meaning given to these holy sites by the three Monotheistic traditions .

On the other hand, only three of the organizations in this dissertation take a clear political stand in relation to the future negotiations about Jerusalem. These are the two Palestinian organizations – PASSIA and Sabeel – which support the Palestinian claim on East Jerusalem. Sabeel even makes suggestions of how Jerusalem could be a capital of a federation of four states – Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel. The third organization is JP which suggests that Jerusalem could be a Holy City under UN. None of the organizations in this dissertation suggests that Jerusalem must remain under Israeli control, but are either silent on this issue or leave this decision to the policy makers.

## 14 Evaluation

In this second chapter the organizations will be critically evaluated and compared. Two critical research questions have been formulated to evaluate each organization according to a critical approach: How does it deal with the issue of asymmetry? Is it capable of formulating a discourse on peace?

### ***14.1 How does it deal with the issue of asymmetry?***

The first critical research question is connected to two interests. Firstly, there is an interest in how the organizations deal with the fact that this is an asymmetric conflict. In relation to asymmetric conflicts we presented two approaches within conflict resolution suggested by Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse on how to deal with asymmetric conflict: either to feel solidarity with the weaker part, or to empower the weaker part. In addition we made reference to the warnings by Gopin against ignoring the suffering of the majority<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, we have an interest in how they seek to avoid asymmetry in the organizational work. Several academics have given recommendations for how to avoid asymmetry in the organizational peacework, as mentioned in a previous chapter<sup>2</sup>. In this dissertation I will limit these recommendations to an interest in whether there is symmetry or not related to staff members and/or those who develop the programs of the organizations. As in the previous chapter each organization will be evaluated first, before they are compared.

#### **14.1.1 Evaluation of each organization**

*Rabbis for Human Rights*: RHR works to protect human rights in the occupied territories. In this way it feels solidarity with the Palestinians living under occupation and raises criticism against the impact of Israeli security measures on the Palestinian peoples. RHR also challenges attitudes related to the other in the sacred texts by addressing the new minority and

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.1.1.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.1.2.

majority situation in the state of Israel. In this way old texts referring defensively to the other are contextualized as texts describing attitudes under persecution or written by a minority in a hostile environment a long time ago. The asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinians as brought out by Edward Said<sup>3</sup>, is considered in RHR's work, in the way that it only criticizes the Israeli politics and religiously exclusive terminology. Although one could claim that this means it is *one-sided*, it could equally mean that its main purpose is to improve the Jewish state based on its religious convictions. RHR seeks to deal with the issue of asymmetry by showing solidarity with the Palestinians under occupation at the same time as its members preserve their own particularity and loyalty to the Jewish state. By putting a focus on the Palestinian experience and living conditions they approach the asymmetry in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They also show solidarity with all victims by paying attention to the suffering of Palestinians under occupation specifically, but also caring for the suffering of Israelis – as exemplified through their visits to hospitals of victims from both sides. In this way they are not ignorant of the suffering of the majority – as Gopin warns against<sup>4</sup>, although they basically seek to change the Israeli state and condemn the occupation. RHR represents the majority – or the one with most power in the Israeli- Palestinian relationship. It sees this situation as a new one, historically, and argues that there is a need for rethinking the Jewish texts and how to relate to the other. In the interview Kelman specifically mentions how the Jewish texts were written during a time when Jews were a minority, while in the context of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, they were now a majority – which Kelman argues means that they are given a moral responsibility for the other.

In relation to asymmetry and organizational peacework it much be pointed out that RHR is both unreligious and unnational and as such not an interreligious organization. This means that their staff members are Israeli Jews. On the other hand, through daily contacts with Palestinians in the occupied territories they develop their programs and activities in the context of an understanding of the other.

*Sabeel*: Firstly, it should be pointed out that Sabeel represents a minority – both in relation to the state of Israel and in relation to Palestinians. In this way its organizational work must be understood as one of minorities who seeks to empower their own communities and show solidarity with their own group. In this way Sabeel's work corresponds with the suggestions by Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse who put forward two approaches to asymmetric

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<sup>3</sup> See the introduction to chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> See 3.1.1.

conflicts of either empowering the weak group or showing solidarity with the weak<sup>5</sup>. One of the main missions of Sabeel was to develop a Palestinian liberation theology which would empower the Palestinian Christian minority. Sabeel also shows solidarity with their people living under occupation.

In relation to asymmetry in its organizational work Sabeel is both unireligious and uninational, thus its work is conducted by Palestinian Christians and the issue of symmetry is not as relevant. On the other hand, Sabeel arranges for symmetry in its activities by offering programs to groups of equal age (youth group), gender (women group) or profession (religious leaders).

*Interreligious Coordinating Council:* As an educational organization ICCI seeks to promote mutual understanding and respect for both sides through dialogue. In this way it does what Gopin suggests, showing empathy for the victims on both sides and not only the minority or weaker part in the power relation. On the other hand, ICCI arranges visits for groups to understand the impact of the separation barriers, the checkpoints and emphasizes the difficulties related to restricted freedom of movement for Palestinians. In this way it shows empathy with the way Palestinians experience the occupation. On the other hand, as Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty have argued, dialogue runs the risk of preserving the status quo if the asymmetry in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict is not considered. But in relation to ICCI it should be mentioned that Kronish explicitly explains in the interview that although it is an educational organization, it also supports the work of human rights organizations. We have also seen how RHR is represented in the board of ICCI.

The presentation shows symmetry in the organizational work of ICCI. As we have seen, the facilitators of ICCI normally consist of one representative of the Jewish side and one from the Muslim or Christian side. The latter is basically Israeli Arabs. In this way it is possible to say that ICCI upholds an internal symmetry as an organization. The same is true in relation to the programs conducted, where the three Monotheistic faiths are equally presented, including the different national identities, gender, profession and age. ICCI seems to use English as a neutral language in the dialogue, although translators can be used as well.

*PASSIA – religious studies unit:* In relation to the asymmetry within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, PASSIA has a clear point of view on the need to end the occupation, and also gives voice to the view that much of the violence conducted by some Palestinian groups against

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<sup>5</sup> See 3.1.1.



Israel is a direct cause of the way the Israeli authorities have treated the Palestinians. In this way PASSIA understands and acknowledges the asymmetry of the conflict, and shows solidarity with the weakest part in relation to power<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, it is clear that PASSIA does not support any violent action. It sees the division of Palestinians into one faction in Gaza and one in the West bank as a disaster, and thus seeks to encourage moderation and unity among Palestinians, exemplified by its support of the Amman message. It should also be mentioned how the religious studies unit emphasizes dialogue and the need to understand both sides accurately. In this way it manages to balance between solidarity with the Palestinians under occupation at the same time as it sees dialogue with the occupants as parallel processes.

PASSIA seems to have a close relationship between Muslims and Christians inside the institutions – that is PASSIA is not a religious institution, it is a Palestinian with both Muslim and Christian members and staff leaders. In this way there is an internal symmetry between the Muslim and Christian members of PASSIA. In the dialogue sessions and publications of material related to the three Monotheistic faiths, all three faiths are represented. There also seems to be a good relationship between Israeli and Palestinian academics. In this way there is symmetry in the activities of the religious unit of PASSIA. On the other hand, it seems to be mainly moderate Israelis who are welcomed into the dialogue, not necessarily the average Israeli<sup>7</sup>. In relation to gender, the activities seem to be dominated by adult men. As stated clearly by the head of PASSIA, Abdul Hadi, the religious participants represented themselves first of all and should be able to define their beliefs<sup>8</sup>.

*Interfaith Encounter Association:* In relation to the asymmetry inherent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict IEA chooses to avoid introducing political controversies into the interreligious dialogue. In this way there is no clear solidarity or attempt to empower the weaker part in the conflict.

An issue which is central in the study by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty is the question of bringing political topics into the interfaith dialogue. According to Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty Palestinians in particular feel that not to “talk about the occupation and its collective and personal impact feels almost like a betrayal of their national identity and community”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See the recommendations on how to deal with asymmetric conflicts by Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse in 3.1.1.

<sup>7</sup> Representatives from the Israeli Jewish side have mainly been moderate Israelis like Rabbi David Rosen (CRIHL), Michael Melchior, Ophir Yarden (ICCI) and Jeremy Milgrom. See 8.2.

<sup>8</sup> See 3.1.2.

<sup>9</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:58.

According to Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, avoidance of politics is mainly implemented through restrictions on three different levels: 1) No political association, 2) No engagement in political action such as demonstrations or other forms, and 3) No political conversation about the conflict during the interfaith meeting<sup>10</sup>. In this way the study by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty raises a serious critique against the kind of interreligious dialogue that IEA conducts. As we have seen in the presented material in a previous chapter, politics is not discussed or brought into the interreligious dialogue or encounter groups of IEA. In this way the asymmetry of the conflict is completely ignored. On the other hand, as Gopin points out, by engaging in an interreligious dialogue where the participants are treated with respect and dignity, the development of good relations between groups such as the one between Palestinians from Abu Dis and Jewish settlers might be the beginning of something unique, and therefore Gopin argues that in certain settings political issues can be put aside<sup>11</sup>. It should also be pointed out that Stolov explains how avoiding political issues is only a temporary situation.

In the organizational work of IEA its members seek to achieve symmetry<sup>12</sup>. As we have seen, the goal is to initiate two facilitators behind every encounter group – representing two of the three Monotheistic faiths, and in interreligious dialogue groups between Israelis and Palestinians – with two facilitators from the two different nations. IEA also has its own Women and Youth groups. In this way both gender and age are considered. We have also seen how IEA cooperates with other Palestinian organizations. In this way, there is symmetry in the relations between the two parties.

*Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations:* First of all, JCJCR sees the Christian communities as the weak part in the conflict, as they are both minorities and divided between two national identities. Secondly, JCJCR believes the political conflict has generated fear of the other – specifically among Israelis, which leads to alienation from Arabic-speaking Christians in Jerusalem. Thirdly, the research survey on Jewish attitudes towards Christians in Jerusalem shows how those Jews who were most religious tended to have the most negative attitude towards Christians. For these three reasons, one can say that building good relations – in the context of JCJCR`s work – is to empower the weak part, the Christians and as Rossing says, most of their work is to educate Jews.

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<sup>10</sup> Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty: 2007:56.

<sup>11</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>12</sup> See 3.1.2.

The issue of *symmetry/asymmetry* can be said to be dealt with by JCJCR in two different ways. First of all, we have seen, both the staff and the board of JCJCR are almost equally represented by Christian and Jewish actors. On the other hand, it should be commented that while the majority of the Christian representatives hold a high ranking in their respective communities, the Jewish participants basically represent themselves. Secondly, JCJCR deals with the issue of *symmetry/asymmetry* through the way they deal with the question of minority and majority. This is obviously central to the work of JCJCR since the whole idea behind the foundation of the organization was to develop a new kind of dialogue based on how the Christians in this context were a minority and how the Jews for “the first time in two millennia”<sup>13</sup> were “an empowered Jewish majority”<sup>14</sup> which came “face-to-face with vulnerable Christian communities with a long history as minorities”<sup>15</sup>. The focus on how Jews in Israel consist of a majority against the Christians, who are a minority whether seen as Palestinians or Israeli Arabs, is further emphasized as Rossing explains how most of their work is dedicated to educating Israeli Jews. The focus of empowering the minority might also explain why the webpage of JCJCR consists of a large number of articles on the Christian communities, while the Israeli Jewish remain unpublished on their webpage. In this way JCJCR uses the approach recommended by Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse to empower the weakest party in a conflict<sup>16</sup>. It should also be pointed out how the groups of JCJCR often are divided into profession and interest.

*Jerusalem Peacemakers:* First of all, it seems clear that JP resists from engaging in demonstrations against injustice, instead its members believe in gathering people from all backgrounds – believing that good relations and cooperation will enable people to find solutions. We have seen in the interview how sheikh Bukhari calls for a need of a whole year of peace – so that difficult issues such as Jerusalem, the refugee problem and the security wall (or separation wall) could be resolved in an atmosphere of cooperation. We have also seen how critique against the living conditions of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem has been raised, past traumas acknowledged during the sulha project and helping cultivation of the land between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In this way it is possible to claim that JP understands the pain of both parties in the conflict, but instead of raising a critical voice it seeks to unite people. Revenge is not viewed as the way to peace, but at the same time suffering is not

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<sup>13</sup> See the extract from the introduction of chapter 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See 3.1.1.

neglected. The focus of JP on inner peace makes it not engage in aggressive speeches, and thus perhaps not approaching the question of asymmetry through demonstrations, but by seeking to mend the traumas caused by the conflict. Thus, there is an empathy with Palestinians who have lived in refugee camps, with those living in Gaza, but also with those who have participated in actions of violence – like Israeli soldiers – who can meet through the sulha project. In this way, the asymmetry inherent in the conflict is understood, at the same time as the suffering of both parties is acknowledged, as Gopin recommended.

On the other hand, there could be said to be symmetry within the organization of JP, since the independent peacemakers represent both the Israeli and the Palestinian side – four Israelis (two religious Jews, one secular Jew and one Israeli Arab) and two Palestinians. JP also cooperates with all who seek peace. Among the independent peacemakers four are men, while two are women. Thus, both genders are represented.

*Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land:* In relation to the question of asymmetry and symmetry it should be pointed out how Bakkevig acknowledges the different expectations of the parties to the dialogue. As has been mentioned, Bakkevig explains how “Palestinians experience restriction and are exposed by military power, Israelis feel a lack of security”<sup>17</sup>, and how both need to feel that they have something to gain by dialogue. This also corresponds to Gopin’s recommendation to acknowledge the suffering on both sides. I think it is possible to say that CRIHL also acknowledges the asymmetry of the conflict, when the Palestinian representatives and the convener clearly explain the experience of Palestinians caused by Israeli security – and when the Israeli representatives never raise any critical voice against Palestinians but only seek to improve tolerant attitudes among the people. In this way it is possible to say that the asymmetry of the conflict – as pointed out by Edward Said specifically – is acknowledged. On the other hand, CRIHL is an official consultative body only for the political authorities of the Palestinians in the West Bank, not in Gaza. The political situation for the Palestinians in Gaza is not taken up by CRIHL. It is possible to suggest that this lack of seeking to either empower or show special solidarity towards the weak part, as suggested by Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse<sup>18</sup> is difficult when the participants represent the highest religious authorities. Thus, an understanding of how the parties view the asymmetry in the conflict is in the case of CRIHL addressed by understanding the expectations of the parties and being neutral.

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<sup>17</sup> See 12.1.

<sup>18</sup> See 3.1.1.

In relation to asymmetry in organizational peacework, it should be pointed out that the staff and member institutions of CRIHL represent both parties, and conduct meetings with both Israeli and Palestinian authorities. It is also possible to say that CRIHL upholds symmetry in relation to its cooperation partners – specifically through the Israeli-Palestinian schoolbook project where a research team of Palestinians from Bethlehem University and Israelis from Tel Aviv University are represented. Although the representatives of the highest religious authorities are all men, there is a certain symmetry of gender among the staff where two are men and one a woman.

### **14.1.2 Comparative approach**

RHR, Sabeel and PASSIA are the ones which specifically approach the issue of asymmetric conflicts by showing solidarity with the weaker part. These organizations are also active in arguing for the need to an end of occupation, although PASSIA emphasizes that this argument can be raised parallel with the interreligious dialogue. In addition JCJCR emphasizes the minority status of the indigenous Christians and thereby shows a special solidarity with this group, whether they consider themselves as Palestinian Christians or Israeli Arab Christians.

Sabeel, PASSIA and JCJCR approach the asymmetry by empowering the weaker part. In the context of PASSIA this is related to how PASSIA was founded in 1987 to prepare the Palestinian people for building a national state. Both Sabeel and JCJCR seek to empower the Christian population, which is seen as a minority in both a Palestinian and Israeli context. The Israeli organization JCJCR seeks to empower the Christian minority specifically by working on attitudes among Israelis and making them see the historical, religious and national affiliation they have to Jerusalem. Sabeel seeks to empower the Palestinian Christians by giving them hope through the continuation of resistance against the occupation. RHR shows solidarity with the weaker part by protesting against the occupation and human rights violations perpetuated against the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

A third option is to perceive the conflict as one which affects both communities and seek methods to promote peace. This approach is taken by ICCI, IEA, JP and CRIHL. In relation to ICCI this approach is conducted through its emphasis on common past traumas. In relation to IEA this approach is somewhat unclear, but as we have seen IEA on one occasion introduced an issue in one encounter group on the injured caused by the conflict and the danger of both sides claiming to be the greatest victim<sup>19</sup>. In relation to JP the approach is taken through

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<sup>19</sup> See 9.2.

religious healing and developing new methods of healing, both for people who have lost family members and for previous soldiers who suffer for previous actions. In relation to CRIHL the convener seeks to understand both sides, by focusing on both the Palestinian experience of restrictions and military power under occupation, and the Israeli experience of lack of security. This third option might be considered in relation to the warnings of Gopin not to overtly focus on the asymmetry in the conflict, but also to acknowledge the traumas of the conflict on both parties.

In relation to potential asymmetry in the organizational work we presented several recommendations by academics, although we also limited our interest to the staff members in the organizations. All the organizations in this dissertation seek to organize symmetry in their organizational work. The analysis showed how all the organizations made serious consideration in relation to gender, profession, age and localization of the encounters, in addition to letting the facilitators or staff members represent the three Monotheistic faiths equally. However, in relation to gender, most of the religious leaders are men and in this way there is no symmetry. In relation to RHR and Sabeel they are both unireligious and thereby only represent one religious tradition among their staff members. In the same way, JCJCR only work with dialogue between Judaism and Christianity and naturally only has staff members from these two religious traditions.

### ***14.2 Is it Capable of Formulating a Religious Discourse on Peace?***

The second critical research question is closely connected to the theory of Vivienne Jabri. According to Jabri, the possibilities of peace movements (or conflict resolution theories) having success could be measured by their ability to deal constructively with radical disagreement. Jabri suggests using a Habermasian discursive ethic as a measurement, and in their access to the public space. By using a Habermasian conception of dialogical relations as a baseline for a critical approach, as suggested by Jabri<sup>20</sup>, I am able to ask for tendencies in the material which show that Palestinians and Israelis have had a dialogical relationship where rational arguments have led to some common understandings of the causes of the conflict and the obstacles to peace. I am also allowed to ask if the organizations are able to be heard in the public sphere, and as such capable of challenging exclusive discourses of violence<sup>21</sup>. On the other hand, radical disagreement is dealt with quite differently in the

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<sup>20</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>21</sup> See 3.2.1.

context of liberation theology than in a dialogue. Leirvik points out how while a dialogue can «expand the space for legitimate disagreement<sup>22</sup>», liberation theology demarks “the limits of acceptable disagreement<sup>23</sup>”. In this evaluation I will seek to understand these different approaches to radical disagreement, and discuss whether they can be further related to the difference between structural and cultural peacebuilding.

### 14.2.1 Evaluation of each organization

*Rabbis for Human Rights*: First of all, RHR tries to challenge exclusive national discourses by its criticism of the occupation. Its argument that Israel has lost its vision as elaborated in the Declaration of Independence of 1948, specifically because of the forty years of occupation, places RHR within the realm of the national Zionist movement. In this context RHR also challenges the institutions which have been established as part of the occupation, such as the difficulties of gained building permission in East Jerusalem for Palestinians, demolishing of houses and demonstrations on Jerusalem Day to protest the treatment of Palestinians in Jerusalem, followed by a letter of protest to the Mayor of Jerusalem. Secondly, RHR tries to challenge national exclusive discourses related to security. This can be seen in relation to demonstrations against separation barriers, publications of videos which show the military actions in Gaza 2009, requiring an investigation in human rights violation and making public statements on these issues.

As described in the presentation, RHR cooperates with both the Israeli secular human rights activists and Palestinians. Through this close connection with both Palestinians and Israeli human rights activists working to improve the daily life of Palestinians, it would be accurate to state that RHR has gained an understanding of the daily concerns and difficulties among Palestinians living under occupation, and that RHR's protests, demonstrations and publications have been developed accordingly through a common understanding of human rights violations among Palestinians in the occupied territories, which is emphasized as vital by Jabri. In this way, it is possible to say that the work of RHR illustrates a good process. RHR has found common values with secular Jews and Palestinians, which according to Gopin is essential to achieve in a pluralistic society in conflict<sup>24</sup>. RHR has a common cause with Palestinians and secular human rights activists, and thus they cooperate well. But the religious

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<sup>22</sup> Leirvik: 2004:129. See also 3.2.2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Gopin: 2000:175.

motivation behind the work of RHR is not shared by secular Israelis<sup>25</sup> or Palestinians who are either secular or belong to the two other Abrahamic traditions. Although it has been shown that RHR has gotten a sister organization in North America, it still does not have dialogue with those whom it is really trying to challenge, the exclusive religious Zionists.

Leirvik points out a difference between liberation theology and interfaith dialogue which might also be relevant in relation to RHR. First of all RHR is involved in interfaith dialogue following Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty's categorization<sup>26</sup>, but their focus is not on the *religious other*, but rather on the *suffering other*<sup>27</sup>. Secondly, their interest is not so much to see dialogue as a tool to create understanding between religions, but rather religion is a tool of pro-social ethical values which they seek to explore in order to improve relations between the conflicting parties and also to help the *suffering other*. In this way RHR does not deal with radical disagreement in the context of dialogue, but is engaged in promoting moral values in its peacework. In this way it is possible to say that RHR seeks to be a counter-voice against the institutions which legitimate and reproduce the conflict<sup>28</sup>. But RHR is mainly concerned with structural peacebuilding – that is to end the occupation and restore human rights, although it also engages in cultural peacebuilding through its educational program.

Another requirement Jabri proposes for peacework to be able to actually be a counter-voice, is its ability to enter the *public space*. Many of the activities of RHR have been reported in the media<sup>29</sup>, but not so much its mission and motivation. On the other hand RHR uses Facebook and the Internet. Documentaries have also been made of Israeli peace activism in which RHR is a part. By being visible human rights activists, through demonstrations, and by being put in jail because they try to stop military orders against civilian Palestinians, its members are also capable of being in place where the media tend to go. In this way it is possible to say that they are a religious voice of peace in their public sphere. But their activities seem to be reported more than their religious message.

*Sabeel*: The presented material shows how Sabeel seeks to challenge what Jabri calls «the dominant discourses and institutions which reproduces and legitimates the conflict»<sup>30</sup>. It challenges the occupation specifically, but through non-violent means. Secondly, it also

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<sup>25</sup> Although there might be exceptions when considering the close relationship between Judaism and Jewish identity.

<sup>26</sup> See 13.2.1.

<sup>27</sup> See 3.2.2

<sup>28</sup> See Jabri in 3.2.1.

<sup>29</sup> See the home page of RHR, online: <http://rhr.org.il/eng/index.php/category/media/> Retrieved December 10, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> See 3.2.1.



challenges an exclusive theology of the land and gives concrete suggestions on how this could be solved politically and gives benefits for all. It also brings forth issues related to the Palestinian narratives – like the Nakba – and challenges the dominant Zionist narratives.

On the other hand, Jabri also argues that a discourse on peace needs to be conducted according to a Habermasian discursive ethic, which means that the two parties in conflict must shed any ideological views and engage in a communicative interaction process where mutual understanding of the causes of the conflict and the obstacles to its resolution should be developed. In such an ideal setting the two parties would use rational arguments and together discover what Habermas calls *emancipator interest*. From one perspective one could say that Sabeel cooperates with both Palestinians and Israelis in its conferences, in its magazine and in the development of future work. But from another perspective it seems also to be clear that Sabeel does not invite the mainstream Israeli Jews to explain their experience of the situation. In this way, Sabeel does not seek to address radical disagreement in a constructive dialogue setting, but is a nonviolent resistance movement. Perhaps it is possible to suggest that Sabeel believes dialogue with mainstream Israelis can be part of the reconciliation process or what Ateek called *reconciliation through the human paradigm*, which will basically occur after the occupation has ended, and at the same time as an International Truth Commission has been established.

A relevant issue in this context is what Oddbjørn Leirvik has pointed out – the difference between liberation theology and interfaith dialogue, where the former is interested in understanding the religious other, while the latter is concerning with understanding the suffering other. Although Sabeel also encourages dialogue, its main focus is on empowering the Palestinian Christians as a minority living under occupation. In this way Sabeel has developed a liberation theology to resist occupation, not to understand the other as such. This claim that occupation must end before dialogue and reconciliation take place has been put forward by several Arabs and Palestinians the last decades<sup>31</sup>. In this way Sabeel addresses an opinion - that occupation must end before dialogue begins, which is central for many Palestinians and Arab countries. On the other hand, the danger of reproducing discourses of exclusion – where Israelis are viewed as the enemy whom one should not cooperate with – might be present in the resistance rhetoric of Sabeel. This can also be compared to the seeming challenges between doing structural or cultural peacebuilding.

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<sup>31</sup> See the introduction to chapter 3.

Sabeel has also reached the public sphere specifically through the Kairos Palestine Document. Following Rene Garfinkel, such a document is a powerful tool to bring out a message in the public sphere, because it is written by a number of influential Palestinian Christians, and as such can make a *grand gesture* in the public sphere and gain long-term influence<sup>32</sup>. The document has as we have seen also been supported by the World Council of Churches and as such has reached a wider international audience. Sabeel also seeks to promote a religious voice for peace among Christians internationally, hoping that they can be helpful alliances for the small minority of Christian Palestinians – and further encourage boycotts of Israeli products internationally. Through the Kairos Palestine Document and the formation of the organization International Friends of Sabeel, Sabeel has shown its capacity to become a religious voice for peace or non-violent resistance among Christians internationally. The fact that the Kairos Palestine Document has been experienced as a counter-discourse might be exemplified through the engagements made to speak against it too<sup>33</sup>. The fact that International Friends of Sabeel includes several European countries, Australian and American, also shows that Sabeel has managed to make its voice heard among a large group of international religious leaders.

Sabeel also uses the Internet which is a medium which can demonstrate its possibility to reach out to a larger international community. The webpage of Sabeel gives a lot of information in both Arabic and English. The development of international conferences also helps spreading their message of peace to international actors, in which the Internet is an essential tool.

*Interreligious Coordinating Council*: As an educational organization ICCI seeks to challenge what Chidester and Linenthal called *contested sacred space*<sup>34</sup>, by educating about the religious significant of the Holy Land – and specifically Jerusalem to groups both local and international. ICCI is also engaged in what Jabri called “meditation of tradition”<sup>35</sup> in the way ICCI brings forth negative images of the other in the sacred texts, in a dialogical setting. When ICCI brings up the issue of religious and national identity to be discussed in a dialogical setting, it seeks mutual understanding between the two parties. According to Kelman the core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the common threat an

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<sup>32</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>33</sup> See for example the response from a Welsh academic who criticized the Kairos Document and WWC, online: <http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/topics/news/3417-tunnel-vision-a-response-to-malcolm-f-lowe> Retrieved October 14, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> See 2.1.2.

<sup>35</sup> 3.2.1.

acknowledgement of the other's claim poses<sup>36</sup>. Kelman argues that the main objective of peacebuilding must be to redefine exclusive identities as identities which both acknowledge the other and one's own collective identity<sup>37</sup>. Bar-On also argues that history and collective memory are part of the conflict<sup>38</sup>. In this context the work of ICCI in bringing political issues into the dialogue is related to an interest in promoting mutual understanding and respect among Israelis and Palestinians – from all three Abrahamic religions – concerning their different religious and national affiliation with the land. Equally, one could say that its work in Jerusalem is aimed towards the same goal, to acknowledge each other's presence and affiliation with the City. In this way it hopes to avoid what Berger, Reiter and Hammer describe as exploiting the religious sites in the political discourse<sup>39</sup>. In this way ICCI seeks to form a discourse on peace which calls for including the other and mutually respecting each other's religious, historical and national affiliation with the Holy Land. By bringing in national, historical and religious dimensions to the dialogue ICCI challenges exclusive national discourses which use religious terminology to promote their cause.

On the other hand, Jabri also argues for a discourse on peace which challenges the political institutions which legitimate the conflict. In this relation it is important to understand how ICCI as an educational organization is engaged in cultural peacebuilding. However, Kronish explains how it also supports human rights organizations.

In order to deal with radical disagreement Jabri suggests that both parties should be capable of speaking freely and also be part of a common discourse on peace. In relation to ICCI the presentation shows how the staff members of ICCI represent both parties although this is an Israeli organization. The presentation also showed how ICCI has developed during the 90s and until the present time in dialogue with Palestinians and in the context of the political conflict. They also seek to develop programs with Palestinian organizations. In this way a Habermasian discourse ethic can be traced in the dynamic process characterized in the development of ICCI, where new understanding among ICCI and its cooperation with others encourages continuous developments of new approaches and methods.

As has been discussed in a previous chapter<sup>40</sup> Leirvik argues that there is a difference between understanding the religious other and the suffering other, which ultimately is linked to the difference between interreligious dialogue and liberation theologies. The presentation

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<sup>36</sup> See 1.1.2. The quote is from Kelman: 2004:62.

<sup>37</sup> 1.1.2.

<sup>38</sup> 1.1.2.

<sup>39</sup> 1.1.2.

<sup>40</sup> See 3.2.2.

of ICCI shows that in the 90s their educational work was mainly aimed at understanding the religious other. But the development of ICCI at the end of the 90s and until the present times shows how it has integrated conflict resolution methods and developed a holistic approach to the participants which includes an emphasis on understanding the suffering other as well as the religious other. However, in the context of ICCI the suffering other is not just one specific group-or the minority only, but all the victims of this conflict –both Israelis and Palestinians and how to deal with past traumas and promote reconciliation among them.

The final question of this evaluation is whether ICCI is capable of bringing its discourse on peace to the public sphere? First of all the public sphere can be understood as the media of television, newspaper and documentaries. As mentioned, ICCI has a list of “ICCI in the Media”, which documents how ICCI during the period between 2007-2010 had a media report from Jerusalem Post fourteen times, while only twice in Haaretz<sup>41</sup>. Most of the media reports of ICCI were made by Christian media in the West. Thus ICCI has made an impact on the public sphere, although not a real loud voice. In the interview with Kronish he explains how religion is not viewed as part of the peace process among the mainstream Israeli opinion. Kronish emphasizes the need for a political agreement and a political will to implement peace education in the official school systems, which would have the greatest impact on the public sphere.

On the other hand, one of ICCI's programs *Kedem* introduced a social action program of working on how religious leaders should address the media in time of crisis in order not to encourage violence. Such an approach would be difficult to measure scientifically, although it could have a positive influence.

Another way of looking at the public sphere is through the new mediums such as the Internet, YouTube, Facebook and blogs. ICCI has an impressive webpage with information on its programs, past, recent and present activities, and dozens of articles. Recently, ICCI also started a Facebook group and blogs. In this way ICCI has the potential of reaching a broader audience with its message and with its discourse on peace. Nevertheless, at the present time it should be possible to claim that ICCI still represents a small religious voice in the public sphere.

*PASSIA – religious studies unit*: As we have seen, the religious studies unit of PASSIA is part of a larger academic institution which seeks to implement research, dialogue and publications

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<sup>41</sup> ICCI: “ICCI in the media”, online: [http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=69](http://english.icci.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=69) Retrieved January 2, 2011. See also the introduction to chapter 7.

aimed at promoting peace. PASSIA challenges discourses which legitimate the occupation, while the religious studies unit challenges exclusive interpretations of holy sites among the three Monotheistic faiths. In this way PASSIA challenges both the social discourses and political institutions which legitimate the conflict. They also do this in a unique way, by bringing both Israeli and Palestinian researchers together. The publication *Where Heaven and Earth Meets* is an excellent example of how cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian academics can challenge exclusive interpretations of holy sites, by giving the representatives of all the three faiths and the two national peoples the ability to express their own understanding and further advance the development of a common historical understanding on Jerusalem. According to Kelman such an approach would be unique in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian contest over Jerusalem<sup>42</sup>.

If we see the work of the religious studies unit in relation to a Habermasian discursive ethic<sup>43</sup> it would be accurate to claim that its work corresponds with the idea that both parties are to be heard in the dialogue – as is exemplified through the activities of the religious studies unit- and that a new emancipator understanding of what is needed to promote peace is the final result of the dialogue. All the publications of PASSIA verify such a process. On the other hand, it should be commented that both RHR generally and Rabbi David Rosen specifically have achieved a great trust among Palestinian organizations<sup>44</sup> and do not as such represent the mainstream rabbinical view on these perspectives. In this way the interreligious dialogue is mainly one between moderate and highly academic participants and as such does not really engage with radical disagreement. Nevertheless, in this way they give a voice to the moderates, which naturally is important to combat extremist and exclusive views.

The main interest of the religious studies unit is to understand the *religious other*<sup>45</sup> without denying its understanding of how the occupation has brought suffering on the Palestinian people. In this way its members manage to balance between an interest in understanding the *suffering other* and the *religious other*. We have also seen how the religious studies unit of PASSIA is engaged in mainly cultural peacebuilding, while PASSIA is also engaged in structural peacebuilding.

Is the religious studies unit of PASSIA capable of becoming a discourse on peace in the public sphere?<sup>46</sup> First of all, PASSIA consists of academics and highly educated professionals

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<sup>42</sup> See 1.1.1.

<sup>43</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>44</sup> See previous chapter.

<sup>45</sup> See Leirvik in 3.2.2.

<sup>46</sup> See the argument on the importance of bringing the discourse on peace to the public sphere in 3.2.1.

who both publish articles and books and educate. Most of the scholars who have written in the religious unit of PASSIA are prominent scholars who themselves have published a number of articles – as for example the Palestinian Sari Nuseibeh and the Israeli Yitzhak Reiter are both prominent academic writers<sup>47</sup>. Several of the members of PASSIA are also connected to Palestinian universities –such as Bethlehem University and Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, and the mentioned Yitzhak Reiter is connected to the Hebrew University. In this way they are capable of reaching a greater audience among students and intellectuals and bringing their voice to the public sphere. On the other hand, and as mentioned by Abu Sway, the capacity to reach the grassroots is still not satisfactory. But the work conducted on the academic level might have the capacity by changing attitudes among future teachers working on the ground. PASSIA also use the Internet by presenting an impressive amount of information on the Palestinian experience of occupation, and about the importance of mutual understanding and cooperation. In this way, it has the capacity to reach a large audience, and the potential for being heard in the public sphere.

*Interfaith Encounter Association:* According to IEA, religion is a resource because it is part of the believers' worldview and as such can be a helpful approach to understanding the religious other on a human level, and a grassroots level, although the theory of Jabri would encourage that the institutions and social discourse were combated, and one can say that they are not since politics is excluded. On the other hand IEA does not seek to work on a political level, but among the grassroots on the individual level. It seeks to promote peace in a society it calls "crystalized in the conflict of war". Is it possible to say that it constructs a counter-discourse against exclusive categories, by showing how friendship and cooperation can be accomplished when these issues are ignored? As Jabri also says, agents are situated agents, born into a system of thinking – that is where social exclusive discourses and institutions which legitimate the conflict already existed before the time when most contemporary Palestinians and Israelis were born – and that by creating good relations by ignoring the construct of war – they show how it is possible to cooperate despite different beliefs and national identities. Is it further possible to suggest that this approach can be a counter-discourse promoting peace between people who hold completely different political positions, such as Jewish settlers and earlier Hamas members?

IEA does not deal directly with radical disagreements as suggested by the discursive ethic of Habermas. Instead its approach resembles a Gadamerian approach where a fusion of

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<sup>47</sup> See for example the presentation of the book "Holy Places" in 1.1.1. where Yitzhak Reiter is the coauthor.

horizons occurs through dialogue<sup>48</sup>. As an interreligious organizations they are mainly interested in understanding the *religious other*, while concern for the *suffering other* is related to everyone and not one specific group<sup>49</sup>. Nevertheless, the approach by IEA also challenges radical disagreement by showing how people can develop good relations no matter what political stand they have, by bringing into the dialogue only religious issues and focus on the religious meaning of their lives in a religious perspective. IEA is as mentioned mainly concerned with cultural peacebuilding, which can challenge stereotypes and prejudice about the other, but not change the structures which legitimate the conflict. On the other hand, IEA believes attitudes must change in order to establish sustainable peace through cooperation.

IEA has accomplished co-operation with several organizations both local, in Palestine and abroad. It also has a webpage and a blog on Facebook which can reach many more people than those whom it has direct contact with. But nevertheless, it does not form a clear religious voice for peace in the public space where, as Habermas said, “public opinion can be constructed”<sup>50</sup>.

*Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations*: It can be argued that JCJCR seeks to formulate a counter-discourse against those who exclude the Christian minority. In this way it seeks to challenge dominant exclusive discourse in the Israeli society<sup>51</sup>. In the following I would like to discuss whether JCJCR`s four activities could be said to be the result of “*a Habermasian conception of discursive ethic*”, meaning through a process where both parties – in this case representatives of the Christian and Jewish communities – meditate over their religious tradition<sup>52</sup> and through dialogue agree upon what is needed to accomplish the building of good relations. As we have seen in the presentation, the founder of JCJCR Rossing developed his ideas through conversations with 80 different Church leaders in Jerusalem. In addition JCJCR has its office at Tantur Ecumenical Institute, where most of the Christian leaders of different dominations are present. In this way it would be accurate to claim that JCJCR was founded by an Israeli Jew who had a good dialogue with the Christian communities, and as such developed strategy plans and activities which were in the spirit of the need explained by the religious communities.

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<sup>48</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>49</sup> See 3.2.2.

<sup>50</sup> Jabri: 1996:159-160.

<sup>51</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>52</sup> See Jabri, 3.2.1.

Although JCJCR is an interreligious organization which mainly seeks to understand the *religious other*, it could be argued that the way they treat the indigenous Christian minority of both Israeli and Palestinian represents an understanding of the *suffering other*<sup>53</sup>.

According to Jabri, it is essential that peace movements reach the *public sphere* in order to actually be able to change attitudes and promote peace<sup>54</sup>. There is little information to find about JCJCR in the media, although their webpage is very informative. The ability of giving voice publicly is also connected to one's position, and as we have seen – again with the exception of Rabbi David Rosen, who represents the Israeli Rabbinate – the majority of religious leaders come from the Christian communities. And since the goal of JCJCR in many ways is to change attitudes among Israeli Jews, the message needs to be heard in the Israeli public sphere. On the other hand, the webpage of JCJCR is remarkable, and the connections JCJCR has with for example the TALI-chain, (which basically reaches the secular Israeli school system) and the increased participation of people to its program might be helpful. Still, I think it is legitimate to claim that in order to change attitudes – and as we saw from the report, negative attitudes were worst among religious Jews – the counter-discourse which JCJCR formulates might be even more effective if a greater number of Jewish religious leaders were represented.

To briefly summarize the evaluation of JCJCR, it can be argued that it challenges the asymmetry in the relationship between the majority of Israeli Jews and the minority of the indigenous Christians in Jerusalem. It could be accurate to say that its program has been conducted through a Habermasian discursive ethic, specifically in the way the Israeli Jewish director Rossing has been in an impressive dialogue with the different Christian communities. The ability to become a strong voice for peace – against those discourses which are exclusive, requires a greater attention by the public sphere on these issues.

*Jerusalem Peacemakers:* We have seen in the presentation of JP how it seeks to include the pro-social values of its mystical tradition towards the other, and further how it includes secular people. Its members also see it as a problem when religious people care only for their own holy places and “allow the rest of the city to degenerate”. In this way JP understands the challenge of exclusive identities and exclusive interests in Holy sites- which ultimately leads to *contested sacred space*. Is it possible to describe JP as an organization which understands the many social discourses and institutional formations which legitimate violence, as Jabri

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<sup>53</sup> See 3.2.2.

<sup>54</sup> See 3.2.1.



suggested should be the starting point for constructing a counter-discourse of peace. Is it further possible to say that JP is capable of contributing to peacebuilding in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? To understand these questions we need to discuss how JP deals with radical disagreements and if it is capable of bringing its voice into the public sphere and in this way challenge dominant exclusive discourses.

Firstly, we ask if JP follows a Habermasian conception of discursive ethic<sup>55</sup>. That is – if its activities are brought forth by cooperation and genuine dialogue between the two parts in conflict. First of all it is clear that the independent peacemakers of JP have a common spiritual orientation through which they seek out new activities – like the sulha project which consists of Israelis, Palestinians and even international individuals, and where they over the years have developed a methodology which seeks transformation based on their experience of previous gatherings. Secondly, we have seen how All Nations Café started out as small group of individuals, which later developed into international contacts, CDs and activities on the ground (cultivating land). Sheikh Bukhari also joined two other Israeli organizations (IEA and RHR) to visit sick at hospitals on both sides after the military campaign in Gaza. And it should be further added how JP cooperates with all who seek peace. Leaders like Sheikh Bukhari and Rabbi Frohman specifically find common commitment to peace from their different religious traditions. From this perspective there is no need to claim that JP is not engaged in genuine discursive ethic from a Habermasian perspective. We have seen in the interview with Sheikh Bukhari how he emphasizes unity as the strength of peacemakers from all specters. On the other hand, if members of JP were confronted with others who strongly believed in revenge after experience of traumas, it would be fair to imagine that JP would try to convert them from this mentality for example through meeting people from the other side who had suffered too, like for example Bereaved Parents.

It would be accurate to say that JP both seeks to understand *the suffering other* and *the religious other*<sup>56</sup>, although it does not emphasize the suffering of one group over the other, but emphasizes how both Palestinians and Israelis suffer from the continuation of the conflict. We have also seen how JP mainly is committed to cultural peacebuilding, without denying the structural challenges caused by the occupation.

As mentioned, Jabri argues that if a discourse of peace is to function as a counter-discourse against discourse on violence – the message needs to reach the public sphere, and as such become a voice for peace within the public discourses. This could be said to be the greatest

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<sup>55</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>56</sup> See 3.2.2.

challenge for JP to really promote peace and gain supporters, and as such become a powerful voice of peace in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The fact that JP opens up for both religious and secular people might make this voice more inclusive. On the other hand, as we have seen, the religious leaders of JP do not publish material by themselves, but are pretty dependent on the interest of others –such as the project Global oneness who have published several videos at You Tube, or their webpage which has not been updated these last years. The sulha project is clearly documented on YouTube. And the Big Hug of Jerusalem is a clearly visible gathering, which also has been published on YouTube. And when Rabbi Frohman participated during the Alexandria Declaration in 2002 this was a public event which reached the public sphere. But during the interview with Sheikh Bukhari he was clear on the issue that the different NGOs needed to cooperate and pursue unity among them. In the interview with Sheikh Bukhari his last appeal was, as mentioned “give us a hand and be part of our work, let your voice join our voices and tell everybody”<sup>57</sup>. Thus, although JP has been using modern technology to spread its message, Sheikh Bukhari still thinks the voice for peace could be even stronger if all the different organizations working for peace could cooperate.

*Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land:* Firstly, we have seen how CRIHL is capable of seeking to change the existence of negative images of the other by religious leaders in the media. This is one way of challenging exclusive dominant discourses as exemplified in the research by Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman<sup>58</sup>. Secondly, the CIRHL is also engaged in a school-book projects which seeks to make sure that religious and historical issues are presented in a balanced manner for future Israeli and Palestinian children<sup>59</sup>. In this way exclusive national narratives might be challenged, as Kelman suggests<sup>60</sup>.

The next issue I would like to address critically is whether CRIHL is capable of conducting a Habermasian discursive ethic in its dialogue. As we have seen, the document of CRIHL makes it clear that CRIHL does not make any public statements unless it has achieved consensus. In this way its members acknowledge the integrity and opinions of all the member institutions, and seek to achieve agreements among all. One central dialogue among members of CRIHL is the future of Jerusalem. In this connection CRIHL announced that they have not yet achieved an agreement, but according to the Washington Communiqué they continue to

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with Sheikh Bukhari.

<sup>58</sup> See 1.1.2.

<sup>59</sup> The centrality of school books in dominant exclusive discourse is also emphasized in the study of Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman. See 1.1.2.

<sup>60</sup> See 1.1.2.

“reflect on the future of Jerusalem, support the designation of the Old City of Jerusalem as a World Heritage Site, work to secure open access to the Old City for all communities, and seek a common vision for this city which all of us regard as holy”<sup>61</sup>. On the other hand, since CRIHL is meant to be a consultative body among religious leaders and the political authority, specifically in relation to the question of Jerusalem, it is questionable whether CRIHL is capable of making a common statement after several years of conducting dialogue on this issue. If - as Sabbah claims, the only agreement they have reached is that Jerusalem is holy for all – the question is whether they are capable of reaching an agreement on issues characterized by a radical disagreement. The same lack of agreement exists concerning the military campaign in Gaza. This in no way means that CRIHL is not doing important work! The three projects it conducts and its efforts of ending exclusive and hateful interpretations of the other are all important issues. Even the fact that it does have a communication is important. Nevertheless, its capacity to deal with radical disagreements is questionable. In this way the dialogue resembles the approach suggested by Jay Rothman where the participants see the conflict as a shared problem<sup>62</sup> and avoid – at least publically – addressing radical disagreement. On the other hand, the CRIHL understands what Leirvik calls *the suffering other*<sup>63</sup> by understanding their different experiences where Palestinians are living under occupation while Israelis are living in insecurity. But CRIHL seeks to understand the suffering on both sides, not only the weakest party in relation to power.

The final question I would like to ask is whether CRIHL is capable of being a religious counter-discourse on peace in the public sphere<sup>64</sup>. The fact that CRIHL represents the highest religious authorities among Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank naturally means that its members have a great potential of being a strong religious voice for peace in the public sphere. The project where they monitor the media for defaming utterance related to religious issues also gives them a position in which they can influence the public sphere. In the same manner can the Palestinian-Israeli schoolbook project can perhaps have the greatest impact on the future generation and as such add a religious voice of peace among the children. On the other hand, in relation to the media Rabbi Rosen points out how when different religious people gather –who have been in conflict – and they are capable of reaching an agreement – the media often become silent, while when religious groups are in conflict, the media offers them great attention. This statement also corresponds to contemporary conflict resolution and

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<sup>61</sup> See 12.1. See point 3 of the document.

<sup>62</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>63</sup> See 3.2.2.

<sup>64</sup> See 3.2.1.

its interest in how the media can fuel conflicts by its focus on violence and conflict<sup>65</sup>. Another issue which might make it difficult to see CRIHL as a counter-discourse on peace, is its lack of consensus on issues which cause radical disagreements – specifically issues which involve religion – such as the question of Jerusalem.

### **14.2.2 Comparative Approach**

All the organizations in this dissertation seek to develop a kind of discourse on peace which challenges dominating exclusive social discourses or political institutions which legitimate the conflict. As mentioned, it should be possible to distinguish between those organizations which are engaged in structural peacebuilding from those who are engaged in cultural peacebuilding<sup>66</sup>. Structural peacebuilding would seek to change the political institutions which legitimate and reproduce the conflict, while cultural peacebuilding would seek to challenge dominant exclusive discourses in the social sphere. By making this distinction the evaluation shows how all the organizations seek to challenge different exclusive discourses – either in relation to breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions of the other, or by challenging exclusive interpretations of the land and Jerusalem. The different approaches related to cultural peacebuilding have been described in the previous section, with one exception. ICCI is the only one who seeks to include the complex relationship between religious and national identity in the dialogue. By engaging the participants in the dialogue to promote mutual understanding and respect for the national identity of the religious other, it challenges what Kelman describes as one of the greatest obstacles to peace – the mutual neglect of the other's national identity and narratives. On the other hand, the school book project of CRIHL might have similar effects by challenging different historical and religious narratives in the textbooks.

Only Sabeel, PASSIA and RHR seem to directly challenge the political institutions which legitimate the conflict, by demanding an end to the occupation. On the other hand, JCJCR also offers courses to the IDF in order to make them understand the Christian communities and thereby hopefully treat them respectfully. Also RHR offers education to IDF to improve their treatment of the Palestinian under occupation. However, it could be argued that ICCI and IEA are indirectly involved in a kind of discourse against political institutions which legitimate the conflict by inviting the participants of the encounters to visit the separation wall, the checkpoints and by their understanding of the restriction of movement imposed on

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<sup>65</sup> See 2.1.1.

<sup>66</sup> See 13.1.1.

the Palestinian people. In addition JP is also involved indirectly by bringing to the fore the tragedy of the situation by inviting previous IDF soldiers and mothers who have lost their children in the conflict together to realize that there are no winners in this conflict. All the organizations long for an end to the conflict; the main distinction between the organizations seems to be different views on whether dialogue should come before or after an end to the occupation -or occur parallel to the political negotiations. It also seems that those who prefer working with mainly structural peacebuilding – like RHR and Sabeel – mainly work for an end to occupation. But only Sabeel explicitly argues that the occupation must end before dialogue. On the other side, IEA says the opposite, by arguing that dialogue must come before it is possible to achieve a sustainable peace.

We have seen how all the organizations in this dissertation have developed the new methods based on their communication with the other. All the interreligious organizations have staff members who represent the three Monotheistic faiths –and ideally also the two peoples. Even RHR, which is an unreligious organization, has developed its approach to human rights in cooperation with the local Palestinians. One exception needs to be mentioned – Sabeel seems to cooperate more with international religious leaders who have developed liberation theologies in other countries than with mainstream Israelis. This may not come as a surprise considering their minority status and development of a nonviolent resistance movement. On the other hand it is clear that Sabeel does not deal with the issue of radical disagreement. This tendency will be discussed below.

In the evaluations Leirvik`s explanation of the difference between liberation theology and interreligious dialogue is important<sup>67</sup>. How does it deal with the question of understanding the religious other or understanding the religious other as pointed out by Leirvik. Leirvik explains how interreligious dialogue seeks to understand the religious other, while liberation theology seeks to understand the suffering other. We have seen from the analysis how both Sabeel and RHR seek to understand the *suffering other* – the Palestinians under occupation. On the other hand, we have also seen how several organizations combine these two approaches by both seeking to understand the religious other and the suffering other- but through an understanding that both Israelis and Palestinians are the suffering other because of the ongoing political conflict which needs to stop<sup>68</sup>. This seems to be most clear in the work of ICCI and JP, ICCI by bringing in conflict resolution methods to mend past traumas, and JP by inviting specific organizations like Bereaved Parents Circle to the sulha meetings – an

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<sup>67</sup> See 3.2.2.

<sup>68</sup> See Gopin, 3.1.1.

organization of Palestinian and Israeli parents who have lost their children in this conflict. The convener of the CIRHL also seems to encourage a need to understand the different expectations between Israelis and Palestinians – the first needs security, the other an end of occupation.

Finally, we asked whether the organizations were capable of reaching the public sphere with their voices for peace. As Jabri has pointed out, the ability of forming a voice within the public sphere is also a question of power and influence. In this connection it should be clear that CIRHL is the one with the greatest possibilities of reaching the public sphere, both through their documents, public statements, and on the long-term the school book project, while PASSIA, which is an independent academic institution, has the ability to reach a generation of students, which can have a long-term affect. The other organizations which work on the grassroots level have a lesser possibility of reaching the public sphere, although both ICCI, RHR have had some media reportage. Specifically Sabeel has in cooperation with other Christian Church leaders written the Kairos Palestine Document, which is a line with what Sabeel stands for and has gained international and national attention. The Kairos Palestine Document is supported by central Church leaders who in this way together have power. The need for cooperation and alliance between the different NGOs and religious leaders in order to become a real voice in the public sphere was also argued by Sheikh Bukhari.

On the other hand, all the organizations have their own official webpage, with a great amount of information. In addition, RHR, JP, ICCI, Sabeel and IEA can all be found on YouTube with short documentaries which present their work. RHR, ICCI and IEA are also using Facebook to spread their message. The impact of these global mediums is still difficult to measure. In this way, the organizations are capable of reaching the public sphere to a certain extent.

## 15 Concluding Chapter

*One means by which conflict resolution may be defined ... is to state that this is a condition where it is recognized that each interpretation of a text, be that a poem, a novel, a painting, an interpretation of history, a myth, must be dependent on the individual drawing upon the depths of experience, which differ from individual to individual and across time and context. Conflict resolution is thus recognition of the multiple and shifting identities of individuals all of which constitute the basis of communication action.*

*Extract from Discourses on violence, by Vivienne Jabri<sup>1</sup>*

In this dissertation I seek to give a limited answer to the question: How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land? In order to answer this question I have adopted conflict resolution theories to the study of religion. Previous empirical researches on religious peacework in Jerusalem have been conducted by Yehezkel Landau and the study by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty. Their researches have been done through interviews. Thus, no empirical research has been conducted which seeks to understand the content of organized religious peacework by analyzing their writings and programs. This study is an attempt to fill that vacuum.

In the first chapter I gave some background information behind the organizations in this dissertation by presenting the significance of the Holy Land for the three Monotheistic traditions and a selection of academic research on the issue of holy sites in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Next I presented two studies which revealed how prejudice and stereotypes had been dominant in the Israeli society towards Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. I also presented documents which revealed similar attitudes in the Palestinian societies against Israeli Jews. Finally, I presented some of the theories of Kelman which argued that one of the most challenging issues among Israelis and Palestinians was the mutual neglect of the other's national identity. I also presented previous research on religious peacebuilding in the Holy Land and constructed an historical review of the development of religious peacebuilding since the 70s. This section was intended to function as background information in order to understand some of the challenges facing religious peacebuilders in Jerusalem.

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<sup>1</sup> Jabri: 1996:119-120.

In the second chapter I gave the analytical framework behind the analysis. Firstly by introducing four central concepts: *religious peace building*, *peacebuilding*, *contested sacred space* and *sacred space*. I discussed the differences between religious peacebuilding and peacebuilding generally. I clarified how religious peacebuilding is limited mainly to cultural peacebuilding and structural peacebuilding. I also clarified the different levels of peacebuilding and different organizational levels, and introduced Lederach's concept of *multi-track* function, which argues for the need for communication and cooperation between all the levels of peace building. Next I presented the concept *contested sacred space* – which focused on how holy sites could also be part of a contest of power – based on the theory of Chidester and Linenthal. Then I introduced the suggestion by Peter Burgess to use an Eliadean concept of sacred space, which would understand the significance of sacred space as giving meaning to man. The idea behind bringing these two concepts together is to understand how mutual acknowledgement of the sacred space for the religious other could hopefully challenge the issue of contest in relation to Holy sites. I then presented different theories related to the religious potential in peacework – both in relation to the individual religious traditions and in an interreligious setting. The potential of the three Monotheistic traditions was presented through their moral ethical values in relation to their *perception of man*, *pro-social ethical values*, *call to pursue peace* and *call to engage in social action* – based on the writings of Smith, Burr, Abu-Nimer and Gopin. I also presented a model of how liberation theology could be identified. I also presented different perceptions of the religious potential in peacework in an interreligious setting. This was done by introducing the seven dominant models of interfaith dialogue in the Middle East – developed by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty. In addition I presented suggestions by Gopin on how shared study sessions, doing concrete deeds together and searching out inclusive interpretations of land could be helpful tools in promoting peace and cooperation between the two peoples and three Monotheistic faiths. I also presented the study of David Guinn, which suggests how religious leaders should be heard by the political authorities. This second chapter was meant to give the analytical framework for the analysis of this dissertation and the first two analytical research questions: What kind of organization is this? How does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework?

In the third chapter I presented a critical approach to be used in this dissertation. While the previous chapter sought to present the potential of religion in peacework, this chapter sought to discuss some of the challenges and therefore the need to approach peacework critically to evaluate its capacity for actually promoting peace. In the first section of this chapter I



discussed the issue of asymmetry vs. symmetry from the field of conflict resolution and interreligious relations. First of all, I presented the work of several academics who have pointed out how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an asymmetric conflict – where Israel is a state in control of the areas where the Palestinians seek to have their own state. I also presented the ideas of some academics who have pointed out how the asymmetry of the conflict is a challenge to the ability of interreligious dialogue to blossom. Among these academics were Edward Said, who launched this challenge in the 80s, and further Abu-Nimer's research in the 90s which showed how dialogue became an advantage mainly for Israeli Jews, while the Palestinians were left silent. Gopin also points out this challenge. The main challenge is that interreligious dialogue might legitimate the status quo – which means that Palestinian resistance against occupation is neglected in favor of a dialogue which seeks to calm the situation and preserve the status quo – or more directly the continuation of occupation. I presented two approaches to asymmetric conflicts suggested by Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse which say that asymmetric conflicts can either be approached by giving solidarity to the underdog or by empowering the underdog. In addition I presented a warning by Gopin not to ignore the mutual suffering among people from both sides of the conflict, which could be counter-productive to peace.

I discussed the issue of asymmetry vs. symmetry in relation to the organizational work for peace among Israelis and Palestinians. I presented some of the critique of the P2P programs, and suggestions for improvements made by several academics. Since this dissertation is not conducted through field work, I chose to evaluate asymmetry in the organizational peacework by looking more closely at the staff of these organizations and how program and activities were developed.

In the second section of chapter 3 I presented a critical approach to dialogue- in relation to how the dialogue dealt with radical disagreements and in relation to the complex relationship between interreligious dialogue and liberation theology. Jabri develops a model for understanding how peace workers deal with radical disagreement. The social theory of Jabri is based on a conception of conflict as being a social phenomenon. She utilizes a theory of how confrontations lead to the development of dominant social discourses which bring forth an exclusive perception of “us versus them”, which eventually lead to the formation of institutions which legitimate the conflict. Jabri calls these dominant discourses for “discourses on violence”, which pictures the other as an enemy who deserves the violence perpetuated against him. According to Jabri, these discourses need to be challenge by conflict resolution theories and peace movements. In this way the main challenge of those who seek peace is to

develop a counter-discourse which challenges exclusive categories and military institutions which legitimate violence. Jabri calls this counter-discourse a “discourse on peace”. Based on this theory Jabri suggests researchers to approach conflict resolution theories and peace movements critically. The above-mentioned issue of asymmetry vs. symmetry is one criterion, but mainly to evaluate the “discourse on peace” by using a Habermasian conception of communicative action as a baseline for the investigation. According to Habermas the parties are to be equally represented, and through dialogue they should be capable of gaining a common understanding of what is important to end the conflict. In this way the “discourse on peace” should reflect the common voice of peace makers from the two sides of the conflict. Secondly, Jabri argues that if this “discourse on peace” is to have the capacity of promoting social change, it needs to be heard in the public sphere. If it is not heard in the public sphere, it cannot challenge exclusive discourses or “discourses on violence”. Jabri further points out how the capacity to enter the public sphere also is a question of power, and that many peace movements remain marginalized because they lack the power to be given a voice in the media and as such are unable to really challenge the dominant “discourses on violence” in the public sphere. I also presented the distinction proposed by Leirvik on how religious dialogue is intended to understand the *religious other*, while liberation theology seeks to understand the *suffering other*. In the first category the participants seek to deal with radical disagreement and find common understandings through religious dialogue, while liberation theology challenges these radical disagreements and protests against injustice.

Based upon these previous chapters I presented this study as a qualitative research in chapter 4. I introduced this chapter by defining what qualitative research is, and by placing this study in relation to previous empirical research on religion and peace building in Israel and Palestine. I then limited this research to a study of religion and peace building conducted from Jerusalem by Israeli and Palestinian organizations.

In the first section of this chapter I presented the methodological considerations behind this work. First of all, I presented the criteria behind the choice of organizations and discussed access to information. Secondly, I presented how I had sampled data from the organizations` official webpages, publications and by interviewing leaders and personnel from these organizations. In relation to sampling data from the Internet, I presented some of the considerations made. The interviews were semi-structured. I pronounced three open questions to the interviewed which were followed up by a conversation on these issues. These three questions were: 1) How would you say religion has been used as a resource to feed the

conflict? 2) How can religion be a resource for peace building? 3) Whom do you cooperate with? The choice of approach was based on the suggestions by Arksey and Knight.

In the second section of this chapter I presented the analytical considerations behind this dissertation. First, I presented two analytical research questions: 1) what kind of organization is this? 2) How does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework? The first analytical research question is connected to the concept of *peacebuilding*, *religious peacebuilding* and the different organizational level where peacework can be conducted as described by Lederach and presented in the first section of chapter 1. The second analytical research question is related to chapter 2 where the religious potential in the three Monotheistic traditions is presented, in addition to the suggestions of how this could be activated. The issue of Holy sites is also central, and the suggestions of how holy sites can be dealt with in peacework as presented in the second section of chapter 2. The second analytical research question also needs to take into consideration what kind of organization it seeks to analyze – that is whether it is a unireligious organization or an interreligious organization. In addition organized liberation theology needs to be analyzed differently than an organization dealing with interreligious dialogue. An additional interest was added – to understand whether the organization developed new methods based on the religious and local context of its peacework.

I also presented a critical approach to be taken in this dissertation, and pronounced two critical research questions: 1) How does it deal with the issue of asymmetry? 2) Does it manage to formulate a discourse on peace? The first critical research question is related to the issue of asymmetry vs. symmetry discussed in the first section of chapter 3. The second critical research question is related to Jabri's proposal of using a Habermasian conception of communication as a baseline for the investigation. Jabri's argues that in order to promote peace, the discourse on peace must enter the public sphere.

Based on these previous chapters, this monograph presented the chosen six organizations, one institution and one consultative body in part two. Each of them was presented according to their mission, motivation, activities and cooperation. Finally, each organization was analyzed and compared in chapter 13, and then evaluated and compared in chapter 14. In the following I would like to high-light the findings of this dissertation and how they have thrown light on the main interest of this study: How can religion contribute to peace in the Holy Land?

All the organizations in this dissertation were given the same analytical questions, in order to give an understanding of how religion can contribute to peace in the Holy Land. The first

analytical question - What kind of organization is this? – helps us identify these organizations in relation to *religious peacebuilding* and *peacebuilding*. One of the findings is how each organization was established to develop some kind of a culturally derived method for conflict resolution which they believed was needed. Thus, there is a clear tendency of how religious actors organize themselves to add a dimension to peacework which they believe is missing, and as such they seek to fulfill a vacuum within peacework, as a supplement. These distinctive and uniquely derived methods for conflict resolution are mainly based on their own experience – often personal experience, where we have seen how the initiators behind these organizations most often also become the directors.

The findings of this dissertation can be categorized through four different issues in peacework: 1) to improve the situation for the Christian minority in Israel and the Palestinian territory (Sabeel, JCJCR), 2) to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories (Sabeel, RHR, PASSIA), 3) to break down stereotypes and prejudices among the two peoples and three religions (all the six interreligious organizations) and 4) to avoid exclusive interpretations of holy sites (all).

Despite these positive findings, we also find challenges specifically related to how the organizations positioned themselves in relation to cultural or/and structural peacebuilding. There seems to be a contradiction between doing cultural peacebuilding and structural peacebuilding – between establishing good relations between the two parties in conflict and between challenging structures which oppress one of the parties in conflict.

Finally, the first analytical question led us to question what level the organized work was conducted at and if the organization was engaged in multi-track cooperation. This study found that clear contacts between the three levels can be documented, although no formalized cooperation exists. Thus, the potential exists for religious peacebuilding on the elite level to cooperate or understand actors on the mid- and grassroots levels.

The second analytical question – how does it try to activate the religious potential in its peacework? – has been helpful to reveal the different ways religions can deal with contemporary challenges in their societies. The findings of this dissertation allow us to divide these differences into three main categories. Firstly, religion can be a useful resource for critiques of the wider society, and as such a call for social change. Secondly, interreligious dialogue through face-to-face encounters can be a useful resource for breaking down stereotypes and prejudices between the groups in conflict. Thirdly, the mystical dimension of

the faith traditions provides an alternative vision of “unity-in-diversity of the sacred”<sup>2</sup>, which connects people across cultural boundaries and national affiliation.

These three broad categories may be further divided into several subcategories. The findings of this dissertation show how the first category – when religion is a useful resource for critiques of the wider society – can be divided into two subcategories. Firstly, religion can be a resource for developing a liberation theology, as Sabeel has done. Secondly, religion can be the motivation for supporting human rights. Both of these subcategories are rooted in a common religious obligation in all three Monotheistic traditions to care for the poor, the orphaned and the weak in the society. Thus, both seek to activate the religious potential which lies in the pro-social values of their faiths. Nevertheless, Sabeel argues that there is a limit to the ability of activating all these religious pro-social values, specifically in relation to forgiveness, where Sabeel proposes a “human paradigm”<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, RHR does not argue for these kinds of limits. I will suggest that the difference between Sabeel and RHR is a question of minority and majority status, and of course who is the greatest victim. If this is the case, it is possible to argue that the ability of activating the religious pro-social values in peacework is related to the understanding of who is the greatest victim in a conflict. If the question of who is the offender and who is the victim is clearly identified, then pro-social religious values are more easily activated towards the victim. On the other hand, religious pro-social values can restrain the anger felt against the defined offender, as in the case of Sabeel, through non-violent resistance. If the group you identify with is considered the offender, it is more likely that the religious pro-social values are brought forth to change your own group – as in the case of RHR.

The second main category presented above, that is those who engage in interreligious dialogue through face-to-face encounter to break down stereotypes and prejudices, can also be divided into subcategories. In this dissertation we started out by using the different dialogue models developed by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty. These models have been fruitful in order to distinguish between the organizations’ approach to dialogue. On the other hand, these models could be given some modifications. Firstly, the *social action and liberation theology model* might be less fruitful in describing interreligious dialogue. The findings in this dissertation rather suggest distinguishing between activating the religious potential for peacework in 1) a unireligious setting and/or 2) an interreligious setting. Leirvik suggests distinguishing between an interest in understanding the *suffering other* or the *religious other*,

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<sup>2</sup> This is also pointed out by Appleby: 2003:249.

<sup>3</sup> See 6.1.

which might be more fruitful. While Leirvik mainly suggests this distinction should be drawn between liberation theology and interreligious dialogue, the findings in this dissertation suggest including religious human rights activists in the category of liberation theology, where both focus their efforts to understand the *suffering other*. Secondly, this model by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty is unclear as to what is meant by social action. The findings of this dissertation document how several interreligious organizations are engaged in different kinds of cross-religious and cross-national social actions. We have seen how both IEA and JP are engaged in social actions through helping the needy on religious holidays, visiting sick or planting trees. ICCI, CRIHL and JCJCR might be considered engaged in dialogue of life through their work with breaking down stereotypes in prejudice in the media and schoolbooks, but in this context, the social action and dialogue of life models may be overlapping. Based on the findings in this dissertation I would rather suggest distinguishing between *dialogue of life* – which is a dialogue about common social needs and challenges – and *social action* - which is a consequence of *the dialogue of life*. By making this distinction it is easier to grasp how it is the dialogue which causes the participants to engage in social action, not a dialogue about social action.

Nevertheless, the different models of dialogue suggested by Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty are fruitful to understand how several organizations see both national unity, that is unity among Palestinians and unity among Israelis, as a parallel process aimed at promoting better relations between Israelis and Palestinians from the three Monotheistic faiths. The findings of this dissertation also reveals how all the organizations seek to balance between harmony and diversity models – which means that they both seek to acknowledge what they have in common, at the same time as they respect differences.

The third main category is those belonging to the mystical dimension of the faith traditions and who provide an alternative vision of “unity-in-diversity of the sacred”<sup>4</sup>. The third category is in this dissertation represented by Jerusalem Peacemakers. On the one hand, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the religious peacebuilders from the mystical traditions preserve their diversity and identities as either Sufis or Jewish Mystics. On the other hand, they also seek spiritual unity among men, by reading all texts of wisdom from the different religious traditions and by developing a neutral spiritual language – such as the land of peace (*Eretz ha-Shalom/ Ard ilSalam*)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See above.

<sup>5</sup> See the excerpt from McLean in 11.1.

Perhaps what distinguishes the religious peacebuilders in the Holy Land from religious peacebuilders in other countries is their creative approach to holy sites in their peacework. Concerning the holy sites, all see as a challenge the way how holy sites are brought up in the political terminology and by religious extremists in a negative way. All in some way support textual study session to gain an equal understanding and respect for each other`s holy sites. This can be done academically - like PASSIA, or in groups – like ICCI, JCJCR and IEA. Or it can be done by promoting unity and a common moral commitment among the three Monotheistic traditions as suggested by JP. RHR and Sabeel have both developed inclusive land theologies from a Christian perception and from a Judaic- Zionist perception. CRIHL also corresponds with the suggestions by David Guinn that the question of Jerusalem must be solved through cooperation between the political and religious authorities. Nevertheless, this dissertation finds a clear tendency where Palestinians take a clear political stand for a division of Jerusalem, while the Israeli actors are reluctant to take a stand. In this case JP is an exception, where both Israelis and Palestinians participate and where the Israeli orthodox Jew, Menachem Frohman, suggests that Jerusalem should be a Holy City for all parties under the auspices of the UN.

I also compared the two critical research questions: 1) how does it deal with the issue of asymmetry? And 2) does it manage to form a discourse on peace? The first critical research question is related to the issue of asymmetry versus symmetry. Concerning the asymmetry in the conflict, we find how all the organizations in different ways acknowledge an asymmetry where the Palestinians suffer most by the occupation. On the other hand, the approaches taken to change the situation are different. RHR and Sabeel may both be characterized as organizations which resist the occupation non-violently. On the other hand, in an interreligious setting, where the aim is mutual understanding and respect through dialogue, the question arises of how both parties can promote peace. Although we have found that the Israeli organizations arrange encounters where Israeli participants see how Israeli security measurements make life hard for ordinary Palestinians, the Israeli interreligious organizations are not engaged in direct protest against these restrictions on Palestinians. This lack of protest among the interreligious Israeli organizations does not necessarily suggest an ignorance of the asymmetry – but rather different choices of strategy in peacework. The question seems to be what must come first in peacework: an end to occupation followed by interreligious dialogue and the creation of good relations? - Or the building of good relations through interreligious dialogue, which will eventually lead to an end to occupation? There is also a third option which says that these two processes of negotiations and dialogue should run parallel to each

other. At least ICCI is clear in its support of a two-state solution, and sees the process of creating better social relations as something needed today but which will be even easier if a political agreement is made. PASSIA and CRIHL also support these two parallel processes of negotiations and dialogue. Both JP and IEA believe a political solution will come easily if good relations and cooperation have been developed first, but specifically IEA states that dialogue must come before political negotiations. Sabeel states that dialogue must come after an end to occupation. Thus, the findings in this dissertation suggest that these different strategies in peacework do not necessarily mean a lack of acknowledging the asymmetry inherent in the conflict, but rather differences of opinion on how to change the situation.

In this dissertation we find that all the organizations in this dissertation seek to accomplish symmetry in their organizational work, although the lack of freedom of movement for the Palestinian participants is a constant problem.

This dissertation found that the construction of discourses on peace can be divided into two different agendas. Firstly, a discourse on peace can have the aim of challenging institutions which reproduce the conflict – such as militarism or occupation. Both Sabeel and RHR have this agenda. Nevertheless, a distinction needs to be made between these two organizations. RHR seeks to challenge their own group in the conflict – that means RHR is an Israeli organization which clearly identifies with the Jewish state, but which seeks to change the Jewish state and its moral character by ending the occupation. RHR shows empathy with Palestinians living under occupation and reveals human rights violation conducted by Israeli authorities. But, when RHR still identifies with the Jewish state, this also means that it seeks to construct a self-critical discourse on peace against those discourses which legitimate the conflict and/or the occupation. In this way, RHR seeks to challenge dominant exclusive discourses within their own society. Sabeel – on the other hand – is a Palestinian organization which identifies with the Palestinian people. Sabeel seeks to construct a Palestinian counter-discourse against Israeli discourse which legitimates the conflict/occupation. Sabeel seeks to develop a discourse of nonviolent resistance against the Jewish state, but such a discourse can also be understood as part of the dominant Palestinian discourse of resistance. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to make any valued judgment on the need for continued resistance when occupation still prevails; nevertheless it should be pointed out that resistance as a strategy instead of negotiations can have the potential of reproducing those discourses which legitimate the conflict. A discourse on peace which aims to challenge institutions which reproduce the conflict – in our case the occupation – will also easily have the danger of reproducing exclusive discourses against an enemy.



A second kind of discourse on peace is that which seeks to challenge exclusive discourses which legitimate the conflict and/or violence. These discourses can more fruitfully be measured according to a Habermasian conception of communication, where the main interest is how the parties deal constructively with radical disagreement. This dissertation finds that all the interreligious organizations give voices to the two peoples in conflict from the three Monotheistic traditions. Nevertheless, a distinction needs to be drawn between those who manage to gather moderate people versus those who manage to gather those considered more controversial. This dissertation finds that interreligious organizations like ICCI, PASSIA, JCJCR and CRIHL mainly gathered moderate peoples in their dialogue sessions. By gathering moderate people to form a common discourse on peace which challenges exclusive discourses among both Israelis and Palestinians, these organizations give a stronger voice to the moderate position. On the other hand, these organizations do not arrange for dialogue session on controversial political issues but rather on religious and historical issues. In this way they seek to develop an inclusive discourse on peace which acknowledges the historical presence of the different religious communities in this region and challenges negative images and stereotypes of the religious other. In addition, ICCI, JCJCR and CRIHL seek to challenge exclusive discourses against the religious other in the media and schoolbooks, where ICCI and JCJCR work on the mid-level, while CRIHL work on the elite level. PASSIA shows the potential role of academics in developing a common historical understanding on Jerusalem among Israelis and Palestinians. In this way these organizations seek to develop an inclusive discourse on peace which legitimates the rights of the Palestinians and Israelis to live in this territory. While these mentioned interreligious organizations mainly gather moderates, both IEA and JP are capable of gathering more controversial groups – like Jewish settlers and earlier members of Hamas. This dissertation can reveal several reasons which can explain the ability of IEA and JP to gather controversial groups. Firstly, they work on the grassroots level and are as such open to any individual who wants to join them. Secondly, they clearly focus on religious issues in the encounters and as such do not require any specific political position prior to the meetings. IEA sees itself as the human component of peacework, where political and economic questions are the other two components left to politicians. In this way IEA develops an inclusive human discourse, which shows that cooperation and friendship can exist when the political debate is ignored. JP seeks to develop an inclusive discourse on peace based on spiritual unity.

On the other hand, these inclusive discourses do not necessarily challenge the continuation of the occupation, and thus – as Abu-Nimer points out – may have the potential of preserving the status quo<sup>6</sup>.

In relation to how the organizations in this dissertation develop discourses on peace, we have found that a distinction must be drawn between discourses which seek to challenge institutions which legitimate the conflict, and those discourses which seek to challenge exclusive discourses. We further approached the question of peacework in relation to the organizations' search to understand the suffering other or the religious other. We saw how Sabeel and RHR paid most attention to the suffering other, while the other organizations were interreligious and focused on the religious other. On the other hand, we found a clear tendency among the interreligious organizations to develop an interest in understanding the suffering of all others because of the conflict. That is - the suffering of both Palestinians and Israelis is sought understood at the same time as the asymmetry in the conflict is acknowledged. Thus, Leirvik distinguishes between liberation theology, which seeks to understand the suffering other while interreligious dialogue seeks to understand the religious other. This dissertation finds similar distinctions, but since interreligious organizations also can seek to understand the suffering of both parties, it might be more fruitful to distinguish between those who seek to challenge institutions which legitimate the conflict and those who seek to challenge exclusive discourses which legitimate the conflict.

The final critical research question was whether they are capable of reaching the public sphere? We have seen how this question also is related to power and influence, and in this way the greatest capacity is that of CRIHL, which represents the highest religious authorities. On the other hand, the use of technology such as YouTube, Facebook and webpages has a potential which is difficult to measure at this point – several of the organizations in this dissertation started using YouTube and Facebook only a few years ago, and some have not done so at this time. The outcome of this technology must be evaluated in the future.

All the analytical questions and evaluation questions seem to point to a clash between cultural versus structural peacebuilding, between self-criticism and criticism of the other, the danger of preserving the status quo versus reproducing the conflict, between dialogue as a strategy versus resistance as a strategy in peacework, between expanding the space for legitimate disagreement and demarking the limits of acceptable disagreement<sup>7</sup> and between challenging institutions which legitimate the conflict versus challenging exclusive discourse

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<sup>6</sup> See 1.2.1.

<sup>7</sup> Leirvik: 2004: 129. See also 3.2.2.

which legitimate the conflict. This clash also seems to be one between Palestinian and Israeli interests, although there are many nuances. Nevertheless, all the Palestinian organizations in this dissertation want structural peacebuilding, raise criticism against the Israeli government, and are afraid that dialogue shall preserve the status quo, support some kind of resistance, demarking the limits of acceptable disagreement and challenge institutions which legitimate the conflict. In the same way, all the Israeli organizations in this dissertation want cultural peacebuilding, seek dialogue as a strategy towards peace, and seek to expand the space for legitimate disagreement and challenge exclusive discourses which legitimate the conflict. As pointed so clearly by Trond Bakkevig – Palestinians want an end to occupation and their suffering, while Israelis want security<sup>8</sup>.

This dissertation has also showed how the other six organizations in this dissertation seem to position themselves somewhere in-between these contradictions. I will argue that these contradictions are not mainly based on a radical disagreement, but rather of different choices of strategy. The religious studies unit of PASSIA is a brilliant example of religious peacebuilding that embraces both strategies. Also RHR, ICCI, JCJCR, JP and CRIHL seem to balance between these two strategies, though in different ways.

The ability to allow these contradictions and different strategies to exist and cooperate seems to be one of the greatest challenges in the future. The excerpt from Jabri in the introduction to this chapter and her call to develop a condition where different identities and interpretation co-exist might also be considered as a call to allow different strategies towards peace to exist in cooperation.

Another issue which barely has been mentioned in this dissertation is the fact that the Palestinians in Gaza are rarely mentioned as participating in these forums – only Sabeel has documented contacts with Christian Palestinians in Gaza. In this way religious peacework between Israelis and Palestinians excludes half of the Palestinian population!

The present dissertation is also limited, specifically in the way it does not give an in-depth study of one or two organizations. On the other hand, this study seeks to map out the diversity of religious peacebuilding in Jerusalem and can therefore also function as a starting point for future in-depth studies of each of the organizations in this dissertation by, for example, analyzing the different documents related to holy sites, or by following up some of the encounter groups through field work. This dissertation can function as a starting point for an in-depth study of CRIHL and their relationship with the political authorities or follow the

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<sup>8</sup> See 12.1.

development of their school book project. Yet another possibility is to explore further the developments of the new methods for conflict resolution based on the religious and local context of the organizations in this dissertation. By mapping out the field of religious peacebuilding in Jerusalem I hope this dissertation will encourage future research by students form conflict resolution and the study of religion on how the local Israelis and Palestinians seek to find ways to promote peace in their region - and as an introduction to the media which have the power to give voice to the discourse on peace.

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<sup>2</sup> In Norwegian only: the title can be translated as "Living conditions for the Palestinians under occupation".