

Between the Altar and the Sanctuary: Reimagining the Missional Church on a Reading of Luke 11:47–51 in the Context of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

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Abstract

This article seeks to investigate the disruptive and destructive nature of global wars, human vulnerability, and woundedness as demonstrated in the context of the violence regarding the Israeli-Palestine conflict. This war, particularly the current encounter between the State of Israel and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip in Palestine, has reached a catastrophic level. The attacks and counterattacks on both sides – Israeli State and Hamas – which started on 7 October 2023 have resulted in the death of many civilians, including women and children, while many are displaced, wounded, and hurting. They are living in the context of death and dying. This article raises questions from the perspectives of a missiologist about the religious nature, promotion, and justification of the Israel–Palestine conflict underpinned by the notion “between the altar and the sanctuary”. Tapping into the resourcefulness of Luke 11:47–51, this article reimagines a missional church as interfacing with and mediating the shalom of God in the face of global wars and woundedness.

Keywords

altar – sanctuary – missional church – Luke 11:47–51 – State of Israel – Palestine – conflict – war

1 Introduction

Humanity is facing several severe woes that have plunged the entire globe into a state of global crisis and woundedness. As Schreiter (2020:337) notes, “that the world carries wounds is hardly a revelation”. The severity of the woundedness of the world is there for anyone to see, and in the end, global communities are like a generation on a slippery slope with no hope of returning to a liveable and enabling global environment. Some of the woes facing humanity include issues of pandemics such as COVID-19, gender-based violence (Mashau 2022:1), racism, and xenophobia (Schreiter 2020:334). Others include migration and people displacement, volatile economic markets, economic meltdown and famine within global markets, ecological degradation and climate change, terrorism, as well as global wars, among others (De Waal 2025:2; Nawfal and Shamal 2024).

Writing about climate change, Bertin, Musco and Fabian (2020:2) suggest that it is a global crisis that has reached a catastrophic state that affects global and local planning and business. While acknowledging that there are other ongoing wars globally and in the African continent (Greco and Radley 2025:2; Sidorova & Lyubenova 2021), the focus of this article is on the ongoing Israel–Palestine conflict that started on 7 October 2023. This conflict has a long-standing history of bloodshed and unending wars on one hand (Gilboa 2023:475), but of peace initiatives on the other hand (Fraihat & Ezbidi 2023). With the 7 October 2023 events of attacks and counterattacks between Israel and Hamas, the end does not seem to be within reach. Unfortunately, civilians are caught in the crossfire and, in the process, they are not only rendered vulnerable but also wounded and bleeding to the point of losing their lives (Yessi 2025:3; Mashau 2024:82).

My interest in the Israel–Palestine conflict, as a missiologist, is based on the following issues: (1) the conflict is a global phenomenon which has divided all the powerhouses of the world, including America, Britain, Russia, China, South Africa, and many others both in terms of geopolitical, economic, and religious contestations and implications thereof (Silver *et al.* 2024:4). This includes a complex interplay of historical, territorial or colonial and occupational politics (Pillay 2016:2; Karsh 2023). (2) The contested religious nature of the conflict, particularly issues around the right to land and ownership, including the rights to citizenship. These contestations include areas such as East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. (3) The violent nature of the conflict, especially as it affects the three Abrahamic monotheistic faiths or religious groupings involved, i.e., Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This sad reality also speaks to the fact that religion, including the Christian mission, has a long history of

complicity in violence (Kollman 2022:141). The foregoing evokes missiological questions such as: Where does God stand in this instance where people are violently harassed and, in some instances, murdered in the name of God? What about issues of love, neighbourliness, justice, and the right to co-exist in the same global space God had created as a home for all? What about issues of non-violence, peace and reconciliation? How can a missional church and its praxis participate actively in the *missio Dei* (mission of God) in response to human pain and suffering as experienced in the Israel–Palestine conflict?

The need to find solutions to similar contexts is captured in the following statement: “prioritising mission in a wounded world thus responds to an evident reality, appearing instinctively salutary and commendable” (Kollman 2022:139). As a black (South) African, I am conscious of devastating notions such as “religious fundamentalism” and “extremism”, when people claim the right to land ownership at the exclusion of others in the name of God, as happened in South Africa during colonial and apartheid times. I am more interested in the role that religion played and continues to play in the promotion of the Israel–Palestine conflict and the role that a missional church can and should play in resolving this conflict in favour of peace. I am also interested in the place of violence in the events around the State of Israel and Palestine. How can the State of Israel and Palestine pursue peace without resorting to violence? How can missional churches in the region serve as agents of peace and transformation?

In the attempt to answer the interdependent questions above, I will engage readily available literature to address three pertinent issues relevant to current discourse, namely: (1) methodological framework; (2) Israel–Palestine conflict 2023; (3) A missional reading of Luke 11:47–54 in the efforts to draw some parallel religious lessons on the use of religious violence in the face of the Israel–Palestine conflict; and (4) Reimagining a peaceful global community beyond global wars. I have chosen a missional reading of Luke 11:47–54 as my hermeneutical lens because the text deals with issues of religious rivalry, traditions, and cases of violence in the name of religion, as captured in the metaphor “between the altar and the sanctuary”. What is even more appealing is that Luke’s paradigm of peace is a much-needed call that should be applied in the context of the conflict under reflection and, by implication, any other conflict-ridden global contexts. There is a need for Christian churches and leaders in the region where the conflict is happening to reimagine an ecclesial praxis of a missional church as interfacing with and mediating for the shalom of God in the face of global wars and woundedness.

2 Setting the Tone: Methodological Framework

This qualitative literature study is undertaken from a broader missiological framework of transforming missiology (Bosch 1991). It is based on the readily available literature on the Israel–Palestine conflict. It is missiological because of its pursuit to locate the church as a missional and transforming agent of the *missio Dei* (Niemandt 2012; Verster 2022). This missional presence is captured by Van Aarde (2017:2) as follows: “Missional is a way of being present in the world, to be the incarnation presence of Christ to our neighbourhoods. It is to the extent that the church actively reaches out to its neighbourhood that it will be recognised as a relevant presence in the community”. This speaks to the renewal agenda to impact and transform humanity and the environment. It is asserted that: “The church should renew all aspects of culture, society and environment” (Verster 2022:2). This also includes the prophetic presence or prophetic witness. Accordingly, “The *missio Dei* also determines the people of God and how they should live prophetically in the world. It is important that, in all aspects of life, the connection with the living God must be proclaimed in word and deed” (Verster 2022:2). But how to apply this in the context of global wars and woundedness like the Israel–Palestine conflict?

In his creative imagination, David Bosch reimagined a missional church as an alternative community but opted for non-violent in reaction to a brutal and violent system like the one used by the apartheid regime against the majority blacks in South Africa. It is aptly captured in the following words: “He firmly opposed the apartheid government, but refused to consider responding to violence with violence as inevitable, even in the face of the brutal events of the 1980s” (Van Wyngaard 2011:163). Unlike the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, who uses religion and the Bible to justify the continued war against Hamas, the *Kairos Palestine* called not only for the liberation of the Palestinian people but also to achieve that through non-violence means or resistance (Le Bruyns 2015:465). It is in contexts like this that a missional discernment is needed to establish where the missional God stands when people continuously face violence in the name of religion.

In their reflection on wounds and woundedness in the context of Europe, Hintersteiner and Tauchner (2020) do not just reflect on the need for transformative spirituality, but also highlight the broader framework to help unpack the complexities around this discourse as follows, “As wounds of the past as well as our present life in a wounded world continue to shape Europe’s collective memories and identities, wounds become the battle ground for various political, cultural, and religious interests and come to be seen as obstacles or

resources for transformation, social, and religious change” (2020:330). These issues remain relevant for the Israel–Palestine conflict discourse or any other global context where humanity is suffering a similar fate.

To interrogate and unpack issues around the Israel–Palestine conflict and to develop a liberative and constructive reflection on issues of justice and morality, Luke 11:47–54 is used as my hermeneutical lens. This will serve to demonstrate how Christian Zionists use the Bible as a weapon to justify violence in the name of religion. It is asserted by one Palestinian Christian that “[t]he Bible has been used repeatedly as a justification of this land-grab and colonization” (Raheb 2020:11). Therefore, there is always a need for a missional church to apply a missional hermeneutical lens in dealing with Scriptures such as Luke 11:47–54 in the context of the Israel–Palestine conflict seeing that the two contexts belong to different milieux but reflecting on the question of religious violence or non-violence by religious communities. While not denying the validity of biblical theology and exegesis, a case is made for missional exegesis as follows: “Missional exegesis should lead to an applied missiological reflection, which is actually the fruit or result of biblical exegesis. Missional exegesis can begin with the context or the text, but it can only be fruitful if it is a reflection on a specific missions or missional context through the lens of Scripture” (Van Aarde and Li-M 2017:7).

A missional reading of Luke 11:47–54 is adopted because this hermeneutical approach provides us with the keys to reflect on the agency of the church in the context of global wars and woundedness. This article locates the church as a community that understands and defines itself as an instrument of the *missio Dei* in the effort to advance God’s redemptive and transforming actions in the broken world of inequalities and marginalization (Wright 2006:25; Dreyer 2013:4). The proposed reading is done with a particular bias to God’s missionary acts towards humanity and the world. In this instance, the church embodies God’s love, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, unity, and peace. This includes God’s acts of intervening in the contexts where blood is shed, and injustice prevails, like the Israel–Palestine conflict, as the case study of my missional reading of Luke 11:47–54.

3 A Messy, Bloody River and Unmarked Graves: Literature Review on Israel–Palestine Conflict 2023

3.1 *Historical Perspective*

The Israel–Palestine conflict has lasted for over 100 years (Gelvin 2014); its history is well-documented, but, at the same time, highly contested. In modern

times, this history includes key moments such as the reign of the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire over Palestine, and the area currently said to be Israel and the Holy Land. The current turmoil in the region can be traced back to the formation of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, after the adoption of United Nations Resolution 181, which proposed the partitioning of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. The idea of the Jewish state was rejected by Arab Palestinians and the entire Arab world (Benziman 2023:513). This resulted in unending animosity and various wars between Israel and Palestine, including other surrounding Arab nations. This conflict has since taken different turns and shapes, or many mutations, as recorded by Waldman (2011). Its chronology is recorded in detail by Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami (2023:xiii–xxii).

Historically, conflict in Israel–Palestine has always been about global politics (including World War 2, the holocaust, and the extermination of six million Jews), land dispossession and land occupation (particularly for the Jews in diaspora), and religious aspects around Zionism,¹ antisemitism, and the notion of reclaiming Jerusalem as the Holy Land (Benziman 2023:513; Zreik 2023:687), but also as a territory with religious significance to the Abrahamic faiths. The Jews associate the land with historical figures such as Abraham and King David; for the Muslims, it has significance for the Prophet Muhammad and Jesus Christ for Christianity (Polyakov 2018:179). It is argued that the theology of the land and naming has been used by Israel to dispossess the Palestinians of their land (Raheb 2020:23).

It should be noted that peace initiatives have been put in place in the past but have failed to bring the desired peace between Israel and Palestine. These include, among others, the Oslo Accords and the 2020 “Trump Peace Plan,” initiated by President of the USA, Donald Trump (Leuenberger 2023:3). Most of these peace initiatives, like the Oslo Accords, failed because the State of Israel was not made to account, but instead “have provided Israel with effective political cover to maintain a prolonged occupation and undermine prospects for Palestinian self-determination through a two-state solution” (Dajani & Lovatt 2017:1). The Palestinians would have continued to resist the take-over of their land by Israel; however, Israel consistently made inroads into the land owned by the Palestinians. They have moved on with a strategy that allows them

1 Zionism is known not only for its cultural and political nationalism, but also as being religious within the context of Israel and efforts to reclaim Palestinian territories which are said to be the original Israel. According to Zreik (2023:696), “Zionism as a nationalist movement became embroiled in a project that limited itself from the outset to a certain religion in a tight and intimate relationship where the nation performs a religious mission and the state itself is at the service of this religious nation.”

space to continue, even forging regional partnerships with other Arab states, but avoiding engagement in the Israel–Palestine conflict (Benziman 2023:525).

3.2 *The Messy, Bloody River, and Unmarked Graves*

The events of 7 October 2023 saw Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that controls the Palestinian territory of Gaza, attacking and killing more than 1,200 Israelis and injuring more than 3,400 civilians on a single day (Barnea 2024:1056). They also captured a sizeable number of soldiers and civilians. Israel retaliated by launching military attacks that destroyed many lives and the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. The incident is best captured by the following statement, “If we start with the direct violence: the IDF has been carpet-bombing Gaza, annihilating entire communities and extended families, over-running it with relative ease, killing over 24,000 and counting (of which seventy per cent women and children), wounding 60,000, displacing 1.9 million, and subjugating whoever was left behind” (Üngör 2024:7). The number of deaths and casualties continues to increase with time (Kiadan 2024:1–2).

Metaphorically, the Israel–Hamas conflict can be typified as the messy, bloody river and unmarked graves. Many unidentified dismembered bodies were buried in mass graves at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. The attacks and counterattacks of both Israel and Hamas have destroyed the lives of many civilians on both sides, including women, children, foreign nationals, humanitarian employees, and media personnel (Kiadan 2024:2). The conflict has, without doubt, left many people displaced and homeless with the destruction of their properties, while many are seeking refuge in neighbouring states. What is even more shocking, the attacks targeted some of the medical facilities and schools. This has literally rendered Gaza unapproachable and the future gloomy and unimaginable (Üngör 2024:8).

Indeed, the situation was worsened when humanitarian aid meant to assist Palestinians was blocked, thereby denying civilians the right to access food, fuel, and other essentials such as electricity and medical assistance (Whyte 2024:3). This has, without doubt, created a humanitarian crisis that is not only violent in nature but dehumanizing and life-denying. Consequently, one can conclude that the Gaza Strip has become a site of a senseless cycle of bloodshed and unmarked graves. The violent nature of the Israel–Palestine conflict is shocking, and the site of this conflict is horrifying, to say the least.

3.3 *The Pharaohs on Both Sides of the River*

I approach this unprecedented and catastrophic turn of events by acknowledging that both the State of Israel and Hamas are violent, brutal, and deadly in their approach to the conflict (Üngör 2024:7). Metaphorically, I concur with

the title of Allan Boesak's book, "Pharaohs on both sides of the blood-red waters ..." (2017). The notion of a "Pharaoh" is used by Boesak to refer to the life-denying and life-taking systems of earthly empires or regimes and is used in this article to refer to both Israel and Hamas for their participation in shedding the blood of many in Israel and Palestine.

Taking into consideration that the history of the conflict goes beyond 100 years, it can be concluded that both Israel and Palestine are guilty of finding more reasons for perpetuating the conflict than seeking lasting solutions to it. The worst part is that the conflict is centred around efforts to secure the Holy Land, located between the Mediterranean Sea and the eastern bank of the Jordan River, and the battle is fought in the name of religion. After the 7 October 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, cited the Hebrew Bible to justify why Hamas must be treated like the Amalekites in Deuteronomy 25:17–19 as they pose an existential threat to Israel (El-Affendi 2024:2). This religious ground and motivation for violence against the Palestinian is said to be a Zionist agenda: "[t]he discourse of the administration nature of the Israeli occupation and the religious claims of the Jewish 'chosenness' and 'territorial wholeness' of the *Eretz Yisrael* have led to the construction of a societal belief in the Israeli society that the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea constitutes an indivisible unit of Jewish homeland, with an inclusive and irrevocable Jewish right to that land" (Brockhill & Cordell 2024:990–91). The same sentiment is shared by Israeli Historian Ilan Pappé (2020:6).

3.4 *It Is a War in Creative and Continuous Tension*

The current Israel–Palestine conflict resembles the ongoing creative and continuous tensions in the region. It is also characterized by attacks and counter-attacks on both sides, which are genocidal in nature (Üngör 2024:7; Kiadan 2024:2). Any effort towards ceasefire resolution looks like an effort to regroup and strategize on how best to attack each other.

4 A Missional Reading of Luke 11:47–51 in the Context of the Israel–Palestine Conflict

4.1 *A Missional Reading of Luke 11:47–51*

A missional reading of Luke 11:47–51 is done within the broader context of Jesus's ministry to the Jews. In his interaction with Jews, Jesus had to deal with religious groupings such as the Pharisees, Zealots, Essenes, and Sadducees. Apart from creating an alternative community grounded on the *missio Dei*,

Jesus confronted and challenged the religious and cultural convictions and conventions upheld by Jewish teachers of the law of the Jewish faith and traditions that have been developed over centuries.

4.2 *Woes against Religious Injustices and Violence*

Luke 11:47–54 is located within a periscope or a cluster of periscopes that speak to six woes or oracles of doom pronounced against Jewish religious leaders of his time (Luke 11:37–54). When Jesus pronounced these woes, it was a way of protesting against unjust and inhuman acts on the part of Jewish religious leaders who used religion to oppress, marginalize, over-burden, and even murder those that they perceived to be religious others and indifferent to their beliefs and traditions. While bemoaning oppressive empires of the world, those that act like Jewish religious leaders as captured in Luke 11:37–54, Boesak argues that “this cry is a cry of grief for the situation in which the people find themselves, and the cry is the announcement that the situation can no longer be tolerated. The cry is raised as critique against the empire, the Pharisees and Teachers of Law, and its workings of oppression. Just as in the exodus story, the history of liberation begins with the ‘cry’ and ‘groaning’ of the people of Israel, reminding God of His covenant, this cry calls upon God to remember the covenant and to ‘know’ the people’s condition” (2017:34–35). This calls for a missional church not to be silent in the presence of oppression and injustice, including violence of one against the other. The prophetic voice must always be heard thundering in protest and agitating for peaceful religious and physical environments and spaces.

4.3 *The Table of Fellowship and Dialogue (Conversation) amid Religious Animosity*

The pronouncement of these woes took place while Jesus was invited to dine at the home of a Pharisee despite the growing hostility between the Jewish leaders and Jesus. Hendriksen (1997:636) suggests that “[T]he Pharisee may have invited Jesus because he was desirous to find out more about the man who was the topic of conversation on the part of so many people, the object of both praise and criticism. And Jesus probably accepted the invitation because he had a message for the Pharisees and scribes.” What is interesting, and even relevant around the Israel–Palestine discourse where the Abrahamic monotheistic religions are at loggerheads, is that their rivalry did not stop them from sharing a table of fellowship and engaging one another on sensitive, difficult, and offensive issues such as “eating without washing the hands first” (Luke 11:38), tithing but neglecting God’s love and justice (verse 42), love for front seats in the synagogues (verse 43), loading people with heavy (religious) burdens

(verse 46), building monuments or tombs for the killed prophets (verses 47, 48), and the awaiting plot to persecute and kill future prophets (verse 49). The issues addressed speak to the core issue around religious and cultural convictions and conventions in pursuit of religious purity at the expense of God's love and justice. The meal shared together around the table provided Jesus with the space to confront the Jewish leaders and invited them to stop their injustice, especially the issue of violence in the name of religion, as recorded in Luke 11:47–54.

4.4 *Bloodshed between the Altar and the Sanctuary*

Tapping into history, one can interpret Jesus's words "between the altar and the sanctuary" both metaphorically and literally to refer to violence and death that takes place in the name of religion, and by those who claim to sacrifice at the altar and worship at the sanctuary of God. In his declaration of the woes against religious violence, Jesus reminded the Jewish religious leaders of two narratives that serve as examples of all the historical cases where blood was spilt in the name of religion between the altar and the sanctuary (Kalimi 2009:246).

The first narrative is that of Abel. Abel's narrative reminds us of the missional calling of God's people of every generation to live all of life *coram Deo* (life in the presence of God) and thus to worship and stand in the service of God and his ecosystem regarding the human relationship with God, humanity, and the rest of creation. In his trade, Abel was able to demonstrate what true calling and stewardship means. In response to his worship in the garden of Eden as his open sanctuary, he was able to offer acceptable sacrifices at the altar of the Sovereign God. Abel offered the best of his stock-farming produce, which God approved, and in the end his sacrifice was met with God's blessing and abundance. This evoked emotions of jealousy and hatred (religious rivalry) from his brother, who ended up killing him between the altar and the sanctuary. This points to religious rivalry that can result in brutal violence and the death of one's religious enemies, as was the case with the actions of the experts of the law whom Jesus condemned.

The second narrative is that of Prophet Zechariah, who was stoned to death at the temple court (sanctuary) for speaking the truth to power (earthly empire). There are serious contestations around the identity of this prophet (Kalimi 2009:246; Thellman 2017:20), but it is not our intention to resolve this discourse in this article. What is of interest to me is the fact that Zechariah's death, just like Abel's, is categorised as among the martyrs. They both suffered religious violence and died at the hands of religious people for the sake of their faith, hence the concept "between the altar and the sanctuary". Zechariah's blood speaks against earthly religious regimes that are violent, brutal, and

murderous towards prophets. According to Thellman (2017:16), “the implication is that the scribal scholars continue in the tradition of their ancestors in actively silencing the revealed word of the prophets”.

These two narratives, those of Abel and Zechariah, remain relevant to any given context, like that of the Israel–Palestine conflict today. “Thus, the statement ‘from Abel to Zechariah’ is best understood as setting canonical parameters for scriptural prototypes of martyrs, to which Jesus and his emissaries bring eschatological, typological fulfilment” (Thellman 2017:23).

4.5 *God's Love and Justice in the Context of Violence between the Altar and the Sanctuary*

When denouncing the religious violence, Jesus appealed to the Pharisees and the Scribes not to neglect to pursue God's love and justice instead (Luke 11:42). Much as God has shown divine punishment and discipline among his people, which were violent in nature, human beings are not encouraged to do the same. Human beings are encouraged to act justly by loving their enemies including those involved in the Israel–Palestine conflict. This is the message that is recorded in Luke 6:27–36, and its hallmark is captured by Sheffler as follows: “Love for the enemy is not merely a spiritual religious idea, or a human feeling, but is tested to the full when physical violence is afflicted. Retaliation is not advocated, but the turning of the other cheek and doing good (proactive) to the enemy” (2006:299). This has been set as a missionary model to the church of every age and is captured by Bosch (1991:119) as follows: “Our missionary involvement may be very successful in other respects, but if we fail here, we stand guilty before the Lord of mission. Peace-making, I therefore suggest, is a major ingredient of Luke's missionary paradigm.”

The paradigm of peace, as propagated in Luke's writings, should not be confused with the necessary justification of the use of violence on the side of God. One of the distinct characteristics of God in the Old Testament is a projection of God as a Warrior who fought and won many battles for God's people. In the analysis of Luke 2:13–14, a great heavenly army is introduced. Sheffler (2006:298) suggests that the peaceful side of God is projected and captured as follows: “The army, however, has lost any image of violence since it proclaims ‘peace on earth to the people in whom God is pleased’. This is significant because although the military image is retained, God is pictured as a God of peace and has lost his Warrior status.” The shadow side of God, where God sometimes uses violence against humanity, cannot be used as a model for humanity to copy, hence the call to leave vengeance to the hands of God. Boesak (2017:37) explains this as follows: “Justice for the poor and oppressed is also judgement on the oppressor for actively pursuing injustice, heeding

neither the cry of the oppressed nor the demands of a just God. It is vital to keep these two elements.” While in his hour of madness, Jesus would have violently flipped the tables at the sanctuary or temple (Mark 11:15–17). Luke’s version remains on peace and efforts to preserve his image of a non-violent Jesus (Sheffler 2006:303) who acted peacefully and encouraged his disciplines to follow the same paradigm to the point of his violent and dehumanizing crucifixion (Luke 22:35–38, 47–53).

5 Reimagining Israel–Palestine beyond Conflict

In his seminal work, “Farewell to Innocence: A socio-ethical Study on Black Theology and Power,” Boesak (1976:3) argued that, “It is no longer possible to innocently accept history ‘as it happens,’ silently hoping that God would take the responsibility for human failure.” It is even more difficult when God is implicated in the process, as is the case with Israel–Palestine, where issues of land dispossession, possession, and the means of violence are justified in the name of God. Christian churches and faith-based organisation cannot afford to be silent, but prophetic. As a result, a missional church should also be a prophetic church and should be one that seeks to promote advocacy for justice in the unjust world by embracing the element of activism. Boesak (2017:41) defines the prophetic church as “the remnant who, those outside the camp of institutionality and acceptability, as surely an offense to the powers that be as they are an embarrassment to the church beholden to the powerful”.

Just as Jesus tapped into history and used the narratives of Abel and Zechariah as representations of those who died through religious violence between the altar and the sanctuary, we should be able to take a stand as a global community and provide tangible solutions to the Israel–Palestine impulse. All of humanity is called to be agents of God’s mission by serving as peacekeepers and not life-takers or murderers of others. It is for this reason that the following, as part of seeking a lasting solution to the Israel–Palestine conflict, are proposed:

- A missional church and religious formations (we) must engage critically and with condemnation of any devastating results of violence and death caused by religion, including issues of religious fundamentalism and extremism. No amount of religious justification should be promoted, especially when it seeks to inflict pain and suffering and, in the process, dehumanises the religious other(s).
- We should rethink our religious and ecclesial positions when defining the place of God in the context of religious conflicts such as that of

Israel–Palestine, where God is dragged to take a stand in their differences around land dispossession and ownership, including contests around religious sites and the right to access God in those spaces such as Bethlehem, Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem.

- We should stand where God stands in the context of oppression, dehumanisation, and conflicts that seek to inflict pain and suffering on fellow humans, irrespective of their religious affiliation. Jesus demonstrated this in Luke 11:47–54 by mediating God’s love and justice in solidarity with the murdered prophets whose blood was shed between the altar and sanctuary. A missional church should also choose to stand where God stands: (1) encountering God; (2) encountering the religious other(s); (3) encountering the migrant other(s) and standing beyond known borders; (4) standing for God; (5) standing for the truth; (6) standing in solidarity with humanity; and (7) standing for justice (Mashau 2018).
- If the Israel–Palestine conflict is dividing the global community, its peace initiatives will surely bring unity to the same community that it had divided. Any missional solution should be one that seeks to call and promote peace in the world. If the Israel–Palestine conflict is destroying the world and contributing towards the ecological crisis, with the threat of weapons of massive destruction, its peace initiatives will contribute towards the renewal and transformation agenda in the world. In their analysis, Ferziger and Bahgat (2020) suggest that there are arenas if pursued by role players in the Middle East, in medicine, economy, security, technology, pilgrimages (by Muslims to Mecca, Christians and Jews to religious sites in Jerusalem), tourism, and sports, among others, that can open doors for co-operation that can contribute positively towards ending the Israel–Palestine conflict.

A missional church exists to mediate the ministry of reconciliation and usher in a new dawn of an alternative movement other than that of experts of the law who justify the killing of the prophets for religious greediness. While the two-state option remains a possibility that Israel and Palestine can opt for, the principle of co-existence and sharing is even more critical.

6 Conclusion

Having conducted this literature review from a missiological perspective, it is my conclusion that a missional church must be an agent of transformation by mediating peace in the conflict zones like that of the State of Israel and Palestine. We should never use religion to exclude and eliminate others, but instead we should use our missional agency to impact and transform all

of humanity as demonstrated by the ministry of Christ in the conflict situation. We should always keep it in our minds that God sees, listens, and comes through for those in pain and suffering in a liberative way. We should, therefore, use our agency to propagate for a peaceful habitation of the Holy Land where Israelis and Palestinians can live in perfect harmony. This should be done with the understanding that God stands for peace, forgiveness and reconciliation.

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Resumen

Este artículo trata de investigar la naturaleza perturbadora y destructiva de las guerras mundiales, la vulnerabilidad humana y las profundas heridas evidentes en el contexto de la violencia religiosa en relación con el conflicto palestino-israelí. Esta guerra, en particular el actual enfrentamiento entre la nación de Israel y la Franja de Gaza en Palestina, controlada por Hamás, ha alcanzado niveles catastróficos y es de carácter genocida. Los ataques y contraataques por ambas partes de Israel y Hamás, que comenzaron el 7 de octubre de 2023, han causado la muerte de muchos civiles, entre ellos mujeres y niños, mientras que muchos han sido desplazados, heridos y padecen sufrimiento. Viven en un contexto de muerte y agonía. Este artículo plantea interrogantes sobre la naturaleza religiosa, la promoción y la justificación del conflicto entre Israel y Palestina, y se respalda en el concepto «entre el altar y el santuario», que hace referencia a muchas muertes que ocurren en nombre de la religión. Este artículo saca provecho del concepto de Lucas 11:47–51 y reimagina una iglesia misionera como interlocutora y mediadora del shalom de Dios frente a las guerras mundiales y sus profundas heridas.

摘要

本文旨在探讨全球战争的破坏性与毁灭、人类的脆弱性和创伤性，特别是在以色列-巴勒斯坦冲突中的宗教暴力背景下。这场战争，尤其是以色列与哈马斯控制的巴勒斯坦加沙地带之间的当前冲突，已达到灾难性水平，并具有种族灭绝的性质。从2023年10月7日开始，以色列和哈马斯双方的攻击与反击，导致许多平民死亡，包括妇女和儿童，同时许多人被迫流离失所、受伤并遭受痛苦。他们生活在死亡和濒死的环境中。本文提出了关于以色列-巴勒斯坦冲突的宗教性质、推广和辩护的问题，这些都建立在“祭坛与圣所之间”的概念之上，指的是许多因宗教名义而导致的死亡。通过借鉴路加福音11章47至51节的资源，本文重新构想了一个宣教教会，在全球战争和创伤面前，如何与上帝的和平（Shalom）互动并调解。