



# The Refugee as Locus Theologicus

Research on what Migration Theology can learn from people's theology  
among Christian Refugees from Syria and Iraq

Maaïke Graafland – S1014069

10th of May 2023

Supervised by Prof. F. Wijsen

First examiner is Prof. H. Murre - v.d. Berg

Number of words is 23626

Thesis to obtain the degree "Master of arts" in theology Radboud University Nijmegen.

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Ede, 2023.

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## Acknowledgments

*“The Messiah will probably not appear in Jerusalem, Rome or Geneva. It will appear with the poor, the weeping and the people who long for justice.” (Moltmann, 1969, p.90)<sup>1</sup>*

In 2015, I came across this quote of Jürgen Moltmann. Through his work I deepened my knowledge about Liberation Theology, just before starting my studies in Nijmegen. Now, eight years later, it is still my fundamental belief that the people who are poor, helpless or in grief are the ones that show us the Kingdom of God. I experienced this again in working on this thesis. Therefore I am extremely grateful to the women, men, elderly, young, Syrian and Iraqi people I interviewed in Lebanon. They gave me their trust in telling their story, in laughter and tears, in which they showed me the Kingdom of God. Secondly I am very thankful for the people who helped me in working on this thesis. First of all, special thanks goes to professor Frans Wijzen for his quick feedback and patient explanations in my first and last steps in writing this thesis. Secondly, I cannot give enough thanks to professor Rima Nasrallah who welcomed me in Lebanon and helped me to understand this beautiful country, without her connections this research would never have taken place. Furthermore, I want to thank Heleen-Murre van den Berg for guiding me to Lebanon, and Asadour Mncherian, Vivian Brakhya, the Relief Centre for Chaldeans and Sarin Keofteian for translation. Special appreciation also goes to Week of the Missionaries in financing part of the research. In addition, I want to express my gratitude to Charlotte Graafland for all of her corrections in English. Moreover, I want to thank my friends, family and most of all my fiancé Bram for their everlasting support.

I hope to give the reader an idea where among the Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq signs of the Messiah are found. Moreover, I hope one day this thesis will lose its relevance because there are no refugees anymore through the development of a better world or the appearance of a Messiah.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by author. Original quote in Dutch: “De Messias zal waarschijnlijk niet verschijnen in Jeruzalem, Rome of Genève. Hij zal verschijnen bij de armen, de treurenden, de mensen die hongeren naar gerechtigheid”

## Summary

This thesis is about the refugee's perspective on faith. It considers this within the theological context of Migration Theology. The focus is on Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria who live in Lebanon. The research distinguishes between refugees who are 'on their way' and migrants who already reached a new country. The aim is twofold: (1) to gather more knowledge through fieldwork about the changing Christian faith of Syrian and Iraqi refugees; (2) to consider whether Migrant Theology should pay more attention to refugees, considering Migrant theology as professional theology and the Iraqi and Syrian refugees as peoples' theology, and if so, in what way.

First of all, a literature review is presented. It describes various churches as they constitute the Christian context of refugees. Subsequently, the literature review focuses on analyzing Migration Theology. Important elements like the four aspects of Groody are examined. Analyzing Migration Theology for elements applicable to refugees, five topics are presented: a steadfast faith, vulnerability in the incarnation, hope against hope, the Bible and several religious practices. Finally, some aspects of psychological and sociological implications of displacement are considered.

In the second chapter, the results of the fieldwork in Lebanon are analyzed. Seven different topics emerged from the data. The discussion starts with the image of God, who is seen as arranging everything, taking action and protecting them. Secondly, a theological anthropology is explored in which there is vulnerability, pilgrimage, losing and starting over, discrimination and positivity. Thirdly, faith does not disappear but becomes stronger. Fourth, religious life plays an important role, especially prayer. Fifth, the church helps to integrate and feel worthy. Sixth, lessons are learnt about faith and their character. Lastly, three aspects describe refugees' theological mindset: peace, thankfulness and hope. These seven topics indicate how refugees can be seen as Locus Theologicus.

The last chapter connects the literature review to the fieldwork. Commonalities are described, such as the importance of faith, vulnerability and the function of the church. The fieldwork also suggests corrections to the literature, such as pilgrimage, incarnation and prayer. In the last part, correlations are discussed such as the definition of Migration Theology, the importance of God and of rituals.

In conclusion, this thesis shows that refugees' experience as peoples' theology is relevant to Migrant Theology as professional theology. Migration Theology can learn from its nuance: that migrants are on the way, searching for a new home without certainty; they are dwelling in a nobody's land where God takes care of them; they are daring to question God, but keep holding on to their faith, patiently; and they have rituals, without any material attachment and with positivity and thankfulness.

# Introduction

## Project context

In the past decade, many refugees have fled their home country to find shelter in a 'safe haven'. Citizens from different countries and nationalities are looking for new citizenship. Several reasons drive them to search for safe places, such as war or prosecution in their home country. These situations force them to make difficult and dangerous journeys, leaving everything behind and searching for a new home. Many refugees in this decade came from Syria, because of the civil war and Islamic State (IS). Most of them fled to neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey. These refugees need to find a new identity (Frederiks, 2016). They are no longer Syrian citizens, but rather migrants or refugees. This affects how they see themselves, including their religious identity. This identity has become fluid, because everything they have been through has impacted their worldview and faith (Schmoller, 2016).

Most of the refugees from Syria are considered Muslim, but Christians also belong to this group of refugees. These Christians are members of a few of the oldest forms of the Christian tradition, such as the Syrian Orthodox Church. One can imagine that faith could be something to hold on to during their flight, but it could also be lost in all the struggles they endure. In addition, when they finally find their new home, this home has other customs and religious beliefs which might influence the faith they once had (Oliden, 2015). These processes are different for every individual and can teach others how to deal with suffering and loss of the place one calls home. There is little knowledge about the way the experiences of these Christian Syrians have affected their faith. The theoretical literature offers some suggestions, but fieldwork focused on religion is rare.

In this context, theology is invited to pay attention to the experiences of refugees and their journey from their country. Especially through the work of Migration Theology, refugees, as subcategory of migrants who are poor and suppressed, find a voice to speak. Ten years ago Daniel Groody paid attention to Migrants and presented a Migration Theology in line with, for example, the World Congress for the pastoral care of migrants and refugees (Groody, 2009). Through this theology, the migrant became important and the theology field started to listen to migrant experiences. New perspectives for theological thinking were born this way. Many NGOs take as starting point that the original citizens of a country teach Migrants how to live in their new environment instead of the other way around, while Migrant Theology suggests that a lot can be learnt from migrants. Moreover, migrants are seen as strangers that lack similar values, therefore they are even seen as dangerous

people. This leads to the dehumanization of migrants: they are not only seen as the 'other', but also as the 'stranger' and potential enemy. Yet, the experiences they carry and the different context they came from create new insights on religiosity in general and on Christianity in particular.

This is the context this research took place in. The status quo of Migration Theology will be examined through theological research. The fieldwork will add a clearer perspective to Migration Theology. Therefore it will be a theory-oriented research, in which the theory of Migrant Theology will be improved.

## Conceptual Design

### Research objective

As the project context describes, the migration flows in the past decade are large. With new conflicts starting regularly, statistics of UNHCR report that there have never been more refugees in the world than currently. The amount of refugees at this moment is above 26 million (UNHCR, 2022). At the same time, little is known about the effect of displacement on faith of refugees in Lebanon as opposed to refugees already settling down in a new country. Any research done on this subject has focused on Islam, since Muslims make up a high percentage of refugees.

Considering, first of all, that little is known about refugees' changing perspective on faith and the lessons they learnt during their flight, and secondly, that Migration Theology can learn from these lessons, the main aim is to analyze in what way Migration Theology can be enriched by the perspective of refugees. To reach this, a twofold aim was adopted: (1) to gather more knowledge about the changing Christian faith of Syrian and Iraqi refugees; (2) to identify if Migrant Theology can be enriched by refugees, and if so, in what way. This will hopefully inspire Migration Theology to see the refugee as an important factor for theological thinking.

As it is impossible to speak for all refugees in all contexts, a case study was chosen. For this thesis, Christian refugees were chosen for observation, especially the group of Christians from Syria or Iraq. They were chosen because of the recency of their flight, their Christian religion and their presence in Lebanon. The choice for Lebanon was due to connections to the researcher in Lebanon and the fact that there are many refugees in Lebanon.

### Theoretical Framework

Migration Theology developed out of Liberation Theology, which became known in Europe through the publication of Gustavo Gutiérrez's book 'The Theology of Liberation' in 1971. After that, Liberation

Theology developed in many ways. Its basic idea is the focus on people who are oppressed and poor, because, according to Gutiérrez, the whole Bible mirrors God's special attention for the poor and oppressed (Gutiérrez, 1988). It entails reflecting on theological ideas from the local context and the experiences one witnesses there. Here, God is the God of the poor and the victim. He does not stand on the edge, but is in between the edges. Liberation theology should be living in what Boff & Boff call 'the roots of the tree' (1998, p. 12). In their metaphor, the branches are the professional theologians, the trunk are the pastoral ministers and the roots are the practical living and thinking of communities: the peoples' theology (Boff & Boff, 1998). Theology is present on all of these levels, but even more in the connections between the three levels. Through the peoples' theology, migrants can be seen as Locus Theologicus. Gustavo Gutiérrez uses the term in the first chapter of 'A theology of Liberation' (1988). He suggested that a new source of locus for theology can be seen in the real life of the poor (Meza, 2005).

Turning toward migrants in theology leads in many cases to Migration Theology. Daniel Groody was one of the first theologians who developed a theology of migration and noticed that theology is almost never mentioned in migration studies (2022). Also in theological works, the topic of migration is not very common. This is strange, because migration occurred frequently in biblical times (Swamy, 2017). These reflections challenge theology from many sides and help to understand the sacred in a different way. According to Swamy, Migration Theology should be brought to the center of Christian theological reflection (2017, p. 338). Most of all because in our world we see people struggling how to deal with migrants and other vulnerable people. He sees the theology of migration also as a theology of resistance. Beliefs in Christianity such as incarnation, the Trinity and ecclesiology should be reflected on from the viewpoint of migration (Swamy, 2017, p. 339).

To give more clarification on the status of the migrant in Migration Theology, Castillo Guerra distinguishes three stages of migration. First of all, migrants leave their country of origin in which they are mostly seen as refugees. The second phase is the arrival and the third stage is that of integration, in which they are mostly described as migrants (2007, p. 6). Research in Migration Theology is mostly focused on the meaning of religion in the country people arrive in. There is seldomly an explicit focus on people 'on the road'. There have been suggestions for important religious elements for migrants while 'on their way', which are further examined in the first chapter.

I argue, in addition to a literature review, we need a closer look at the perspective of people 'on the road' gives a clearer view of what a migrant is and what they can bring to theological thinking. According to Boff & Boff, using the poor and suppressed as Locus for theology requires a certain

approach. One should be engaged with the defined group (1998, p. 23). When being engaged with this group, questions and interpretations of this group should be noted and used as material for the theologian's work (Meza, 2005). This is why a literature review is not enough. Professional theologians need engagement with the people whom they study and theologize with.

## The research questions

The aims of this research as stated before can be seen in the light of different levels in theology, in which professional theology can learn from peoples' theology. Therefore, in line with the aims, the main research question is as follows:

*In what way can Migration Theology learn from the life and theological reflections of Christian refugees in Lebanon?*

To answer the main question the following sub-questions are discussed:

1. What does the literature, especially Migrant Theology, say about the experience of faith for refugees during their flight?
2. What kind of theological reflections come from the case study of Christian refugees in Lebanon?
3. What insights can be inferred from the correlation between theoretical research and fieldwork?

## Definition of concepts

In comparison to 25 years ago, twice as many people are currently migrating. One of every 25 persons in the world is not living in their country of origin. Of the 89.3 million migrating people, 27.1 million are refugees leaving their country of origin (UNHCR, 2022). There is a distinction between the term 'migrant' and 'refugee'. So first of all, it should be made clear what is meant by the term 'refugee'. In this discussion of definitions, it should be noticed that a hard distinction is impossible to make because the definitions are fluid. Migrants are a diverse group, in which Cruz makes two distinctions. Firstly, she makes the distinction between 'temporary migrants' and 'permanent migrants' who are voluntarily moving to another country. Secondly, she defines 'forced migrants' as those who have no choice but to flee their home because of wars, persecutions or natural calamities (Cruz, 2014). Then there is another distinction made by Peter C. Phan, between internal migrants, who seek safety in their own country, and external migrants that try to find shelter in foreign countries (Padilla & Phan, 2013). In the overlap of these distinctions, 'refugees' are defined as forced and external migrants. These are

defined by the 1951 UN Convention as “*persons who have had to flee across an international border because of well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion*” (UNHCR, 1951) (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014, p. 5). The focus in this research is on the UN definition of refugees. One should note, as Martha Frederiks (2016) argues, that ‘the’ migrant, or in this case, ‘the’ refugee, does not exist. Refugees are a highly diversified group of people with different backgrounds, biographies and reasons to migrate. Therefore, they have multiple identities and multiple belongings, so saying that they belong to one and the same group is not the truth (Frederiks, 2016). As written before, Castillo Guerra (2007) also distinguishes three stages in the life of migrants in which the first stage is that of the refugee: of leaving their place of origin. In this thesis, migrants are understood as people who migrated out of different kinds of situations and have finished the first stage of leaving, while refugees are defined as people who are forced to be ‘on the road’ because of well-founded fear and have not reached a new place to settle yet.

The focus here will be on the case study of refugees from Syria and Iraq in the last wave of migration. This wave started with the so-called Arabic Spring, which came to Syria in February 2011 in the city Dera. The Red Cross declared that the country was in a civil war in July 2012. Assad claimed that he was fighting against extremist rebels who were being financed by the West. There were many different groups of opposition. One of the rebel groups was the army of IS which conquered a fair share of land in Syria. This in turn caused many refugees to flee the terror of these Islamists. IS did not only conquer parts of Syria but also became active in Iraq, which caused many people there to flee. The UN reported in July 2014 that many Iraqis are persecuted on the grounds of religion (UN, 2014). Although there are places where the battle still continues, most of Syria and Iraq has returned to the situation before the battle. In case of Syria, this means it is in the power of the dictator Assad. Although the people are trying to restore normal life in Syria, it is still not very safe. Besides that, the economy is in a bad state, even worse than during the war. This is the complex situation in a nutshell, although much more can be said about the difficulties and horrific events that happened (Tets, 2020).

## Technical design

The research questions will be answered through literature review and fieldwork. As was written in the theoretical framework, Boff & Boff (1998, p.23) argue that theologians need to be engaged with the people they study and theologize with: peoples’ theology. Therefore, a literature review is not enough, ‘engagement’ with the people who are studied characterizes fieldwork. Tweed states that in this fieldwork, theories are ‘itineraries’, which means ‘travel in changing terrain’ (2006). The theories

are positioned representations of the itinerant researcher, but always have blind spots. All theorists have an approach which is situated within categorical schemes and social contexts. In doing fieldwork, one only has access to the narratives, artifacts as practices of faithful women and men, but one does not have access to the spiritual states of people (Tweed, 2006). Theological fieldwork explores the practice of faith and the faithfulness of that practice. According to Swinton and Sowot, it is: *“critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God”* (Swinton & Mowat, 2016, p. 35).

## Strategy

Fieldwork in this research is performed as qualitative research and not quantitative. It is difficult to capture qualitative research in a single definition. According to Denzin and Lincoln, it is defined as *“multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter”* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3). Especially qualitative research searches for meaning in a specific situation and a deeper understanding of these meanings, which can be described as idiographic knowledge. This meaning follows from a society with individuals who interact in a certain way. Seeing qualitative research in this light means that the aim is not to produce generalizable knowledge, but rather to describe the realities of individuals, which enables us to see the world differently (Swinton & Mowat, 2016).

The most important tool in fieldwork is the researcher herself. The researcher should be aware of her own contribution to the generation of knowledge and should be able to function in a social and sometimes complex situation. One of the most important characteristics of this researcher should be reflexivity. In some sense, all research is autobiography, and the researcher cannot leave herself out of it entirely. Yet, the better the researcher knows herself, the better she can reflect on herself and separate her own autobiography from what she hears in the field. Another important characteristic is sensitivity: the researchers should be open and sensitive to what is being said in the field and what it means (Swinton & Mowat, 2016).

More specifically, two methods were applied in this research: literature review and fieldwork. By reading about and discussing what is already known, existing knowledge was systemized. Moreover, through fieldwork, by talking to and meeting the other, the other’s beliefs could be understood. This research therefore consisted of three stages. The first stage was to acquire knowledge about the subject through literature research. The second stage was to gain insight into the observed practice of

Christian refugees in Lebanon and to interview Christian refugees in Lebanon, in order to gain even more insight in how they experienced their flight and beliefs during their flight. This is peoples' theology. The third stage was correlating the literature research and fieldwork, to discuss their differences and insights. From this correlation follows the conclusion, namely to reflect on the findings and evaluate which important ideas answer the research question. This took place in the light of Scripture and the tradition and raised the question how to understand this situation from the perspective of critical faithfulness, and if possible, how to innovate professional theology based on the findings.

The second stage, of observation and interviews, was mostly performed using ethnographical research. The aim of ethnography according to Malinowski is "to grasp the native's point of view" (Malinowski cited in Spradley, 1979). It requires involving oneself in the life of a group in order to get an understanding of the group and their behavior from the inside. Participant observation is important in ethnographic research. Interviews can be helpful to understand people and their religious practices better. But people in difficult conditions are not always able to answer questions about their belief and the answers can be flexible. In addition, there is a language gap. Consequently, it is better to combine interviewing with observing and participating (Moschella, 2012).

## Sources

In the three stages of this research, several sources were used. In the first stage of literature research, theoretical sources were used. Here the focus lay on articles and books about Migration Theology such as those by Groody (2009), Cruz (2010) and Castillo Guerra (2007), in which the attention for refugees was examined. A selection was made by choosing several authors specialized in Migration Theology and researching several practice-oriented handbooks to put it in a broader perspective. Some literature about Liberation Theology relatable to Migration Theology was also part of the research. In addition, sources to clarify the situation of refugees from Syria and Iraq were used, with special attention for the different churches in the Middle East. Besides that, some literature about the psychological and sociological implication of becoming a refugee will be discussed, because such a life event has great impact. Literature about the history or the systematics of Migration Theology were less interesting for this research.

In the second stage of the research, fieldwork took place. Here the sources consisted out of different people and groups of refugees from Syria and Iraq who were interviewed or observed in their (religious) activities. Through the contacts of the Near East School of Theology, several groups of

refugees could be approached to be part of the research. The fieldwork took place during eight weeks in the summer of 2021 in Lebanon. During these eight weeks, different religious meetings and church activities with refugees were observed. Next to that, 27 people were interviewed, who were selected using the criteria of being Christian before becoming a refugee, and having fled from Syria or Iraq during the civil war or because of the threat of IS (see appendix 2). Variation in the selection was aimed for concerning gender, age and different church denominations, and this partly succeeded. Through several networks respondents were found, using the network of professor Rima Nasrallah of the Near East School of Theology in Beirut. Pastors such as Asadour Manjrian and Hagop Akbashian from the Armenian evangelical Church asked refugees in their church to join. The same happened with refugees known by Mira Kassarji from the Chaldean Church and Vivian Brakhya from the Assyrian Church of the East. People living in Beirut joined the research, but also people living in Zahle or Anjar, which lies in the Beeka Valley of Lebanon, participated. This fieldwork was analyzed using the method described below.

## Methods

Using ethnographic research in performing the fieldwork, the Grounded Theory Approach was used for analyzing the data. This followed the idea that interviews are always shaped between the one who speaks and the one who listens, even before the analysis of the interview takes place. The Grounded Theory Approach claims that insights can be drawn from interview data and observations and offers a methodical structure for the process of coming to conclusions based on these (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2012). Although this approach is criticized with the argument that every narrator is equally unreliable as the researcher, one could also state that all beings are the *Imago Dei* and are able to deliver insights on theological matters. Although, as this approach describes, this insight should not be seen as normative, it can act as a catalyst (Barnsley, 2016). The approach offers different steps in analyzing the data. The first step is to transcribe all the data. According to the Grounded Theory Approach, no transcription is complete or unselective, but all interviews were recorded and transcribed in full (Barnsley, 2016). This prevented premature decisions about what was relevant and what was not. Secondly, the first cycle after transcription is open coding, which entails assigning a code to every meaningful segment in a transcript (Pieterse, 2020). Thirdly, coding is repeated, but in a selective way based on the codes that are observed through open coding. Then axial coding is done, in which the phenomenon that the research concentrates on is studied through central categories. Coherence is given to the analysis (Pieterse, 2020). In the last phase, theory is derived from the

analysis, which is a constant coming and going back to the data. There is a constant redesign and integration of the material (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2012).

## **Overview of the thesis**

As the question of this thesis suggests, there are three main chapters that answer the three sub-questions. In the first chapter, the theoretical framework contains several viewpoints. Firstly, I take my theoretical starting point from the notion of the concept of Migration Theology. Although this already exists for a while, it is still not well-integrated in theological reflections among Christians (Swamy, 2017). In the first chapter, I will discuss which kinds of perspectives Migration Theology as professional theology carries for the specific group of people on the road, fleeing their country, and which kind of perspective it provides on faith.

In the second chapter of this thesis, the fieldwork will be examined. Based on ethnographic research among refugees in Lebanon, seven topics are introduced. These seven topics are based on the experiences of refugees in their faith and religious life. They provide insights in how refugees can be seen as Locus Theologicus.

After describing both the literature review and fieldwork, these will be brought together in the third part of this thesis. This chapter will bring together and correlate the results of both parts. Correlations, commonalities and additions will be discussed. Finally, the conclusion will form the end of this thesis in which the main question of this thesis will be answered.

# Chapter 1: Literature Review

In the first chapter of this thesis, the first sub-question is answered:

*What does the literature, especially Migrant Theology, say about the experience of faith for refugees during their flight?*

The aim is to present a literature review describing a professional theology for the subject of this research. However, before focusing on the question of which theological themes or religious practices are important for Syrian Christian refugees, it is necessary to describe what a Syrian Christian refugee is like. Therefore, this chapter starts with that. The situation of Syrian and Iraqi refugees will be examined as well as the religious background of Christian Syrian and Iraqi refugees. As an introduction to what is known about the religious practices and theological ideas of refugees, Migration Theology will be introduced. The reason for this is that Migration Theology already presents some knowledge about refugees and the influence of religion in their lives. Last, there follows a description of many subjects that are important for Christian refugees categorized in three main themes: theological themes, religious practices and sociological themes.

## 1.1 Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon

There is a wide variety in labels and classifications in the registration of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon. This causes complexity in the response they get from Humanitarian Aid and registration. There is a group of registered refugees which are registered as refugee at the UNHCR registration. This registration certificate entitles refugees to protection and humanitarian assistance. But there are also nonregistered refugees, who receive no access to the same aid. There is another model of ordering in the humanitarian regimes, where people are seen as convention refugees or mandate refugees. The latter means that their refugee status is not urgent enough for resettlement. In 2017, 71 percent of the refugee households were living below the poverty line, and almost none of them get the 'vulnerable status' (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018). This makes it very hard for refugees to make a living in Lebanon.

### The current situation in Lebanon

During the war in Syria, Lebanon changed significantly. The small country with a surface area of 10452 km<sup>2</sup> is a refuge for almost one million registered refugees. Since not all refugees are registered, the exact number is probably higher. This makes it a front-line state: a state at the border of a country in war or crisis. There are many contradictions in Lebanon. On the one hand, it is a free and modern land,

on the other hand, there are still doubts about the extent to which human rights are respected. This is partly because of the strict separation within the political system. Although political power is equally divided into a Christian, Shiite and Sunni part, in daily life they all have their own community which influences their social, economic and political group. The last few years, due to Covid-19 and an explosion in the city of Beirut, the situation has worsened and the economic currency has lost value. Unemployment rates are high and half of the people live under the poverty line (World Bank, 2022).

Refugees are seen as the cause of many social and economic problems. Part of this view goes back to the historical background of the Lebanese civil war, in which a part of Lebanon was occupied by the Syrian army. This led to a dislike for Syrians, which is augmented by the extreme expansion in number of inhabitants during the period the Syrian war started, when the number of refugees went from 450 thousand to 1.6 million (World Bank, 2022). In addition to Syrian refugees, there are also a lot of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon since the establishment of the State of Israel. Both Syrians and Palestinians are limited in their rights. They cannot work or get insurance. The consequence is that they work illegal jobs.

### Christian refugees in Lebanon

Most of the Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon are Sunni Muslims. Next to that, there are also Christian refugees. They came to Lebanon because of the Christian character of the country. These Christian refugees are hardly found in refugee camps, because they find a place to live with family, friends or through the church in Lebanon. Most of the church denominations in Syria and Iraq are also found in Lebanon, therefore the contact is easily made. Their Patriarchal sees of the Churches of the Middle East cover more than one country in the region. For example the Maronites, the Syrian-Orthodox and the Syrian-Catholic receive members of their own community and help them (Verschoof, 2017). Another characteristic of the churches in Lebanon is that they do not cooperate with each other because of the strict separation. Each church mostly organizes its own church services and cares for its own members.

## 1.2 Christianity in the Middle East

Christianity in the Middle East is one of the oldest forms of Christianity and has four main families: the Eastern, Oriental, Catholic and Evangelical families. Many of these different families have their own liturgy, hymnody, theology, law and spirituality. An explanation will follow of the different churches found in the fieldwork. Some important aspects are discussed to give a brief introduction to the

traditions, although all of the traditions are different and much more can be written on the topic than is included here.

### The Assyrian Church of the East

The Assyrian Church of the East came into existence during the Council of Chalcedon in 431. Many of its member churches share their attention for two Syriac writers, Aphrahat and Ephrem. The church claims to be one of the oldest churches, mainly because of the language they speak, which is thought to be very close to the Aramaic that Jesus spoke (O'Mahony & Loosley, 2010). They have a history that especially in the twentieth century is very traumatic. Together with the Armenians, they became victims of massacres and deportations, which are estimated to have caused the loss of more than one third of their population. Many of them then fled to Syria, Lebanon and other parts in the world. Later events made the diaspora only more severe. The church devotes much attention to the education of the youth and thereby tries to preserve the ethnic and spiritual traditions. An old form of worship is preserved. There are no icons or images, the interior is relatively simple (Bailey & Bailey, 2010). Another point of interest is the place of women in the church, who play an important role and can also play a visible role in the Sunday liturgy through singing in the choir (Perry, 2007).

### The Armenian Church

Before World War I, many Armenian communities were situated in the Middle East as a part of the culture of the Middle East. Although they live there, they do not consider themselves Arab. Until World War I, they were relatively at peace with the Middle Eastern population, but then the tragedy of the massacres and deportation happened under the Ottomans, amounting to genocide (O'Mahony & Loosley, 2010). In Lebanon, the impressive museum in Byblos portrays these massacres and several orphanages that came into existence in Lebanon after that. The Armenian church is divided into three different churches: the Armenian Apostolic (or Orthodox) Church, which is the largest, the Armenian Catholic Church, and Armenian Evangelical churches. In all three of them, the Armenian language is used to preserve the identity (Perry, 2007).

### The evangelical church

In the contemporary Middle East, some people become members of the evangelical churches. The evangelical churches were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by American and British missionaries. There is great diversity among these evangelical churches. In some house-based churches, the 'gospel is spread', sometimes through Bible-reading groups (Andrews, 2019). A noticeable phenomenon in Lebanon at the moment is that Syrian and Iraqi refugees who come to Lebanon find the evangelical

church attractive. Sometimes this is also because of the food these churches provide. As Ruben Das writes about a church in the Beeka valley, this church is very clear about their identity and *“their help does not come with conditions, and recipients are not required to take any spiritual books or attend any meeting or church service (...) however, Christian materials are available and they are invited to church services and meetings”* (Ruben Das in Andrews, 2019, p.33).

### Syriac Catholic Church

The Syriac Catholics have their origin in the Syriac Orthodox Church, but during the Council of Florence in 1444 a decree of union came to existence. For several centuries, the church had to go underground because of persecution. Under the leadership of Ignatius Cardinal Tabbouni, the church recovered after World War II and it now consists of 100,000 members (Perry, 2007). The Syriac language used to be the language in services, although this did not necessarily mean that the church was Syrian. The Syriac language is now mostly substituted by Arabic. The church makes great effort for educational opportunities (Bailey & Bailey, 2010). Most of the Syrian Catholics can be found in Iraq, above all in Mosul. More and more are living in diaspora in countries such as America and Europe. The church is not very big, but according to O’Mahony (2010), it can still be seen as a contemporary sign of the borderland between the Christian, Islamic and Hindu worlds.

### Chaldean Church

The Chaldean Church came into existence due to the work of missionaries in the Assyrian Church of the East and a conflict within the Church. After the conflict, the Chaldean Church came out as the larger church. Most of the members lived in Iraq in the surroundings of Baghdad. The church is known for its education and pastoral care (Bailey & Bailey, 2010). Before the war, they formed the majority of Christians in Iraq. In this church, Arabic is influential and the original language of Aramaic slowly disappeared, although already from the mid-1980s the situation of Christians in Iraq became more difficult and migration made the communities smaller than they were before. The difficulties for the church increased during and after the reign of Saddam Hussein.

## 1.3 Migration Theology

Castillo Guerra defines Migration Theology as *‘the contextual theological reflection on human mobility and the welcome, rooting and living together with people from another cultural or religious*

*orientation*<sup>2</sup> (Castillo Guerra, 2007, p. 42). It is useful to see how migrants experience their faith and which subjects come up in Migration Theology. Even more so because the implications of these subjects are also felt by refugees on the way.

Migration Theology is connected to intercultural theology. It is focused on the dialogue between different communities, in which the gospel can be the connection between them. In this context, Migration Theology is meant to create a common space to live together. People should long for a 'society of living-together', where different cultures and religions meet each other and learn from each other, also in an interfaith context (Castillo Guerra, 2007). Through this common space, theology can have an influence in the public sphere, solving challenges of multiculturalism (Swamy, 2017).

As said before, Daniel Groody was one of the theologians who wrote about the theology of migration. For him, migration is a way of thinking which is also relevant in thinking about God and what it means to be human in this world. He proposes a theological framework with different theological aspects taken from migration. In this, migration offers a basis for thinking about the foundational dimensions of human existence. First of all, he speaks about 'Imago Dei', which is the basis for his protest against the labelling of refugees, which often generates asymmetrical relationships. He argues that everyone is made in the image of God, which offers a very different starting point in the discourse about migration. Secondly, he mentions the 'Verbum Dei', in which migration and the incarnation come together. In the incarnation, God migrated to humanity and enters the place of 'otherness'. According to Groody, for God there are no borders that cannot be crossed and therefore migration is a metaphor for the movement of God towards others. The third aspect that Groody offers is 'Missio Dei', which calls for action in helping the poor, but even more than that, that the one needing help also has something to give. This is a 'ministry of generous hospitality' which is mutually enriching for the host and the guest. Last of all, Groody sheds light on the 'Visio Dei' when he claims that a theology of migration articulates a new vision of an eschatological horizon of faith and unbelief. Migration Theology offers a new mindset and a new worldview, a new vision (Groody, 2009).

## 1.4 Refugees in Migration Theology

When people leave their country for their safety, their life is turned upside down. In earlier paragraphs, this complex situation was already examined. But what function does faith serve in the lives of

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<sup>2</sup> Translation by the author: "een contextuele theologische reflectie op het fenomeen van de menselijke mobiliteit, de ontvangst, het wortelen en het samen-leven met mensen met een andere culturele of religieuze oriëntatie."

refugees? Which support does faith offer and which elements are important for that support? This paragraph examines the professional theological point of view and proposes different religious themes that can be important for refugees. These themes are significant according to the literature review when speaking about the faith of refugees. Although most of the sources for this paragraph have a Christian background, not all of them only focus on Christian religion. In addition, in a few sources there was special attention for Christian Syrian refugees.

### Steadfast faith

When discussing the faith of refugees, the first thing that is significant is that faith is very important to refugees. Research of De Graaf (2020) and Schmoller (2016) points out that faith became even more important to them during their flight. When refugees lost everything they had, they found support in their religion. Through interviews that De Graaf (2020) had with Syrian refugees in the Netherlands, it turned out that their faith had grown through their journey. They experienced how much their faith and their heritage from the tradition from the East was worth. Their belief in miracles increased. Therefore, refugees even got the desire to tell citizens how it is to live 'underneath the wings of God'. Faith is something they could hold on to during their flight, but even more they received comfort, support and orientation in difficult situations (Anderson, 2015). Migrants are more religious in their country of arrival compared with their home country. Another reason for this is that religion connects them to their country of origin (Oliden, 2015). This strong faith which is characteristic for refugees is called 'steadfast faith' by Cruz. This faith is a treasure and without this grace of God, it is impossible to live (Cruz, 2014, p. 134). Especially in moments when refugees find themselves in the spiritual desert, they discover that this supports their purification.

### Pilgrimage

Refugees are people 'on the move', they are on their way to a new home, coming from a place that was their former home. This journey is also a spiritual journey. It is comparable with a journey through the desert, which fits with Christian spirituality. Many Christians were pilgrims, and according to Cruz, life is a constant event of coming and going. Therefore, the life of a refugee is seen as a pilgrimage (Cruz, 2014, p. 143). This pilgrimage takes place in the wilderness, which has positive and negative associations. At first glance, a wilderness has dangers and hardships in it. On the other hand, Chad Rimmer wrote: *"In the wilderness, nations are recreated, people are renamed, sacrifices are made, callings are discerned, spiritual acumen is honed, God's grace is revealed and God's people are renewed."* (Chad Rimmer in Cruz et al., 2010, p. 144). Not only the refugee is portrayed as a pilgrim,

God also fits into this framework. God is not a God who is standing still, but a God who keeps moving across borders, especially the border between God and humankind (Castillo Guerra, 2007). Kristine Suna-Koro even calls God the 'God on the move' or 'Deus Migrator' (2020, p. 241). Seeing God as 'Deus Migrator' is, according to Peter Phan, one of the first characteristics of God, because creation is in itself a migration. Therefore, God is described in the analogy of the Migrant, not just as a Migrant, but infinitely a Migrant (Phan, 2020, p. 104). The refugee is a prototype for religions who are always on the move and crossing borders. Tweed describes this as 'dwelling and crossing'. Religion is about finding a home, but at the same time is about dwelling on earth (Tweed, 2006, p. 181).

### Incarnation in vulnerability

Writing about the theological themes that are important for refugees, Christology cannot be left out. First of all, incarnation plays an important part, because Jesus crossed all borders when he came to this world as a human. This is the ultimate movement of God towards humankind. If even this border can be crossed, the incarnation shows that, for God, all borders can be crossed (Groody, 2009). In the incarnation of Jesus, he became vulnerable. Refugees are also vulnerable in fleeing their country, which shows their humanity (Keul, 2015). Even though, as explained in the introduction, many refugees are part of the upper class of society in their land of origin, leaving everything behind makes them vulnerable. There should be a place for vulnerable people in religion, because a lot can be learnt from vulnerability (Horstmann & Jung, 2015). This vulnerability of Jesus at the end led to total sacrifice at the cross. In this sacrifice, another parallel can be made with refugees. Refugees sacrifice their lives in risking their life for their family or finding a new home. At the end, this sacrifice brings salvation. Therefore, Cruz argues that migration can serve as a heuristic lens for the meaning of salvation. Refugees are searching for life by taking the risk of being killed. Salvation means the risk of dying to reach the full life at the end (Cruz, 2014, p. 22).

### The Bible

All these theological themes figure in analogous stories from the Bible. Many of these stories are used in Migration Theology and resonate with the lives of refugees. One of the most important stories for Migration Theology is the Exodus, the liberation of Israel from Egyptian domination. This story is characteristic for the story of refugees, because the people of Israel were also migrants and went through many hardships to reach the Promised Land. In this story, the perspective of the refugee is visible and that makes it a worthy parallel with refugees nowadays. Refugees can feel encouraged to see that even the people of God themselves were refugees (Gruber, 2015, p. 97).

In Migration Theology, the story of Ruth is also recognizable for refugees. The experience of Ruth is full of loss, invisibility, change, independence and self-respect, which are also challenging for refugees (Cruz, 2014). This story is especially relevant for female refugees, for example the migrants coming from the Philippines. As a model of faith, trust and obedience, Abraham is also seen as the first migrant. Or more than that, one of the first acts of God was making Abraham a migrant. Abraham did not reach his country of destination immediately, but had to settle down in several places before (Phan, 2020). In line with this story of Abraham, another woman in the Bible with such an experience is Hagar, who resists injustice and is violently forced to leave her home. She is left alone in the desert to die, and can be seen as the first refugee (Phan, 2020). God helps her out, although she is a slave (Cruz, 2010). A different story that can relate to the situation of refugees is, according to Cruz, the parable of the workers in the vineyard. This story helps to see the refugee as any other man with the same value. Other stories that can relate to refugees are the parable of the Good Samaritan, for which Groody (2009) argues that humankind can be seen as the Levite and Priest while walking around the wounded man. In addition, Lilian Dube states that we as Christians should promote the sense of positive otherness in engaging with the immigrant other like the Samaritan did (2009, p. 268). Furthermore, the story of the tower of Babel followed by Pentecost and the laws in the Old Testament are applicable to refugees (Castillo Guerra, 2020; Nausner, 2015). Furthermore, religious stories from other sources than the Bible can be of worth for refugees, such as the story of the Lady of Guadalupe (Cruz, 2014).

### Hope against hope

Christian hope is mentioned several times in theory. Suna-Koro characterizes the hope of refugees as 'hopes against all hope' (2020, p. 240). Although there is sometimes nothing to hope for, they still keep hope. God is their God of hope and can give this to everyone who experiences pain, rejection or alienation (Suna-Koro, 2020). Cruz agrees with Suna-Koro and frames this in her Migration Theology as 'courageous hope' (2014, p. 128). Although hope is unmistakably important, there is also fear for the future. This is described in the research of Bandak, who examined the experience of death and dying among Christian Syrians. These Syrians were still in Syria and had a great fear for the future (Bandak, 2014). Schmoller (2016) argues that this fear is conquered by the experience of faith and therefore according to him, migration is an experience of liberation.

## Religious practices

In 'Writing the camp', Qasmiyeh makes an attempt to describe life in a refugee camp. It is a kind of a diary that sketches different scenes of the camp. Among these are religious scenes, which give some indication of how faith is practiced in a refugee camp. He writes:

*"Now in the camp, there are more mosques, more houses of God, while people continue to come and go, like the calls to prayer emanating at slightly varied times from all these mosques, supplementing, interrupting, transmuting, and augmenting the voice and the noise simultaneously." (Qasmiyeh, 2020, p. 59)*

This dynamic of faith he writes about is also seen in the church that was built in the refugee camp in Calais. It marks the importance of religious practice of refugees' faith. Wherever they go, they take their faith with them and want to practice their faith the way they did before. Therefore, first of all, religious practice becomes visible in the role of the religious community. Religious migrant organizations in the country of arrival function as a bridge between the refugee and society. Refugees who attend a religious community integrate faster (de Graaf, 2020). Next to that, the community provides access to a new network. Therefore faith functions as a source of comfort, a safe place in times of despair. Cruz defines this as the 'festive community spirit' in which the church functions as a family who celebrates her humanity (2014, p. 138). De Graaf also found that for Christian Syrian refugees in the Netherlands, religion helped them to find a path in their new situation. It is seen as a place where they can develop their new identity (de Graaf, 2020). This fits the idea that Oriental Orthodox Christians are very attached to their church and their traditions (Chaillot, 2007). According to Castillo Guerra, the church functions as a community of dialogue where the intercultural perspective is practiced (2007). Last of all, it offers them a place where they can find equals with the same language and culture and a new network (de Graaf, 2020).

Next to the church community, the liturgy is important, as Suna-Koro argues: *"There is no liturgical development without migratory flows woven into it"* (Teresa Berger in Suna-Koro, 2020, pag.224). Liturgy exceeds human borders of symbols and rituals. In liturgy, God himself appears and then it is not human-work but God-work. Tweed describes the function of liturgy and rituals in three ways, which are comparable with the functions of the church as De Graaf describes it. There are 'locative' religious practices, which focus on the new place or city. Second, some religious practices are 'superlocative', which means that they change rituals from the past into new rituals. Lastly, there are 'translocative' rituals, which are a combination of rituals of their foreign country and the new place.

These three rituals all function as a bridge towards the country of origin (Oliden, 2015, p. 47). Several other studies confirm this conclusion, for example a study about Lebanese women who turned from an Orthodox Christian religion to a Protestant religion (Nasrallah et al. 2015). They did not leave the rituals of their Orthodox religion behind with their conversion, proving that these rituals are important to them. These rituals are a way of dealing with 'physical doing and sensing' as way of knowing, because actions and practices of the body are means of knowing as Nasrallah noted (Nasrallah et al. 2015).

When speaking about religious rituals that are important for Christian refugees, the Eucharist is mentioned frequently by different sources. In Migration Theology, the Eucharist is mentioned as an expression of the incarnation and connection between different cultures. Groody argues that this is precisely the sacrament in which the refugee, who is mostly seen as 'no-body', should fill the place of 'every-body' (2022). The Eucharist offers a unique space to look for connection. For Groody (2022), the Eucharist is meant to remember the body of Christ as a gift for everybody, to start with the 'no-bodies'. Not only the meaningful character of the Eucharist is important, also the sharing of a meal is important. This became apparent when migrants in the Netherlands were asked about the meaning of the Eucharist at a dinner. The migrants answered that it creates a consciousness of unity: to be together in faith, with other migrants and with the Dutch society (Castillo Guerra & Wijzen, 2007). A shared dinner stands for hospitality, happiness, a warm atmosphere and the meaning of community. This makes the Eucharist itself a God-experience. Cruz (2014) puts attention on the meaning of sharing bread. She argues that we should share the earth like we are sharing the bread, that is our challenge.

In many of the traditions refugees subscribe to, the Virgin Mary is very important in the liturgical tradition and daily religious life. She is called the Theotokos: the God-bearer or the Mother of God. By being the Mother of God, she becomes the mother of all faithful people. Next to being a mother for all, she is also a model of what each Christian hopes to be in the future. In addition to her importance in the liturgy, icons are important because they can lead to the awakening of spirituality. For example, some icons are known for providing miracles and myrrh streaming. Therefore in daily life, many Orthodox and Oriental Christians have icons at home and burn candles for it (Chailliot, 2019). Not only for the Theotokos, but there are a number of saints that are popular, such as Mar Giwargis, Mar Sargis and Mart Shumi. These saints play a role in pilgrimage sites and their lives are extolled in hymns. Murrevan den Berg refers to refugees' belief in protective prayers, which they keep in their house or in their clothing (Perry et al, 2007). Prayers like the Lord's Prayer are used in addition to the prayers to saints, rites and amulets of protection.

## Psychological aspects

The collection of essays in the book 'Migration as sign of the times' (Gruber, 2015) starts with the essay of Hagen Kopp (2015), which describes the status quo of different waves of migration. He compares the situation with that of the Apartheid, because there is 'selective inclusion', in which refugees are seen as a risk and the higher class of society decides about them. This situation in Europe and other parts of the world affects refugees psychologically in several ways, which will be discussed here.

First of all and most importantly, being a refugee affects one's identity. While trying to find a new home in a different culture, there is a shift in the identity of a migrant. According to Castillo Guerra, there are three phases in migration and finding this identity is the one mentioned in the introduction. Castillo Guerra (2007) argues that the shift of identity mostly takes place in the last phase, because the new country expects from the refugee that he will find a new identity. On the other hand, letting go of an old identity is necessary and this process already starts when leaving the country of origin. This change in environment, culture and country affects the person who seeks refuge greatly. After arrival, this refugee needs to find a new meaning and place in society. Especially in the process of waiting for a residence permit, this takes a lot of patience and being able to handle unclarity. This is what Schmoller (2016) also found in the life of Syrian refugees which he describes as the idea that 'I am not here, I am not there'.

This identity crisis is discussed by Jung Young Lee. He presents three different attitudes of migrant identity. In the first situation, there is an 'in-between' status, when refugees live in two different worlds and have to switch between those. But this leads to 'existential nothingness'. Another predicament he describes is the attitude of living 'in-both' which means that migrants live in both of the worlds, and they surrender to both of the worlds. This makes them open, inclusive and pluralistic. Finally, he describes a third attitude that he prefers for migrants, which he calls the 'in-beyond'. This is the idea of living in both worlds, but also in between them at the same time without being bound to one or the other. In this, the person functions as a bridge between both worlds as an insider, but also the critical stance of the outsider (Lee, 1995).

Of course, it is not conducive to finding a new identity if there is still a lot of discrimination and rejection of refugees. Therefore, the border is a symbol for an open wound, in which the borders of existence, identity and belonging to something are dubious and even threatened to get lost (Cruz, 2010). Even when refugees get a passport, there is still a distinction between migrants and the local community. They are still 'the stranger', because they do not share the same values according to the people in the

local community. For migrants, there will never be a feeling of 'full citizenship', as they will always be reminded of the fact that they have a 'not-good-enough-status' (Anderson, 2015, p. 20). Groody (2022) sees the labels that refugees receive, such as status holder, asylum seeker, economic refugee or migrant, as dehumanizing. These labels suggest an asymmetric relation, while in Genesis we are introduced to the idea that man is made equal in the image of God. In the 'Imago Dei', the value of all humanity becomes visible (Groody, 2009). The Catholic Social Teaching also speaks about human dignity as a cornerstone of the migration policy. The migrant 'must be seen as our neighbor, a helper, to be made a sharer on a par with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God' (John Paul II, 1987). For refugees, in finding their identity, faith can be an identity marker and support in who they are. Furthermore, it is a healing factor in hurtful situations and it is able to add meaning to the reason of migration (Frederiks, 2016).

Next to the theme of identity and belonging to a new country, other psychological and sociological themes are present in the lives of refugees. First of all, refugees can feel guilty towards their home country and their loved ones who still live there. It feels like they have left them behind (Cruz, 2014). They still feel responsible towards the things they left behind. In addition to guilt, they can feel homesickness. This can lead to loneliness, especially when there are relatives still living in the country of origin (Cruz, 2010). Therefore, Cruz signalizes a 'creative resistance' in them. They fight against the injustice that was done to them. Although they may be migrants and still be powerless in their country of arrival, there is a power in them. Despite their powerlessness, there is power in this and they seek justice in their 'holy anger' (Cruz, 2014, p. 130).

## 1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, a literature review was presented to answer the first sub-question, namely what Migrant Theology as professional theology tells us about the experience of faith for refugees during their flight. Many different aspects of faith were highlighted that can be relevant for Christian refugees during their flight. First of all, focusing on the Christians in Lebanon, it is noticeable that refugees are part of many different churches, which play an important role in the experience of faith. Many of these churches pay special attention to Saints such as the Virgin Mary. Even so, they all have to deal with challenges for Christians in the Middle East. From the literature about Migration Theology, several aspects are supposed to play a part in the experience of faith. Firstly, aspects from intercultural theology can be part of their experience. Secondly, the four aspects of Groody – Imago Dei, Verbum Dei, Missio Dei and Visio Dei – can be part of the faith of refugees according to Groody. In line with these aspects, five other topics are presented in Migration Theology which can play a part during the

flight of refugees, namely: the steadfast faith, vulnerability in the incarnation, hope against hope, the Bible and several religious practices. Next to religious aspects, also some aspects of psychological and sociological implications of displacement can play a role.

## Chapter 2: Fieldwork

There is great diversity among Christian refugees in Lebanon. Not only in denominations and how long they have been living in Lebanon, but also in how they experience their own Christian identity as refugee and practice this. This diversity does not mean that nothing generally true can be said about Christian refugees. Therefore the second sub-question will be answered in this chapter:

*What kind of theological reflections come from Christian refugees in Lebanon?*

When viewed as theological beings who act at the level of peoples' theology every day, many similarities and equal experiences become apparent. The theological thinking of the Christian refugees in Lebanon will be systematized in this chapter using seven topics. As will be explained later in greater detail, these topics are inferred from the analysis of the interviews. The first paragraph contains the methodology of interview analysis. The second paragraph describes the seven topics that were identified in the interviews. The first topic is the image of God. The second topic turns attention from God to human beings. Centralized in these human beings is their faith, which is the third topic, after which follows faith in practice, namely their religious life. This then leads to another aspect of religious life, the *ecclesia* and how refugees experience this. The last two topics will be focused on the answer refugees give themselves to the second sub-question. The sixth topic contains the lessons the refugees learned themselves and the last topic pays attention to the theological mindset they developed during this period of their life. This all leads to a concluding paragraph in which the sub-question of this chapter will be answered.

### 2.1 Methodology

#### Interviewing

As explained before, fieldwork took place through ethnographic research, in which the researcher observed and interviewed the participants on topics within the scope of this research. The research spanned eight weeks in the summer of 2021 and provided many opportunities to speak to all kinds of people in very different ways. Many observations and conversations took place at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, sometimes with an interpreter. Other places where the research took place was at the Beeka Valley, where many refugee camps are stationed, and in Anjar, an Armenian village next to the Syrian border. Observation was mostly done in churches, school camps, festivals, trainings for refugees and daily life. Furthermore, interviews were held. Here, first of all, participants were asked whether they wanted to tell their story and what had happened on the road from their country of origin to Lebanon. The interviews were held in a semi-structured way. Although the preference was to

do non-structured interviews so that the participant was free to speak, this did not really work. Many participants found it difficult to speak spontaneously about their past and to tell their whole story instead of parts of it. Therefore, it was sometimes necessary to ask some specific questions, which can be found in Appendix 1. The main question was whether they could tell their story about fleeing the country and how they experienced their faith in this flight. In total, the research included 26 participants from diverse backgrounds as can be seen in Appendix 2, that contains a list of participants.<sup>3</sup> Two participants were later removed from the research before open coding because they were not part of the target audience. So the total of interviews comes to 24.

### **Transcription**

As the Grounded Theory Approach states, no transcription is complete or unselective (Barnsley, 2016). In order to achieve the most complete transcription, all interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. This prevented premature decisions about what was relevant and what was not. Sometimes, multiple persons were interviewed, in which case a distinction was made between the different speakers by numbering them.

### **Analysis**

In order to draw a valid analysis from data from the fieldwork, a standardized procedure of ordering, structuring and interpreting meaning is paramount (Swinton & Mowat, 2016). As depicted in the flow chart below, the process of analyzing the data was done in five different steps, which will be explained below (figure 1). The analysis was performed in the computer program Atlas Ti.9. The Grounded Theory Approach was applied, starting with open coding from 24 interviews. After coding, the data were networked, which led to the step of selective coding. Through the whole process, theory was generated in a constant redesign as Glaser and Strauss approach for data of fieldwork (1967/2012). Afterwards, the codes were analyzed again and out of the seventeen significant group codes, seven themes were defined. These seven themes are the conceptual basis of the results. In this paragraph, all steps will be explained, so it will be clear how the results were arrived at in a logical and scientific way.

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<sup>3</sup> Two interviews were held with families, one woman with her son and one daughter with her mother

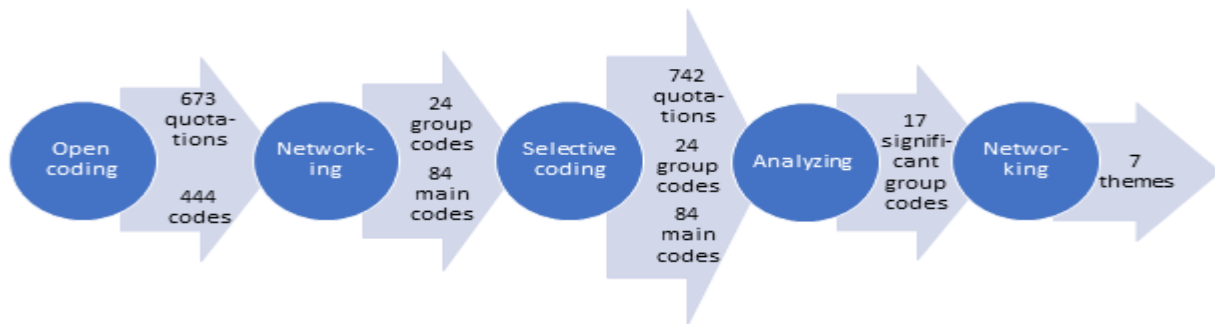


Figure 1. Flow chart of the number of participants and methodology.

## Open Coding

The first cycle, according to the Grounded Theory Approach, is open coding, which entails assigning a code to every meaningful segment in a transcript (Pieterse, 2020). Each document was read carefully and codes were generated from the responses of the interviewees. This analysis led to 444 different codes. These codes were brought back to 24 group codes by networking and comparing what belonged together, as is shown in Appendix 3. As Pieterse explains, the process of open coding continues into the search for categories that are ‘a piece that is unique and has overriding significance’ (Pieterse, 2020, p. 3). The 24 group codes were examined in 24 different networks shown in Appendix 4. Three group codes were added together or were so small that they did not require a network in order to see what the commonalities and relations were.

Each code related to another code were added together in a network. From the 444 codes, 84 codes were upgraded to being a Main Code. These Main Codes were gathered underneath a Group Code. For example, as is shown in Appendix 3, the Main Code *Donations* became part of the Group Code of the characteristics of *Refugeeship*. Each Group Code contained a description, which made clear what kind of Group Code it was.

## Selective Coding

The second cycle of coding according to the Grounded Theory is selective coding. The 24 Group Codes and 84 Main Codes were brought into a new Atlas Ti.9 file. In addition, all the 24 interviews were gathered in this file. Then coding was repeated, but now selective coding was done. In this, the 84 Main codes that were discovered in the categorization during the open coding were looked for. The documents were analyzed again using the 84 Main Codes. To give insight in how the 84 Main Codes were coded, Appendix 4 shows how many times each code was attached to segments in the interviews and what percentage and number of the interviewees recognized this theme.

## **Axial Coding**

In the process of axial coding, the phenomenon that the research concentrates on is studied through central categories. Coherence is given to the analysis and theory comes into existence (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2012). During this analysis two Group Codes were found to be duplicates or irrelevant to the study, so they were removed. To see what kind of Group Codes and Main Codes were most significant in the interviews, it was analyzed which of the Codes had the most quotations. For example, Praying was mentioned most often: 79 quotations and 22 of the 24 respondents paid attention to prayer. There were 17 Main Codes or Group Codes that had more than 19 quotations. These Codes were seen as most important and therefore Networking was done with them in order to answer the main question: What can be considered the main theological topics for refugees? This led to seven different topics, which formed the basis of the fieldwork (visualized in Appendix 6 and in Appendix 4).

After formulating these seven topics, they were again brought into a network in Atlas Ti.9. This time, quotations were added in these networks. Not all quotations were added, because many quotations were similar. Based on these networks and the responses of the interviewees, the theory for the fieldwork was established in a constant moving of back-and-forth between the data and the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2012).

## **2.2 The image of God**

As seen in the data, when one is fleeing one's country, God is present in every sense. Therefore, one of the main things that is important for the respondents is God. But how do they see God and what kind of images do they present when they talk about God?

First of all, God is a God who is completely in control: He knows everything and arranges everything for the best.<sup>4</sup> Of the respondents, twenty out of twenty-four described God in this way. Therefore, not only the good things are in his hands, He sometimes also allows sad things to happen. For example, one woman related that her mother had died and she had not been able to be with her at that moment. Although she was clearly feeling pain while telling this story, she still believed that it occurred with

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<sup>4</sup> 16:11: She had the feeling that another bomb was going to happen and when they were talking on the fifth floor and their balcony, they bombed but, at first I didn't know what happened to her house. I couldn't, it was another, so what happened was another the work of God that her husband and her son wasn't at home, she was not in her home, she was down. So it was the work of God.

God's approval, because God knows what is good.<sup>5</sup> A different woman, who was kidnapped by ISIS for nine months, highlights this clearly:

"It's true that ISIS took us and kidnapped us and we had bad times, I was never angry or upset with God. Because God knows better what's good for us. And at the end He was the one who saved us and released us." (10:38)

Of course, they did not always understand why things happened and why God did these things. One out of three of the refugees gave meaning to events in their life by believing that God arranged things and that God wanted to thereby test them, to see if they had enough faith or to send a message.<sup>6</sup> It is clear to them that God is acting out of love.<sup>7</sup>

As a God who arranges everything, seventeen people described God as a God who acts and is not distant. He is active and interferes.<sup>8</sup> The acts of God are meant to help the refugees and this can be done in all kinds of ways. He helps them with basic needs<sup>9</sup> like food, housing and furniture. He also helps them on the way to Lebanon and to reach Lebanon in the end.<sup>10</sup> But also with other small things, God helps them in a practical way, for example by helping to get good grades in school. For one of the women, this refers to the main character of God, which she explains as follows:

"They [God] are three in one, in a way, like, the holy spirit is my best friend you know. I can't imagine a day without sitting in his presence and he is one who connects me with Jesus and God. Like as Christ said, I'm going now, but I don't let you orphan, I sent you paracletes, in the original word, which means the helper. And he is the best helper I have." (19:20)

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<sup>5</sup> 21:29: always belief that everything is end up for the good. She's saying, even for the Lebanese people, everything that is going on, it's gonna be better. Because our God is the God of fairness and good.

<sup>6</sup> 8:16 So he puts us in experiences, he put us into hard lessons, to see how, to test, to see how faith we have, how much faith we have, how much belief we have in Him and so we should continue having faith and belief in him

<sup>7</sup> 12:25: so God says that he injures the one that he loves

<sup>8</sup> 13:24: I find this very new and discover that God is interfering in very small detail also, not only in the big one. Because before I thought that God is interfering only in big things, not in the small things.

<sup>9</sup> 13:28 But thanks to God even although we are refugees, he is helping us, we are with our clothes, we are not nude, we are in a house, we are eating.

<sup>10</sup> Question: did you had the feeling that God was answering your prayers? Answer: 'he answered our prayers after we were there, he said, I was with you, you passed without getting injured. You reached the safe place with the help of God.' [18:16]

Here, she referred to a characteristic that Jesus Christ used himself to explain who God wants to be for humankind. The idea that God is active and helps them, gives them strength. Although the situation was sometimes very hard, they felt that God helped them.<sup>11</sup>

Because God arranged life around them and helped them in this, 22 people out of 24 tended to describe God as a God who takes care of them. Contrary to humankind, He is a God of the powerless and does not see someone's skin color or formal identity.<sup>12</sup> They experienced that God takes care of the needy. Because of their experiences, they still looked to God for help when they were in difficult situations. They wanted Him to lead them<sup>13</sup> and therefore they kept asking God to take care of them.<sup>14</sup> God is their leader, He led them when they fled their country and God will keep leading them in the future. And in his lead, He protects them.<sup>15</sup> Interviewees told several stories about how God took care of them in all kinds of situations. For example, when they were starting their life over in Lebanon or when they got sick.<sup>16</sup> This stands in contrast with the lack of help they received from humans.

Although one might say that a God who arranges everything would seem like someone at a distance, respondents experienced God as being in contact with them, one out of three said that God was with them.<sup>17</sup> When asked what they learned from being a refugee, they stated that they learned that God is always with them. As this person said:

“Question: What did you learn about God during this period?

Answer: He is everywhere, He is with you in every minute. Especially in the minute that you are down and you need his help.” (18:20)

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<sup>11</sup> So when she thinks back, she wonders how did I do this things? No, I couldn't do it with some things, so God gave this strength. God gave me strength, hope, everything, being positive, like new. [11:23]

<sup>12</sup> Question: how does God look upon refugees? Answer: He is the father of the refugees, He is the God of the powerless and He is the one who takes care of the needy. [19:30]

<sup>13</sup> There is something way better than me that should lead me, that I should need to look up to. And I know that's God. [5:27]

<sup>14</sup> And she felt the Lord was always protecting them till then. [20:71]

<sup>15</sup> It's like remembering Noah's ark, because God is going to protect you, He will protect you. So that story tells that. [11:36]

<sup>16</sup> I'm always saying, God is always there, when we build that house here, God gave us the money, gave us the work to gain that money to make that home, to make our work there. So now we'll ask Him to be with us, to restart our lives. [18:42]

<sup>17</sup> So we live and we're faithful people. If something happens we are not that disappointed to use our faith or to be far from Jesus, so the Lord we believe is always with us and when somebody dies, we know that it is his life that is finished and God give life and God takes it back. [9:15]

Almost none of the refugees experienced God as someone who is far away. They experienced his presence.<sup>18</sup> They also saw the presence of God if they looked back on their life and saw different moments when they definitely thought that God was with them.<sup>19</sup> Speaking about this brought forth deep emotions, because in their vulnerability they could not live without God.<sup>20</sup> For many of them, this knowledge of God who is close and who is with them gave them hope to carry on. Some even did not know whether they would have come so far without Him.<sup>21</sup>

In most of the cases, refugees kept talking about God in general and did not focus in the first instance on Jesus. But later on in the interviews, they also started describing what Jesus meant to them. Nineteen participants described the meaning of Jesus in their life. They paid more attention to Jesus than to the Holy Spirit, which they hardly mentioned. Some of them explained that Jesus and God are the same to them, so that when they talk about God they also talk about Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, if they ask God, they will also ask Jesus to help them.<sup>23</sup> For others, Jesus seemed more tangible. They related their situation to the stories about Jesus told in the Bible. This gave them courage that God is able to do great things.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, they recognized themselves in Jesus. For example, Jesus also had to flee from Bethlehem and was tortured before he was crucified.<sup>25</sup> Especially the crucifixion and the resurrection were important to them. They drew hope from that, because Jesus went through the same things and can feel and know what they are feeling. One of the families had a big problem because one of their daughters was sick with leukemia, about which they said:

“And in the bigger picture she [the mother] believes and she relates this to Jesus’s story. How he carried his cross and went through that, like his will and knowing that he is going through it. And we are happy and feel blessed and carry our cross. It’s a blessing because of course

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<sup>18</sup> Her feeling for Jesus is on our side, He is watching us, He is with us and her mother always says that Jesus would not let us let harm. [7:3]

<sup>19</sup> Everything she has been through in her life, like everything the prosecution, the unfairness, everything that she is been through from here to Turkey to Lebanon, she always feels that God is with her, despite that it has been very hard. [21:14]

<sup>20</sup> Observation 24

<sup>21</sup> So, if God is not with me, so she is telling, if God wasn’t with me, I shouldn’t have survived all this years. Seven years of war and being away from your family. [15:12]

<sup>22</sup> It’s the same, Jesus and God, it’s the same for me. [15:27]

<sup>23</sup> God is always with her and now she does not need a husband anymore, because she has Jesus, he helped. [1:18]

<sup>24</sup> So, yes Jesus did the miracles during his lifetime, he stopped the waves when he was on the boat, he added up the bread and fish for people to eat, so he can easily answer our prayers and hear us. [9:5]

<sup>25</sup> Question: Does she have like a favorite story that she can really relate to and that is meant for her during this period? Answer: Like the story of Jesus when every time Jesus was humiliated from other people, he was deported, even from his childhood, and before his crucifixion when they tortured him, that story. [16:23]

everyone goes through difficulties, have their own problems of which they believed that they can get through. But we are happy that he chose us and gave us this cross that we carried with us from there to here and till today.” (17:29)

So Jesus gave them courage in two ways: through the knowledge that Jesus carried his cross, they could carry theirs, and Jesus has felt what they were feeling.<sup>26</sup> In addition to his crucifixion, Jesus was resurrected from death, and therefore they believed that nothing is impossible for him.<sup>27</sup>

So in the end, who is God for Christian refugees? They experienced God as a God who arranges everything, who takes action and by this action, leads and protects them. He is a God who takes care of his believers, the ones that He loves. And although God arranges everything and opens and closes doors for them, they felt that God is close to them. Jesus is not different from God, although Jesus is more tangible in his crucifixion and resurrection.

## 2.3 Theological anthropology

In the interviews, many different aspects were discussed which drew out the stories and experiences of refugees. Seeing the refugee in the image of God, we can learn from their experiences. Therefore, below, different aspects are described from what the interviewees said about the life of refugees.

### Vulnerability

One of the keywords describing the experiences in the lives of refugees is vulnerability. All of the respondents felt vulnerable in some way. All the difficulties they have been through caused these people to be vulnerable. More than half of the participants fled because of the threat of Daesh.<sup>28</sup> The rebels came to their villages, sometimes bombed them and conquered them.<sup>29</sup> For example, one woman told that they were sleeping when a missile hit the garden, and after that they immediately fled without taking any possessions with them. The refugees who fled from Iraq mostly had an experience of being threatened by letters. In these letters, unknown people told them to leave,

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<sup>26</sup> So if we have troubles, if we are feeling bad, so that's nothing for what Jesus has sacrificed for us. [8:15]

<sup>27</sup> He brought him back to life, so nothing is impossible for him, so he can do anything. [6:8]

<sup>28</sup> We came here after the attack of Daesh [...] it has been seven years, I don't know what to tell and not, it was a hard day there. We were sleeping before they came to our village. [18:1]

<sup>29</sup> Because when after I went from Raqqa, there was bombing there. So the people there, she saw how they died. To three minutes she was there, till I'm in shock about how God made me go away. In Aleppo it's also the same. In Aleppo when we were preparing to get escaped, another man came, hurry up they are going to bomb this. And after we escaped, they bombed. So God is giving me those directions, every time. when the bomb fell in their garden it was night, they were sleeping. Only her husband was awake. But when they woke up, why are you waiting? God will lead us from here, and they went directly. And on the street they can see the bombs falling, like rain. [15:35]

because otherwise they would be killed. Vulnerability was even clearer for a woman who was kidnapped by Daesh for nine months.<sup>30</sup> All these events make it unsurprising that many refugees feel vulnerable, which is mostly expressed in feelings like fear and sadness described by more than half of the respondents. This fear made them very alert. One woman described that while sleeping, she always stood straight when she heard bombings, because she was so scared.<sup>31</sup> And this fear was not removed by moving to other places.<sup>32</sup> In this fear, they experienced God as their guide. Sometimes, the fear left them, but sadness endured. Especially in the beginning, they felt sad about leaving their country and about everything that happened there.<sup>33</sup> Listening to all these vulnerable stories, one could argue that many refugees had the ability to flee, which made them privileged compared with other people who could not. However, also these refugees felt vulnerable and still are.

## Pilgrimage

Many respondents did not feel like pilgrims, because fleeing is not voluntary, while pilgrimage mostly is. Next to that, a pilgrim plans to return to their home after finishing their pilgrimage, while refugees cannot come back to their house, even if they wanted to. On the other hand, pilgrimage also has some similarities with the descriptions half of the respondents gave. Firstly, the road they took did not lead straight from point A to point B, but many times they had to take a winding road in order to continue, without knowing where to go next.<sup>34</sup> As someone said, they were living day by day.<sup>35</sup> Unwillingly, they had to sleep with many people in one room, on the street or in churches.<sup>36</sup> Another comparison with

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<sup>30</sup> So there was some kidnapping happening, some fights every now and then and then they attacked my village and at 7 o'clock AM morning, they came and took us, even without our shoes. [10:1]

<sup>31</sup> And she and her children went to the roof and they tried to sleep maybe they can breathe a bit, but then they woke up to the sound of fire, of bombs and fires and everywhere. When she started hearing the gunshot, and bombing, she just, she was sleeping, but she stood immediately, and this is a reflect because she was so scared. [21:6]

<sup>32</sup> She says that until now she lives with this fear, because also she lost her cousin. [11:5]

<sup>33</sup> I took a car. So it was the saddest day of my life, to leave Syria behind, everything of my life was there. I came to Lebanon, I had no relatives. [26:6]

<sup>34</sup> So after ISIS came, they had to escape to small villages, they stayed in churches in 2014, after ISIS entered. So they had to flee to small villages, and they stayed in churches. After moving to the small villages, they stayed there for four months, but their youngest son, his health, his hydration, and his body had diarrhea, his health was not good and he was only one and a half year old. And they had to take him to a doctor and the doctor said that this environment is not good for your child and it can get any worse. If you can leave the country, you should leave it, it is for your own safety. So they went to Erbil, did their passport and came to Lebanon. [20:4]

<sup>35</sup> Exactly, living day by day. Tomorrow she can be dead, what can you do. This can be your last day together. [26:22]

<sup>36</sup> So they went to Erbil, escaped to Erbil. They went to Erbil and they had no one there, they stayed in a parc, because they were on the street, because there was nothing. They knew no one. They were churches in the area, they would give them sandwiches, food, a few small mattresses to sleep on the street. But they could not shower, they could not change their clothes. [21:8]

pilgrimage is that the roads weren't safe. It took them much longer than normal with attacks from rebels and bombings. They prayed all along the road and even smuggled Bibles with them, which was dangerous.<sup>37</sup> These roads are similar to the deserts in which the people of Israel had to travel for forty years.<sup>38</sup> Not all people came by the normal roads, many just took an airplane to Lebanon. But all of them were not able to bring many things, especially when they had to leave the house unexpectedly because of threats of violence. Ten of the 24 respondents mentioned this. A third characteristic of pilgrimage that can be applied to their experience is that half of the respondents never felt at home in their new place of residence. Many of the refugees want to travel further than Lebanon and therefore they keep being on the road.<sup>39</sup> Through this all, when asked in which story they recognize themselves as refugee, they often mentioned Abraham. He is an identification figure for them:

“God said to Abraham, to leave his homeland, his family, whoever. Like it happened to me, but Abraham didn't said why are we going from here? So if Abraham didn't say something, and similar happened to him, so why am I saying that?” [13:15]

This quote shows that they wanted to trust in God on this journey, like Abraham did. Abraham even consented to sacrifice his son, which is characteristic of the received strength to go through many things that are not understandable, but are still led by God.

### Losing and starting over

Respondents described the aspect of losing what one leaves behind, in parallel to the aspect of pilgrimage<sup>40</sup>, but with an extra dimension, namely starting over again in an unknown place. Starting over again presented a tough process for ten respondents, as they did not know the people and culture, and had no possessions. One participant compared it with a road:

“It's like a road when you in the mountains here and there is a downside, the road is very dangerous, you don't have anything with you, you're walking, you have to continue but you don't have anything, it's difficult and dangerous. And you know that it's dangerous.” [11:17]

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<sup>37</sup> The women wanted to take bibles, but the husbands didn't let them to bring bibles, because they were afraid that something will happen. Because on the road, the roads are filled with Daesh. [15:4]

<sup>38</sup> Observation 30.

<sup>39</sup> Lebanon is not good, Syria is worse, maybe to different place, so both encouraging the will power and also maybe to somewhere else. And don't stay here. [12:27]

<sup>40</sup> At first she didn't know and she lost everything in Iraq, they had a home and they lost it and the way they were threatened and the things that happened with her daughter and everything. [23:20]

For some, there were also blessings in coming to Lebanon. They stopped worrying about material things, because they learned that these do not matter, and they were helped by many people.<sup>41</sup> In the process of starting over again, some of the participants still did not feel at home in Lebanon, although they had been living there for a longer period now. Partly, this is caused by financial problems, which make it hard to survive. Next to that, one out of three respondents still missed their home country.<sup>42</sup> They kept identifying as Syrians or Iraqis instead of Lebanese.

## Discrimination

As described by the refugees in this research, being part of a minority comes with discrimination. Few participants used the term 'discrimination', but 83 percent of the respondents mentioned that they were being treated as lesser beings. Refugees have fewer rights in going to the hospital or getting a job.<sup>43</sup> They are rejected because of their background and the ideas that the society has about them.<sup>44</sup> One of the participants also said that she did not tell her colleagues that she was Syrian, because when she would tell them, she would receive a lower salary and less respect. Everyone said that the salary of Syrians is reduced and sometimes they had to deal with insults.<sup>45</sup> They were not only treated as less by the Lebanese citizens, they also felt left behind by the UN. Many tried to get a visa to other countries, but they felt no one to listened to them.<sup>46</sup> A woman described this as follows:

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<sup>41</sup> The material things I don't, it's not my, I don't worry about the material things that I lost there. Before she used to think that all the things that she lost from Syria, but then she changed her mind, because God returns every single thing. When your soul is with god and you have faith in him, he shows you that the material things are not the important ones. The spirit is. [15:17]

<sup>42</sup> But then, when she found out that they were going to stay here for good, it was a surprise to her, and she knows that is for her best interest and for her families best interest, but she misses her country. She considers Lebanon as her second home. But she misses the trees, the water, the fish, everything back home. She also has friends there, it is not that easy. [22:4]

<sup>43</sup> We don't have rights, if you go they always ask for money first and then ID and then they will, some hospitals do not take you, because you don't have papers, if you go and work, because you're Syrian they don't give you. [6:20]

<sup>44</sup> They told us, you're Syrian and we cannot continue the treatment, of course we are going to feel you're some kind of I don't know. They had the belief that everyone who is coming from Syria is a terrorist. Uhm, it was hard and harsh in the beginning, but yeah the most difficult part of discrimination is when they told us, you're Syrian, we're not going to cover it. [17:27]

<sup>45</sup> You know, I'm no racist, but the mentality of having Syrian among Lebanese, was insulting. I heard insults. Even though we were Armenians but the thing that we came from Syria, and now that we have places in their classes, again we were seventeen year old, what do you expect from seventeen years old to do. I heard insults, but I didn't rely. [5:9]

<sup>46</sup> Now, we are waiting your turn, to go and receive, something. Paper of when you will get ill or you need something to get from the UN. It was too hard, when you hear the UN, no, you are a refugee. That's too bad. [18:34]

“The feeling is bad, because when you know that this is the village that you are living but they are seeing you as an outsider. At first I was living at my mum’s house but she said go outside, find another place, so when I was finding another home I was pregnant to my daughter. Nobody cared. So I went through difficulties at that time, nobody came to arrange for my house, for food, for a thing.” [16:22]

## Positivity

Describing all these different facets of being a refugee makes clear that it is really difficult. This is definitely true, but there is also a bright side where positive feelings are found. Namely, half of the respondents described their positive view towards life. First of all, much is conveyed by this quote:

“Here is better, here it’s better for children, the most important thing is to be safe.” [3:14”]

Safety is very important, and therefore some participants did not miss Syria or Iraq.<sup>47</sup> Some also liked the open Lebanese society, which is very different from where they came from.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, in many cases refugees were welcomed in the local church, especially Armenians. They already had a good reputation in Lebanon, which made it easier for them to integrate.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, some participants actually did not feel like a refugee.<sup>50</sup>

These five different aspects of the life of a refugee are sometimes experienced all together, while for others only a few of these aspects are recognizable. It is therefore hard to say what life of a refugee is like in general, but now it can be said that it can include experiences of vulnerability, pilgrimage, to lose and start over again, of discrimination and positivity.

## 2.4 Faith centralized

As can be concluded from the paragraph about the image of God, faith is a central subject in the life of the respondents. It is interesting to investigate how the forced flight of these refugees influenced their beliefs. Therefore, this paragraph is about their faith, and for this, the following statement is iconic:

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<sup>47</sup> I was not struggling actually, I had peace in my heart. I never felt homesick. [19:9]

<sup>48</sup> I like to stay here, because of the society that as I said, that they are open to outside more. [5:19]

<sup>49</sup> So as being Armenian maybe it helped her here, because there is a Armenian community, if she was non Armenian Syrian, they would have treated her differently, because then she would be Syrian, so most of the Armenian, they see them not as Syrians, but as Armenians. So maybe this perspective of being Armenian helped her to adapt of Lebanese to accept her. When she would not be Armenian, this would be more difficult. [11:44]

<sup>50</sup> No, no, I never felt refugee or left alone. [26:13]

“Faith is the light, believing is the weapon, not killing, believing is the weapon to reach good stuff.” [9:33]

As seen in this quote, faith plays a central role in the life of the Christian refugee. In 22 interviews, it was explained how important faith is to them. When they had nothing else in their hands, they had their faith.<sup>51</sup> They even said that maybe they would not have survived so far without faith. They saw faith as their light, their guidance, the food for their soul and the beginning and the end.<sup>52</sup> As a woman said about the years that lay ahead:

“So, if God is not with me, if God wasn’t with me, I shouldn’t have survived all this years. Seven years of war and being away from your family.” [15:12]

This shows that faith is very important to them, especially during the hard times. The importance of faith follows from the experience that they felt close to God, as half of the respondents explained. And, maybe more importantly, that God was with them.<sup>53</sup> And out of that feeling, there came a desire to stay close to God in how one stumbles through life.<sup>54</sup> Some participants spoke in this light even about surrendering yourself to God in every circumstance. You should not put your trust in a country or materials, but in God.<sup>55</sup>

Speaking about faith, it would seem logical that faith changes during difficult circumstances, and therefore, that the faith of refugees would also have changed. Two thirds of the refugees confirmed this assumption. Some described that during and because of the flight, people gave their life to Jesus.<sup>56</sup> Of the participants, seventeen experienced that their faith ‘increased’, by which they meant that faith became more important to them. As is shown in the words of one participant:

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<sup>51</sup> Especially now, when you have nothing else, you see what do I have now in my hands? I have my beliefs, I have my faith and hope. [5:28]

<sup>52</sup> I: Why is it good? R: Because this is food to your soul, the relationship with God is good, even though sometimes you stay away from the church or you get busy with other stuff, but you still feel emptiness, whenever you are at church, you are full in heart and soul and everything.

<sup>53</sup> Despite like she brought in some things within the church, in difficult times she started to feel closer to God. [11:24]

<sup>54</sup> There is another verse he is mentioning it is about that it says that if like a man has a if he has one thing or one duty is to turn to God and to live with God. So this is for him that if a person has one thing in life to do, it is to be close to God. [12:24]

<sup>55</sup> I: What can people learn from refugees? R: To trust God and to don’t be related to a country or any house, furniture anything. [13:31]

<sup>56</sup> So the day she was going to come, she asked me to pray for her salvation prayer, cause she was afraid, they have been shooting on the road from Aleppo to Damascus and on the borders. It wasn’t safe on the road, they were shooting and bombing. And that’s how she gave her life to Christ. [19:4]

"I: did you change in your faith during the years?

R: Of course, my faith is stronger, I believe more in Jesus Christ." [6:15]

This man summarized what many refugees share. In Syria or Iraq, their faith was sometimes daily-based, but by the interference of God in their life, faith developed. Doubts about their faith disappeared.<sup>57</sup> Also the people who already had a firm and steady faith in their home country, went through moments which brought their faith to a different level.<sup>58</sup> Some described that during their flight, they started to see God more as a loving father instead of fearing Him.<sup>59</sup>

Although most people explained that their faith increased and became more important, next to the experience that they felt closer to God, four respondents also experienced the opposite during hard periods. As one said:

"R: Yes, I'm angry, of course I'm angry

I: And also angry at God?

R: Uh, at God, I can say that, yeah, because like why is He allowing to happen? Not for me, but for others, if I forget about myself, I can see many people having shortage." [5:41]

It's clear that some people questioned God about why things happened. In the end, He could have change these things, because He is able to do so. These questions are known as the problem of Theodicy. This question came to the mind of these people, for example when they lost their loved ones or many hard situations occurred. This brought forth these questions and a feeling of being upset.<sup>60</sup> Most of the participants did not recognize these questions, but four people thought about it. In the

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<sup>57</sup> Faith is loud because she experienced many things, more than when she was in Syria. In Syria maybe the faith was daily based, occasionally done, but here in struggle time she experienced very crucial things and very evident interference of God in their life. And day by day the faith is developing, until that everything God is managing. There is not any doubt to don't feel, to don't believe that God is present or is working on us. [13:21]

<sup>58</sup> Like, the way I struggle to seek his face and his will, I was doing the same in Aleppo but not on the same level. Now, you are in a new place, you have challenges [...]. The times that I fast and prayed, I don't think I would be doing that in Aleppo, the same way that I did here. [19:12]

<sup>59</sup> In Iraq, God to them is the angry God, the God that they fear, but here, she sees him as the Father, the carrying, the loving, so definitely she learnt more. [22:10]

<sup>60</sup> I: isn't she mad about this? R: Of course I got mad, I got a bit upset, I was upset about it, to tell you the truth. Because I asked for Him to keep her longer with us. [14:23]

end, this did not motivate them to put their whole belief and religion aside. Most of them asked the questions, maybe felt upset or angry, but in the end they came back to God and trusted Him.<sup>61</sup>

Overall, it is remarkable how steadfastly these refugees kept holding on to the faith in God. Sometimes people wondered why all of this was happening, but mostly they kept growing in their faith. Faith became more and more important to them. They found their faith very important and wanted to stay close to God, and they experienced that God was close to them.

## 2.5 Religious life

It is useful to analyze how the religious life of refugees takes form. The practice of faith says a lot about what they believe and what helps them to believe. One thing about the religious life of refugees stands out in the data: prayer is one of the most important things for them. In every way, prayer was mentioned more than anything else, by 22 of the 24 respondents. Also during the analysis of all the other aspects of religious life, prayer was constantly connected to them.

Prayer had different functions for the interviewees. It released their anger, it had the power to change things, it was a way for them to ask God for what they needed or to remind God of his promises. Most of all, prayer gave them peace, it was relaxing and through prayer worries were laid down.<sup>62</sup> Another important aspect is that in prayer, they asked God for his guidance, as exemplified by this woman:

“So the continues prayer was [during the flight] that God keep us your leading: You will be our Leader, because you are aware of where we are going. Everything is obscure around us and we need your lead. This is the only prayer that she is praying.” [13:18]

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<sup>61</sup> It's hard. I had nights without sleep for me. You ask yourself, why? Why is this happening? Why is there war? In the first I asked those questions, until a time came that God told me, you should not ask those questions and you should live the day, live the moment. You should spend your day as much as you can. You should spend it that way. If I stay and think a lot and worry a lot I will not be able to spend with my kids a good time and will not have that memories with my kids. So every family that came here, escaping from Syria they thought that they are, this is temporary, so they will leave this place also. I didn't think that. And I was not like the others, I am only, the only family that is still here, there are a few families. I get this question a lot, why are you still here? What do I answer? As God wants the good for me, and wherever there is a good, he will send me to there. [15:38]

<sup>62</sup> When you go to prayer, you hear praying and your mental health will be more in ease and like relaxed and you be more comfortable. [14:14]

Not everyone used his own words in prayer, some made use of prayer books or common prayers like the Lord's prayer.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned before, people prayed for what they needed, also because they experienced that God was listening. There are many examples of this, like the following:

“So I learn that God never leaves anyone away, not even a day. There were days that I slept without knowing the next day what I will feed to my children. So she just prayed for God to take care of... and actually that happened. God took care of them. and she has felt that God brought men in front of her people who were able to help her.” [15:13]

Next to the prayers that they found answered by God, fifteen people described that they had other religious metaphysical experiences. Some refugees saw people being healed by prayer.<sup>64</sup> Others experienced God working in their process of fleeing the country, when the furniture in their new house was exactly what they needed.<sup>65</sup> Or another experience was that some people got away from their house just in time, before it was bombed the next moment.<sup>66</sup> Even during bombings, they experienced that they were saved through the power of God.<sup>67</sup> All of these religious and metaphysical experiences came together with prayer. What was also mentioned several times was a meeting with some godly figure in their dreams. They described a person who was dressed in white or they saw an older man who was helping them. An example of this is:

“I saw Maryam and Jesus in my dream, I was going to my bed, after two minutes, first Jesus came to me, not my mom, I was seeing him on the cross. Then I was scared and I was passing

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<sup>63</sup> So I prayed the Lord's prayer, but there was in the people who were with me, there were some young girls, they knew some Assyrian hymnes, so we used to sing with them, and to repeat after them. [10:31]

<sup>64</sup> I also have a story that I had some problems with my sight, I couldn't see properly, I prayed so much, and now my sight, I can see much better and feel much better than before. [6:9]

<sup>65</sup> Most evident miracle that happened was the house, especially the furniture, because they heard when they arrived, because in Armenia, the houses are selling and renting with furniture, but here in Lebanon that is something else. So they arrived and they listened that there is someone will leave the country and he sell the house with it's furniture and she told that we will buy only washing machine, and we will bring only things for on the ground. But God made a very good miracle, that even the beds are equal to the numbers of the family. [13:19]

<sup>66</sup> There is this irony, it's the miracle that happened the coming to Lebanon, it's right that she got diagnoses with this horrible disease, but it was after a week or so when we were here, we were still getting to know what we were gonna do. There was a bombing on our house. So if it wasn't for the diagnosis that God gave us, I think, I don't know what would have happened to us there. [17:15]

<sup>67</sup> One second, the pressure...other side....I was on the third floor.....I felt on the ground. That was that. I was super close, there was nothing between us. I am the first person ....walls. Maybe in a minute or less, I open my eyes... I hit the wall....if your ...are verry fresh, ...I know I was shot. I didn't feel anything. I stand up, I could feel the pain any moment, I stood up, ....so I went to my maker, he, that used...fall.... That was just like my home, ...so we went up....smoke, ....flashlight,.... All the walls are filled with glass, but not at the place where I was standing, not at that place. [26:5]

by some problems in my life, so I closed my eyes, then opened my eyes, then close it, I saw the Maryam. Trying to tell me something, I didn't understand anything, she was not talking, only opening and closing her mouth. Then I do my prayer much longer, I started talking with them. Then I woke up, next morning in a different world, it like most of my problems were gone. Gone, I was feeling like that, I woke up in peace." [18:22]

This dream brings us to another facet of the religious life of refugees: the Saints. In nine of the interviews, the Saints were considered important, and the interviewees mentioned them several times. Mostly orthodox Christians paid attention to this. Statues of Saints could be found in their homes and in several churches where people pay attention to them by kneeling before the icons.<sup>68</sup> Saints like Saint Charbell, Saint George, Saint Elias and Saint Kuriakos were mentioned.<sup>69</sup> The refugees brought their customs from their hometowns and tried to celebrate the special feasts they had for the Saints in Lebanon. Celebrating feasts for Saints is a way to feel connected with their culture, identity and family. Even people who moved away from Lebanon came back to their family to celebrate the feasts with their community.<sup>70</sup> Most of all, the Virgin and Mother Mary is important, she is also the one who appeared to them in dreams the most or helped people in difficulties.<sup>71</sup> For instance, in the moment that a female participant was kidnapped, she dreamed about Mary. Mary asked her to look back and there a door was opened, and Mary asked her to go through this door. A short period after the dream, they were released.<sup>72</sup>

Next to religious experiences, prayer and the meaning of Saints, other religious practices are important. Some refugees fast before making their decisions about fleeing the country or going back.<sup>73</sup> For others, the meaning of incense, holy cotton and oil is important as a protection on the road and through life.<sup>74</sup> Others light candles, especially for a blessing for other people.<sup>75</sup> Often, there is also an

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<sup>68</sup> Observation 7.

<sup>69</sup> So there was some saints holy days that were important, like saint George, saint Elias, virgin Mary and especially for the virgin Mary, there was like a festival happening. We used to attend, of course I'll go. [14:2]

<sup>70</sup> Observation 4.

<sup>71</sup> I saw Maryam in my dream, not in my dream, but when I was woken up. He told me put something for Maryam on your, keep her with you. I put this (necklace), after one week, I was cleaning my hands, in the restaurant the mirrors are to big, you can see all your body. So I noticed Maryam that I saw in my dream, she is the same as this icon, there is to many icons for Maryam. [18:23]

<sup>72</sup> I know it was the virgin Mary because I felt like her hand touching me and she said there is a door, a open door behind you, go to that door. So I ran and went through that door and after a short period of time, they released us. [10:62]

<sup>73</sup> Fasting for me is reading God's will and for a certain issue, for a certain situation. [19:21]

<sup>74</sup> I: Do you know that his protects you? R: Yeah because we have experienced, because they pray and they bless this cotton, it is not the actual materialistic meaning of it. [17:23]

<sup>75</sup> So I light a candle for someone's health to be, if he's sick, to be health. [14:18]

altar in the room filled with candles and some icons of Mary and Saints. Some participants also described that they found it important to give donations, also when other people were in danger.<sup>76</sup> Although these rituals took place during the flight, it did not seem like they were performed more frequently or had a changed meaning. When attending a different church in Lebanon, refugees sometimes started to practice other rituals, but other than that, there did not seem to be a change in performing rituals.

Lastly, speaking about religious life, the Bible also played a role. The Bible meant a lot for many refugees, eighteen people referred to stories of the Bible. As someone described:

“So it’s like someone who is thirsty and he needs water and you give him water so he will be, feel, he feels better. So this books are for us like water, so every time we’re down, we read and feel better and more relax and comfortable.” [8:13]

Especially in difficult times, these books increased their faith, gave wisdom and mental healing.<sup>77</sup> The Bible was sometimes so important that they risked their life to bring it with them on the road.<sup>78</sup> The importance of the Bible was connected frequently with the importance of prayer.<sup>79</sup> Concerning the Bible, they found the stories most important. In an earlier paragraph, it was explained that Abraham was compared several times with their own situation. Next to that, they found strength in the stories about Jesus, especially the ones in which He heals people. A common element in these stories and other verses is the hope and salvation it brings, as well as an example of faith.

Altogether, prayer remained the recurring theme in every religious practice they had in their life. The metaphysical, religious experiences were mostly connected to prayer as an answer or a wake-up call. The same was true for dreams and the belief in the Saints. In the other religious practices, like incense,

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<sup>76</sup> So we did like (..) and you know cut them like, slaughter the sheep in front of the church and distribute the meat to the inhabitants of the village. And we prayed a lot and, she said before we gave money to the man like, to let him go, and my father said like we have to do this to give money otherwise they will harm him [brother who is kidnapped]. [7:4]

<sup>77</sup> They give us, they make us feel safe, they increase our faith in Jesus, they give us more comfort. [9:10] and There are verses that can speak to us until now, it’s a book that can give you wisdom and can be applied until now. [12:22]

<sup>78</sup> The women wanted to take bibles, but the husbands didn’t let them to bring bibles, because they were afraid that something will happen because on the road, the roads are filled with Daesh. Even they didn’t put cross. But the women put the bible without the husbands knowing. Each one her own bible. So they hid them. On the road they searched many times, but they didn’t found, they couldn’t found the bibles. When they came to Latakia they showed their bibles, look there are bibles. How they didn’t find the bibles? You don’t know. [15:4]

<sup>79</sup> In difficult times she started to feel closer to God, even, not only going to the youth group and church meetings, she started also, not only in bible studies, but with prayers and having more close relation to God, especially in difficulty moments. Like reading in the bible and praying gave her strength in this weak situations. [11:24]

lighting candles or fasting, prayer played a major role, though not always. And lastly, reading the Bible was comparable to prayer in importance for their religious life. Although these practices did not seem to change significantly by becoming a refugee, they mentioned often that the intensity of these practices grew in difficult times.

## 2.6 Ecclesiology

Christians from Syria and Iraq have diverse backgrounds in church denomination. As described in the literature review, the research population consisted of Armenian Evangelical, Armenian Orthodox, Assyrian Orthodox, Chaldean, Syriac Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Evangelical churches. All these denominations have existing churches in Lebanon. Therefore, the church of the refugees' own denomination was mostly a logical place to go after arriving in Lebanon. Some described the welcome they felt when entering the church community. This was also true for the way that the church helped them to rebuild their life.<sup>80</sup> Many churches offer social care, for example the Chaldean church has a health center where people can come for help.<sup>81</sup> In the Assyrian church of the East there is social care for refugees in the form of food packages. In the Armenian evangelical church, members brought clothes and finances for going to school. In seventeen interviews, the church was said to have become an important place. The church brought them closer to God, it made them feel fulfilled and relaxed.<sup>82</sup>

The church services of all these denominations have a different focus in their liturgy, but they have one common aspect, namely to underscore their own tradition. Their own language is used, except for the Chaldean Church, which uses Arabic. During the church service, the Eucharist plays an important role. Many people enter the church just before the Eucharist takes place.<sup>83</sup>

On the road, the church also played an important role. When the interviewees escaped from their home to other villages, local churches provided a roof to sleep under. As one participant said:

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<sup>80</sup> Everything is great here, the people, and the church is here, any church that she would go to, they would help her, also financially, from getting a place to live in. food, everything, churches really really were welcoming to them. [21:12]

<sup>81</sup> Observation 3.

<sup>82</sup> I feel so relaxed at the church, I go there and my spirit, when I go there I usually connect with God there, not at the home, I go to the church to meet God with myself. I usually don't hear like the orthodox church is two/three hours the worship, she goes there and uses the time to connect with God. She, also she prays before sleep. [16:8]

<sup>83</sup> Seen through different observations: observation 2, 5 and 7.

“So when they escaped from Kessab to Latakia they stayed in the church, they slept in the church for fifteen days. And after that, the village, they decided to escape from Syria and come to Anjar.” [15:8]

In this case, it did not matter what kind of denomination people were from, all people were welcome for refuge in the churches. This could be a reason for refugees to start looking further than their own church denomination. They found out that other denominations worship the same God.<sup>84</sup> As a consequence, some started to go to other churches, mostly to the evangelical church:

“Their main church is Saint Jakob, here it’s Saint Martu, but when she goes to evangelical churches, she likes, she feels that she can hear the word of God, from speaking and whenever the priests speaks she gets closer to God.” [21:15]

Next to the church service, five participants mentioned that they attended other activities in church like the choir.<sup>85</sup> Bible studies were also attractive, because they learned more about the Bible and spoke with other Christians about this.<sup>86</sup> During the summer, the Chaldean church also organizes a camp for refugee children, which they deserve according to the leaders because of the joy it gives them. Led by Chaldean girls, it is mostly about entertainment, but also contains different lessons such as a Bible class or moral lessons. The children seemed happy to be in such a peaceful and safe place. Iraqi and Lebanese cooperated to build a camp, although one could still distinguish the Iraqi from the Lebanese. They mostly looked for their own group to hang around with.<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, respondents realized that the church in itself does not make you blessed or better. Some of them even did not attend church anymore or did not go very regularly. Therefore, they agreed that having faith is something else than going to church.<sup>88</sup>

All of this made that the church was very important for most of them, but what was even more important was their family. Eighteen people talked about this. Although family does not have a lot to

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<sup>84</sup> Yeah, so orthodox, or catholic or protestant, the same. We believe in the same God. We pray to the same God. [17:34]

<sup>85</sup> She is happy to sing in the church because she could feel happy about that. [1:7]

<sup>86</sup> I: What did you like at church? R: Bible studies, and all the church programs, youth group church, bible studies, all these things, but especially the bible studies. [12:13]

<sup>87</sup> Observation 27.

<sup>88</sup> And I don’t think that when I go to church, even when I go to church, the faith is not in the church, it’s not only in the church, going to the church. When you go to the church, I can see that there are many people that come to the church only to show off. Not for the real purpose to connect with God and I feel pain. [16:31]

do with faith, it is still worthy of notice. Family was important for them in several ways. First of all, they wanted to protect their family. As said by this person:

“She doesn’t think to marry someone else, they can’t do that. She is there for her mother and daughter. She wants to be there for the life of her daughter.” [1:19]

Life was basically centered around taking care of your loved ones. During the explosion in Beirut in 2020, one of the interviewees had a traumatic reaction from the bombings in Syria. Therefore, when the explosion hit Beirut, she ran from her house to the streets without thinking to look for her mom. The fact that she did not care about her own safety, but went searching for her mom, shows how much she wanted to protect her family.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, when people lost their relatives, this broke their heart. As a woman, who lost her family in Syria, aptly worded in tears:

“There is no joy, there is no joy. It is good to have my children with me, they are my life. But without my parents and siblings, there is no joy.” [14:33]

This feeling of missing their relatives prevented them from feeling completely at home in Lebanon when their family was living somewhere else.<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, family was also the reason some of them came to Lebanon. If relatives were already living in Lebanon, this provided motivation for going to this country. The people who had relatives in Lebanon felt more at ease and at home because of this.<sup>91</sup> Even when they only had their close family with them, this made them feel stronger.<sup>92</sup> As observed in different families, the happiness of being together and loving each other was visible.<sup>93</sup> This paragraph shows that the community is an important

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<sup>89</sup> I just say mom, mom, I don’t remember everything these moments, everyone calling me, my sister, my boss, everyone, I don’t, I can’t ask, I just want to see my mom, where is she? [11:9]

<sup>90</sup> I: So you feel like being a refugee? Like being away from your country? R: yes, every, always I feel like that. I: And how does it feel? R: I remember this place in my country, I miss the people everything there, I miss that. I miss how I have been raised, where I have been raised. The people here are Armenians are very good, but there comes a time where they, you can understand that they are feeling that I am not from here. I don’t care. So my kids don’t know their family also. They don’t know their aunt, my kids weren’t able to grow up with their family, uncle, aunt, they don’t know that experience. And because of this I feel that I am alone. I have been raised in a big family, a lovely family. [15:33]

<sup>91</sup> At 2012 they escaped from Syria and until now they are here. so she said that I have my family here and it’s like my village, so let us stay here. [16:3]

<sup>92</sup> We will live with the things that we have now. Not being sad for the things that we lost. Maybe the power or the love of the family make you much stronger. When you’re mom and dad tell you gallas, the house or the things that we got is not hard things, it’s between us, we are the family, we are the house, where we can live, we will make our house there. Because of that we were much stronger.[18:41]

<sup>93</sup> Observation 24.

element of life for people who escaped their country. Their own family is most important, but next to that the church can also play a part in building this community.

## 2.7 Lessons learned

When the refugees interviewed in this research fled, many things changed inside them. This has already been made clear so far in the previous paragraphs. As a result, it is understandable that they learned a lot of things during this period. And some of these lessons can be applicable for other people, following the idea of peoples' theology. This will be the central theme of this paragraph. These lessons are varied and can be divided into three topics.

First of all, sixteen respondents mentioned different things that refer to growth of character. A common characteristic mentioned often is patience. During the period before leaving Syria or Iraq, preparing for departure or the different episodes of their flight, they were often required to wait. After arriving in Lebanon, they needed to be very patient for literally every resource. As an example of the patience they needed, the book of Job was mentioned. Job was not only patient, but also trusted the Lord completely.

“Yes, I have a long patience from here to the sky, patience from here to the sky, I have that much patience.” [10:56]

Intertwined with the story of Job, another characteristic was learned and developed by seven respondents, namely to persevere in faith.<sup>94</sup> Although doubts might come up, an important lesson was to keep faith and trust God in this. From their faith, they also learned to help others and not to be jealous or greedy. One should not talk badly about others, but act and help them.<sup>95</sup> So in their character, they learned to be patient, to keep faith and help others. Besides that, some learned to be more open to other people, to be grateful or not to be lazy. These different facets are summarized in the following quote:

“What you can learn is that to be patient. To get a point. And to be consistent, perceiver, whatever your case, you can come out of it. You can get to know, get to know your new self,

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<sup>94</sup> At first she didn't know and she lost everything in Iraq, they had a home and they lost it and the way they were threatened and the things that happened with her daughter and everything. What you can learn is to be patient. To count on God, give him everything, this is it. Has strong faith and belief in God that he is with you. [23:20]

<sup>95</sup> God told us to be patient, to be more faithful, to stay faithful and to help others, needy people, to help needy people and not to be greedy or jealous for others, and help as much as we can and not talk about others badly and so we don't talk but do, act, we say. [9:19]

things like you will be surprised on yourself if you break a certain barrier. This is what I can say. There will be better years, but you can be out of faith, and you can challenge those barriers so you can be someone else. A new, not someone else, a new form of you. It's very personal working on yourself. It's, it needs awareness." [5:52]

Next to these characteristics, feelings of appreciation taught seven participants what they have in life. Material matters are not important anymore compared to the situations they were in, where everything they once had was lost.<sup>96</sup> These material things also do not matter compared with the spiritual life, and more than that, the eternal life. Therefore, one should not be worried about furniture or housing.<sup>97</sup> This is also evident in the following quote:

"The material things I don't, it's not my, I don't worry about the material things that I lost there. Before she used to think that all the things that she lost from Syria, but then she changed her mind, because God returns every single thing. When your soul is with God and you have faith in him, he shows you that the material things are not the important ones. The spirit is." [15:17]

So in a spiritual way, God returns the things that are lost, even if one only realizes this when looking backwards.<sup>98</sup> This makes clear that God will provide, sometimes in money or housing, and sometimes invisibly with His protection.

The third lesson for one third of interviewees is that, through everything, they became much stronger. They are stronger in several ways, as one man explained very strikingly:

"What he is saying, that the problems, difficulties, temptations those are the things that he had, he's saying that he heard at some point personally, last tracing this, like washing machine, when you put the clothes and they start hitting and in the end you have the clean version. So like difficulties and problems those are the things that really build you." [12:29]

Like a washing machine, people become stronger through all the hardship. Of course, the question can arise if this strength is worth all the pain and sorrows. But either way, when it happens, it makes you stronger, if you want it or not. This indicates that any hard situation they will face next is easier to

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<sup>96</sup> No, money is not everything. When you lost something very ... Like somebody, somebody like in my family, lost house, lost cars, everything. [11:2]

<sup>97</sup> Because all that we have here, to be remained here, and we will left this earth to go to another life which is better, here our house will not be taken by someone or there is a life that is better than this struggling life, and everything will be more happier and rest. So we should were we are living, to think about that life, to work for that life, which is the eternal life. And don't be attached to the very small things, which is not eternal. [13:32]

<sup>98</sup> But now I can say that God took care of me. In the orphanage they gave us the best food and the best clothes they could give, but so I began to understand in Lebanon that God took care of me in everything. [26:14]

handle. They know now that they can challenge themselves and that nothing is impossible.<sup>99</sup> Besides that, fewer issues seem to form a problem.<sup>100</sup> One should not give up, knowing that God is with you and the other way around, that because God is with you, you are strong.<sup>101</sup> Lastly, in becoming stronger, there is severe injury. Bearing this harm is a lesson in itself.<sup>102</sup>

## 2.8 Theological mindset

All different analyses described so far contain theological thinking. But in addition to that, the mindset of refugees contains three theological subjects that kept coming up: peace, thankfulness and hope. What is remarkable about these three subjects is that they are all full of positivity. There is hardly any complaint in the words or deeds of refugees. They all exude positivity, especially in their faith. As one participant said:

“In this situation you have two roads in front of you, either you take the sad one: you’re getting cold and second: you are walking the right way, with positive thinking it leads you through, even with difficulties and hardships. You have also the other [sad] side that, this week has some problems, takes you to roads that it can devastate you, to unknown places. So like thinking positively can take you to it you can improve and you can become a better person.”  
[11:20]

This positive mindset brings thirteen out of 24 respondents peace. The belief in God brings peace in daily life.<sup>103</sup> Mostly, they find this peace by going to church and attending the mass. These moments

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<sup>99</sup> I: How was it like to be down? R: that down makes you strong, you can be person stronger than before. I don’t know how, but you can be stronger. I: You have more strength than you think? R: Yes, you challenge yourself, I can do this, I can reach the top, I can study, I can do everything, nothing is impossible. Yes I have depression, lots of depressions, but first, but then she is saying to be able to be move on and things starting getting better. [11:16]

<sup>100</sup> I love to talk about my experience for the people especially for the people from small things make huge problems. No, come on, see what I passed through and sure when someone broke up with his boyfriend, being so mad. No, no, life is not the boyfriend, you know, feel what I’ve been through. [18:43]

<sup>101</sup> God is always with her and he is making her stronger. She was weak before she knew the Lord and now she is stronger. [23:23]

<sup>102</sup> I: What do you think that people can learn of refugees in like, general but also in religious way? R: Injurence, to injure. (...) We can learn from their injurence. What did they injure, for example through the harsh wetter, those not having the stuff, I don’t know if they have the desire to have stuff. [5:51]

<sup>103</sup> So she was like, after she knew Lord and take him as her own Savior, she started repenting and asking God for forgiveness for all the time that she was blaming him for when she thought that he left them. And, the main purpose she understood that this is God’s plan for her and her family, to get to know him better. So now, she says, there is very hard time in Lebanon, and it is very sad everything that is been going on, but she and her family have joy in the Lord, they are not afraid of anything, because they have big faith, she just was baptized, a week ago, she and her daughter, but her son before. So she has peace with God, whether she is here, in Iraq, anywhere, she has the Lord’s peace. [20:8]

bring peace in their heart.<sup>104</sup> Sometimes they find this peace through coming to Lebanon. Where they used to be more grumpy and angry, they found peace after all that happened.<sup>105</sup>

Being thankful seems extraordinary considering the situation these people come from, but still seventeen of the respondents said that they were. Through all the traumatic events such as bombings, insecurity, feeling like a stranger and being left behind, they thank the Lord for everything He gives. As the next quote shows:

“Of course I was mentally stressed, stressed out, psychology very bad, and people were telling me to leave, so with time, thank God, and the help of Jesus, here my brother was released and now everything is good, besides of this. And my father his back was also in stress, and my mother.” [7:7]

Giving praise to God seems to be the general mindset.<sup>106</sup> Everything that they could be thankful for, they are thankful for. Even for the fact that someone listens to them and wants to hear their stories.<sup>107</sup> Sometimes the following question came up: if it would be the case that God would be here, what would you say to Him? Almost no one answered that they would ask him for things, on the contrary: almost everyone would thank him.<sup>108</sup> Nor would anyone ask any questions. And even when they would have a question or do not understand God in what is going on, later on they see how things worked out. When they see this, they start to thank God even for this difficulty and where it led them.<sup>109</sup>

Coming close to the end of this paragraph, all that is left to analyze is hope. One can definitely say in this context: hope is frail, but hard to kill. Of the respondents, eleven refugees said they kept hoping for better days to come, knowing that God is a God of hope.

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<sup>104</sup> Peace of mind, peace of mind. When he go to the church he find peace. [3:11]

<sup>105</sup> She usually used to slam things or beat things. But now she feels calm, when she sits in the presence of the Lord. This is the most thing of ever. And she sings when she is happy, not when she is angry. Even though it is the other way around, she sings when she is happy. [22:17]

<sup>106</sup> It's kind of not forgetting to give praise to God that you are leaving your country and you are let, so you're not forced to leave your country, or your situation, you should not forget to praise God. So even in small matters, to praise God or to thank God, at small things that you keep forgetting about and you don't see the value of that. [11:41]

<sup>107</sup> Observation 10.

<sup>108</sup> I: imagine that God or Jesus would be here, right now, what would you say him right now, out of your heart?  
R: thanks God, it's his will. I: thanks for what? For everything, because they are happy and their family is happy. [4:14/15]

<sup>109</sup> So the mostly sometimes it's a difficult question that we ask that, why God is closing doors in front of us. Like always when I'm going to this, from here to there and almost reached the end and suddenly God shuts doors in front of us, in front of me, but then after a while when I think about it, I realize that it was better that God closes and shut this door in front of me because you start seeing what are the things, what are the wrong things in your way there, so you thank god in a way that he closes the door in front of you. [11:29]

“Always believe that everything is end up for the good. She’s saying, even for the Lebanese people, everything that is going on, it’s going to be better. Because our God is the God of fairness and good.” [21:29]

Proclaiming that nothing could stop this hope, they could see a brighter future against all the odds of the times. Even in situations like the refugee camps that are built in the east of Lebanon, where people are stuck for years and no one seems to care about them, they still find hope for a better future.<sup>110</sup> Even though one does not know what to hope for.<sup>111</sup> One interviewee compared this with standing on a wave: they were not getting out, but they were also not drowning.<sup>112</sup> In this, any person could focus either on the ‘not getting out of the wave’ part or the ‘still not drowning’ part. And many refugees choose to focus on the latter. God gives this hope and can show it better in this desperate situation, which then stirs man into action.<sup>113,114</sup>

A positive mindset is something one wishes everyone to have, but in Lebanon one can definitely find it, through the theological keywords of peace, thankfulness and hope. A peace of mind, thankfulness for everything that is left and hope against all hope.

## 2.9 Conclusion

As an answer to the second sub-question – what kind of theological reflections come from the case study of Christian refugees in Lebanon – seven topics that play a role in the lives of refugees were identified in the analysis of the fieldwork. First of all, refugees’ image of God is a God who arranges everything, takes action, and by this action protects them. He is a God who takes care. Secondly, several aspects were described in the theological anthropology. These refugees are vulnerable, on a pilgrimage in some respects, they lose and start over, and they are discriminated against, but remain very positive. Another aspect is that faith is central in their life and does not disappear, but becomes stronger. In this, their religious life plays an important role, especially prayer. A fifth aspect is the forms

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<sup>110</sup> Observation 8.

<sup>111</sup> Observation 28.

<sup>112</sup> So here it’s like, we are standing on a wave, we are not drowning and we are not getting out of the wave, like in the sea. So I just want my children to settle down in one stable country to be safe. [10:54]

<sup>113</sup> Observation 16.

<sup>114</sup> God doesn’t forget that you are his son, daughter. He is our father and a father doesn’t keep his son out on the street, even if our main reason that bring us here is not the refugee but I know what you mean by the question, it’s having the hope that there is someone up there and having the faith in him and the will to survive, because you know it is ultimately related to I believe, you know that he is there, you have to work and know that he will help you. Cannot sit there and say I don’t have work or a home. You have to get up and it’s the hope and it’s the faith that makes you get up in the morning and having the will to work and search for a place to live in. [17:32]

of their religious life: the church, which helps them to integrate and feel dignity. Furthermore, the participants also described lessons they learned themselves, which were partly lessons of faith but also lessons of character. Last of all, three important aspects were described as theological mindset, which are thankfulness, peace and hope. All of these seven topics define how refugees can be seen as Locus Theologicus.

## Chapter 3: Correlation

This thesis is about the question which theological insights Migrant Theology as professional theology can draw from the faith and experiences of refugees as peoples' theology. In the previous chapters, this question was approached through theoretical research and fieldwork. In this last section, the following question will be answered:

*What insights can be inferred from the correlation between theoretical research and fieldwork?*

It is shown in what ways theory and the field have commonalities, stand in contrast to each other or provide new insights for the other. These commonalities, contrasts and insights bring forth four insights for Migration Theology through the stories of Abraham, Hagar, Job and Mary. After explaining this, the conclusion will answer the main question of this thesis.

### 3.1 Commonalities

There are many commonalities between fieldwork and theoretical research, of which the most important ones will be discussed. Because of these commonalities, it seems that the literature is aware of many theological insights of refugees. A first commonality concerns faith. As De Graaf and Schmoller discuss, faith is a central theme in the life of refugees (de Graaf, 2020; Schmoller, 2016). The fieldwork confirms this, as the refugees interviewed said their faith was strengthened. Not only their faith became stronger, they themselves were also changed, which is similar to Chad Rimmer's idea that people are renewed (Cruz, 2010). Oftentimes, their faith increases and they trust God even more than they did before their flight. This is framed by Cruz as a 'steadfast faith', which is a correct description according to the field (Cruz, 2014).

Another common aspect is the vulnerability that comes with being displaced. Fieldwork shows that the interviewees mostly felt vulnerable due to their flight, but also due to discrimination or unequal treatment. They were treated as lesser beings in their payment, job and healthcare availability. As Anderson (2015) recalls, they always have a 'not-good-enough-status'. Therefore, they do not feel like they are human, which causes feelings of fear and sadness. The literature recognizes this vulnerable feeling and derives an antithesis from it: refugees should be seen as the *Imago Dei*, as humans made by God himself (Groody, 2009). Moreover, Groody (2009) uses the term of *Missio Dei* to claim that vulnerable people have something to give, so that there should be mutually enriching contact.

A third commonality is found in the church. Church culture contrasts with the previous point, because there is equality. The fieldwork shows that refugees felt welcome at church. The activities helped them to be themselves. And in the literature, de Graaf and Schmoller already pointed to an important role of the church for migrants, as research confirms that this helps to integrate (de Graaf, 2020; Schmoller, 2016).

As the theoretical research showed, stories from the Bible can be important in Migrant Theology as an analogy for migrants. Although many stories that play a role in Migrant Theology do not play a role in lives of the refugees of the fieldwork, one story certainly does. This is the story of Abraham. For Christian refugees in Lebanon, Abraham became an identity figure, especially in the way he moved without resistance and followed God. In theoretical research, Abraham is also seen as the first migrant who in obedience took a leap of faith (Dube, 2016; Phan, 2020). Moreover, the fieldwork shows that the Bible in itself is important to refugees, as they find wisdom, faith and mental healing in it.

The mental healing found in the Bible may be related to the last commonality: the attention to and importance of hope. As Suna-Koro characterizes, there should be hope against all hopes in these kinds of situations (Suna-Koro, 2020). This is seen in the field when refugees keep going in their lives, although no hope is left. Therefore, refugees are an example in holding on to hope for the best that is yet to come, even if life does not seem to go that way.

## **3.2 Contrasts**

In theoretical research, several elements were discussed that generally take place during migration. Some of these were not apparent in the field. Therefore, there is a contrast between fieldwork and theory, as described in this thesis before as the forming of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2012). First of all, Cruz (2014) argues that the lives of migrants can be seen as a pilgrimage. This is because people are on the road, trying to reach a destination. Although refugees in this research are indeed on the road, trying to reach a destination, other characteristics of a pilgrimage are not compatible. For example, a pilgrimage indicates a voluntary decision to leave, while refugees are forced to leave. In addition, pilgrims mostly come back home after reaching their destination, while the refugees I interviewed did not. Similar to this aspect of pilgrimage, the story of Exodus is also not recognizable for them. This story is a common story in Liberation Theology, because it speaks about liberation from slavery and being led towards the promised land (Gruber, 2015). In the fieldwork, not one participant compared themselves with this story. They did not describe themselves as being liberated, but instead they saw their homeland as the promised land they had to leave. In line with

these two aspects, a third aspect that refugees do not pay attention to is intercultural theology, while Castillo Guerra (2007) suggests that this can be the case among refugees. In practice, the participants did not feel a gap between their own culture and the culture they lived in. Maybe this is because the cultures of Lebanon and Syria are quite similar. But also during their flight and the first moments of living in a new place, there was less attention for intercultural theology.

As mentioned earlier, the theme of vulnerability is clearly present both in theoretical research and fieldwork. But while vulnerability stands in line with the incarnation of Jesus in theory, among refugees in the field it does not. The incarnation is seen in theory as a strong image, since Jesus became vulnerable by becoming human and this symbolizes God's presence among the suppressed and poor (Groody, 2009). But among interviewees, Jesus was not viewed as an incarnation of vulnerability. For them, Jesus was the image of conquering pain just as they did, and therefore Jesus knew what they were going through and could empathize with them. Another absent symbol in fieldwork is the symbol of the Eucharist. Groody (2009) argues that this sacrament symbolizes a different kind of God's approach, in which there is place for every-body and people become some-body. In the fieldwork, this idea was not observed. The Eucharist did not seem more special in times of being displaced.

As already discussed among the commonalities, the church is very important to refugees. But what is missing in the literature is that the church is not only important for finding a new home in a strange country, but it can also be very important for people on the road. Several refugees in this research described how they found shelter in churches along the way.

A seventh contrast is the importance of prayer for participants. Although the literature pays special attention to religious practices that can be very important for refugees, it does not pay special attention to prayer (Suna-Koro, 2020). The fieldwork shows explicitly the importance of prayer. Of all religious practices, prayer can be seen as one of the best options for refugees to practice their faith.

The last contrast is about changing identities. The research of Castillo Guerra (2007) claims that refugees change in three stages, in which the last stage of integration changes their identity. In the field, it was confirmed that this does not happen in the first two stages, because during the flight identities do not change. But, contrary to Castillo Guerra's idea, identity change was also not observed once they started living in another country. They became stronger and more believing, but their identity did not change. Therefore, they did not come to an 'in-beyond' identity, as Lee (1995) projects. A sidenote could be that these refugees were not integrated yet in the Lebanese culture, although sometimes they had already lived there for ten years.

### 3.3 Insights for literature

It is not strange that there are correlations between the daily life of refugees and the ideas known in theory. That is why fieldwork is useful: to sharpen existing theological ideas. So in this section, the insights for theory out of the field will be examined.

To start with the definition of Migrant Theology described in the very beginning of the theoretical research, Castillo Guerra (2007) claims that Migrant Theology is about 'humanly mobility'. Although some literature pays attention to this mobility, there is often far more attention for the second part of the definition: '*rooting and living together with people from another cultural or religious orientation*'<sup>115</sup> (Castillo Guerra, 2020, p. 42). In contrast with this definition, the fieldwork suggests that many theological reflects can be found in the movement of being displaced, especially in the costs and hardships people endure.

A second insight is suggested by the description of God by refugees. Chapter 2 discussed how God is described and how important these descriptions are. Strangely, Migrant Theology does not pay much attention to the character of God. Even though refugees in the fieldwork describe God as being in control, interfering, arranging their lives and helping them, in the literature these images of God are lacking. Although Groody pays attention to the God who crosses borders, Suna-Kuro (2020) describes God as 'Deus Migrator' and Phan (2020) even describes God as a Migrant, little more is said on this topic. There is no description of which characteristics of God are important. In relation to how the participants see God, there is also room for the questions of Theodicy. But these questions do not have a large place in Migrant Theology. So looking through the eyes of refugees towards theology, this should be re-evaluated.

Another insight is found in the four aspects of Migration Theology offered by Groody (2009) when writing about God. As described before, the Imago Dei and Missio Dei are relevant for Christian refugees in Lebanon. In contrast, Verbum Dei raises more difficulties. According to Groody, Verbum Dei means that God migrated to humanity, symbolizing that there are no borders that cannot be crossed. In the lives of interviewees, there are many borders that are impossible to cross. Many refugees in the field are stuck in an 'in-between-land', where movement forwards or backwards is impossible. Furthermore, the idea of Visio Dei, which describes a new eschatological horizon of faith

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<sup>115</sup> Translated from the Dutch definition: "een contextuele theologische reflectie op het fenomeen van de menselijke mobiliteit, de ontvangst, het wortelen en het samen-leven met mensen met een andere culturele of religieuze oriëntatie" (Castillo Guerra, 2020, p.42)

and unbelief, is absent (Groody, 2009). Although participants experienced their faith strongly, they did not speak about eschatology. Remarkably, they did not speak about death at all. Therefore, while *Imago Dei* and *Missio Dei* are observed in the field, *Verbum Dei* and *Visio Dei* were missing.

There are also insights when looking at theological anthropology. Firstly, Cruz (2010) writes that refugees can feel guilt and homesickness and therefore they can have a 'creative resistance' within them. Among refugees in Lebanon, not many of these aspects were seen. People tried to build up a new life, and although they might have been worried for their home country and missed it, guilt and homesickness were not necessarily seen and consequently no 'creative resistance'. On the contrary, many other feelings were present in their lives which are not described in the literature. It is remarkable that participants were very positive. For them, material goods became less important and they felt a lot of joy and peace while living in another country. Moreover, they felt a lot of thankfulness for being where they were at that time. And although the cause was negative, they experienced that they had gained more patience in life. Furthermore, they also experienced a lot of peace, living in safe conditions. So in the literature, there should be more attention to these positive feelings.

Last of all, there is a difference in the practice of their beliefs. In theory, de Graaf (2020) says that the religious community is very important for refugees, and as Oliden (2015) states, there are rituals that change, which he calls 'superlocative'. In the field, this is confirmed, but there seems to be more to it. It was observed that there are many rituals that can be important. And contrary to Oliden's idea, these rituals mostly did not become superlocative, but stayed the same as in the refugee's home country. As explained before, prayer was important. Moreover, saints played an important role, especially the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, metaphysical experiences like dreams, visions, healings and religious artifacts were experienced by participants. Here, there seems to be a difference in what kind of rituals is important. The fieldwork focuses more attention on individual rituals, whereas the literature concentrates more on communal rituals. Therefore, refugees put more worth in rituals than is described in Migration Theology.

### **3.4 Four stories reflecting the correlation**

Describing the commonalities, contrasts and insights in correlating the literature review and fieldwork brings forth several insights about what Migration Theology can learn from Christian refugees interviewed in the fieldwork. These insights will be summarized through four different stories of the Bible. These stories show how the Bible itself is full of Migration Theology with special attention for

the perspective of refugees. The central question in paragraph is how this story reflects what Migration Theology can learn from Christian refugees in Lebanon.

### Abraham as a migrant on the road

One noticeable consideration in the fieldwork is the way refugees speak about the God of Abraham. Refugees feel a connection with Abraham, because he was also a refugee. Although Migration Theology suggests that he is the first migrant, the period of Abraham being on the road is mostly forgotten (Phan, 2020). God asked Abraham to leave the land he knew and the certainty he had, to go to another place which was unknown and uncertain. Even so, Abraham left and started walking on an unknown road. He kept walking, not knowing where God would lead him. On this road, Abraham experienced that God took care of him and led him. In the wilderness of the unknown, Abraham had patience. Even when promises were made but did not come true immediately, Abraham trusted God. Through this, his patience found a reward and his faith became stronger.

Many things that Abraham passed through were also part of the life of refugees. The fieldwork describes that they left their homelands without knowing where to go. Sometimes they had the idea that God asked them to leave, but more often, they were chased away. Just like Abraham, their life became uncertain and the known was exchanged for the unknown. Yet in the unknown, refugees experienced a God who led them and had everything in His hand. This was confirmation of the belief that God is trustworthy. At the same time, they could not do anything else than put their trust in God, because all materials and certainty fell away. This flight can be compared with the wilderness that Abraham was in and having patience for better days to come. In the midst of these hardships, of stepping into the unknown, refugees found what it is like to keep trusting God, to see faith becoming stronger and see patience rewarded.

In light of the story of Abraham, refugees are teachers for Migrant Theology. They challenge Migrant Theology to focus on the Abraham who had not arrived yet, who did not focus on integration, but on survival and patiently following God's lead, in which God is the One who cares.

### Hagar in the in-between-lands

In line with the story of Abraham, the story of the slave Hagar is told. Phan dubs her the first biblical refugee, and her story is remarkable in many ways (Phan, 2020). A feeling of injustice arises with this story. Although the story is not explicitly mentioned by refugees in Lebanon, the stories they told are quite similar to the story of Hagar. I therefore decided that the story of Hagar expresses the story refugees tell. The story recounts that Hagar becomes homeless together with her son Ishmael. From

an unpeaceful situation at home, she ends up in a distressing, traumatic experience in the desert. As the story continues, her bread and water run out and she gets lost. Caught in survival mode, she decides it is better to leave her child behind, so she does not have to see him die. Nobody seems to be around her and nobody seems to care. She finds herself in a nobody's land between the end and an unseen beginning. She is dwelling, but not crossing. In this nobody's land, God joins her and becomes a God who empathizes with her and helps her. He does not leave Hagar alone, because He always stays with his people, especially with the weak and oppressed. Not only does He stay with her, He also interferes. He helps Hagar to see a new beginning: a well filled with water. In this, He is a God who provides. And that is the reason why Hagar can move again to leave the nobody's land towards a new beginning.

In every refugee nowadays, a Hagar is seen. Refugees leave their home, although they do not want to. In this injustice, refugees go through traumatic and distressing situations. Death is around the corner when they have to walk along dangerous roads, cross the sea or when they have to trust smugglers. These people are in a constant mode of survival. They are, as Hagar, in a nobody's land between the end and a new beginning, they are dwelling but not crossing. Not much is valuable in this nobody's land, except for the progress that is made in kilometers. In this nobody's land, God looks at these refugees and joins them. He appears as an Empathizer who travels with them, provides and interferes. More than once, refugees described instances when God interfered in a miraculous way. God interferes because he does not see a refugee, but a human being. Without his empathy, help or interference, many refugees claim that they would not have made it. This gave them the hope that the nobody's land will end and a new beginning will come, as happened with Hagar.

Here, the story of Hagar shows that Migrant Theology should pay attention to the nobody's land that refugees find themselves in, that many of them are still dwelling and not crossing. And that in the midst of this endless situation, they experience God as a God who empathizes, helps and arranges a way out, so that many of refugees find a way out of nobody's land.

### **Job being steadfast with questions and faith**

The book of Job has a long tradition of being 'the book about suffering'. The story is not used in Migration Theology. In Liberation Theology, Gutiérrez (1987) sees Job as someone who becomes aware of the poor and suppressed and who believes in God without expectation. But Gutiérrez does not show sides of the story of Job that are experienced by Christian refugees. In the story of Job, everything is taken from him: his house, family, money and even his friends. In this, the vulnerability

of humankind becomes apparent: everything can disappear in a flash. That sounds like a recipe for depression, and these feelings do indeed appear in Job. In his feelings, his focus is on God. He wonders why God allowed all this to happen, he even accuses God of being unjust. He wrestles with the so-called Theodicy: why does God allow this suffering to happen if He could end it? Yet, Job does not consider letting go of his faith for one moment. He does not doubt the existence of God and seems to rely on God even more when his friends and wife question him. He keeps believing steadfastly that God takes care of him and is full of patience in his wait for God's answer. In the end, it turns out God is indeed in control.

The feeling of losing everything you have is familiar for people who have fled. In a span of days, they lose their possessions, home and culture. Just like Job, they lose family members: husbands, wives, mothers, fathers and even children. In their suffering, they recall God's goodness. They start to focus on God even more and rely on his righteousness. But, in their faith they also wonder why God allows this all to happen. The question of Theodicy becomes relevant. But in their questions and suffering, the steadfastness of their faith does not suffer, as the story of Job also shows. In the end, God is God. He may have a reason, and even if not, He still is God: the transcendent force who takes care of everything. Moreover, during their suffering, refugees described that they have patience.

By telling their story through the story of Job, it is shown that the Theodicy should play a role in Migration Theology. Job does not ignore suffering, he endures it while maintaining his focus on God. He questions God, but never lets go of his faith and trust in God, and God finally shows him that He is in control. Migration Theology should pay attention to this focus on God and the steadfast faith that does not ignore the Theodicy. Patience is formed in the character of Job, which Migration Theology can certainly add as a relevant characteristic.

### Mary, who practices her beliefs

The last story to highlight is about Mary of Magdalene. Before Jesus enters his last days of suffering, Mary wants to show that she feels great submission and thankfulness towards Jesus. She uses an old ritual which symbolizes anointing. She buys a cup of expensive perfume and pours it out over Jesus during a meal with his friends. This anointing contains a lot of meaning. For Mary, it seems to say that she wants to honor her friend, savior and identification figure. The cost of the perfume symbolizes how much Jesus is worth to her and how little money matters. The ritual does not echo despair of what is coming, but seems to symbolize gratitude. Few of the people around them understand what Mary is doing, but she does not seem to care about that. Although the form of the ritual is important, the

intention of Mary seems more important. She stands by her conviction and devotes herself to the things she believes.

Considering the rituals which are practiced by refugees, this story can first of all be seen as an example of the power of rituals and the way they give meaning to negative events. For refugees, rituals are an example of how faith has a prominent place in their life. Over and over again, prayers are said, candles are burnt, saints are remembered and holy places are visited. All of this is performed to make their faith a living practice. Of all these rituals, prayer is the main form in which refugees exercise their beliefs. In the same way Mary pours her perfume out over Jesus, refugees pour out their prayers before God. Like Mary, they start to care less about the material and more about the spiritual, about honoring God. Next to the importance of the ritual itself, refugees show they do not live in despair, but in positivity and thankfulness, like Mary shows in her act towards Jesus.

This story shows in many ways what Migrant Theology can learn from refugees fleeing their home. It shows how rituals are important on the road, while materials become less important. Next to that, it shows how refugees focus on the things that remain, maintaining the positivity and thankfulness for everything around them. In Mary, a symbol is born of the devotion of refugees towards God.

### **3.5 Summary**

In this chapter, it was discussed which insights Migration Theology should draw from the fieldwork. It was shown that there are three ways to correlate the fieldwork and the literature review. First, there are comparisons between the fieldwork and Migration Theology. Secondly, there are contrasts, and lastly, the fieldwork provides new insights for Migration Theology. These comparisons, contrasts and insights are translated into four stories in the Bible that tell the stories of Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq in an analogical way.

## Conclusion: Refugees as Locus Theologicus

Based on all descriptions, analyses, comparisons and conclusions in the sections above, the main question of this thesis can be answered:

*In what way can Migration Theology learn from the life and theological reflections of Christian refugees in Lebanon?*

To give an answer, one should first ask whether Migration Theology as professional theology can indeed learn from the life and theological reflections of Christian refugees in Lebanon as peoples' theology. One could say that Migration Theology already contains the perspective of refugees, since refugees are a subcategory of migrants. As the previous section shows, next to commonalities, there are also contrasts between the theory of Migrant Theology and the fieldwork. New insights for Migration Theology follow from the fieldwork. Therefore, because of these corrections and correlations, it can be concluded that Migrant Theology can learn from the life and theological reflections of Christian refugees in Lebanon. Furthermore, the peoples' theology of refugees can be seen as Theological Locus, since theology happens in the midst of their life, bringing a new perspective to professional theology.

Now that it is clear that Christian refugees have something to say to Migrant Theology, the next step is to see what worth these reflections have. Surely, these reflections do not contain paradigm shifts. They are better characterized as nuances: the refugee's perspective offers a nuance of how God, humans and the world should be seen. So to answer the main question of this thesis: Migration Theology can learn from several nuances that Christian refugees in Lebanon offer through their life and theological reflections. These nuances are in the end what Migration Theology aims for: to look through the eyes of the weak and suppressed towards Scripture. Moreover, the aim of fieldwork is to offer a critical theological reflection of daily life, in order to provide new insights for the Christian tradition and to challenge her. Concluding that Migration Theology can be nuanced by people's theology of Christian refugees in Lebanon, the question arises: which nuances do refugees provide?

Through four stories found in the Bible, the nuances are explained. First of all, the story of Abraham indicates that migrants are people on their way, searching for a new home without any certainty. While Migration Theology mostly characterizes the migrant as living in the country of arrival and not as being on the road, refugees show that peoples' theology is found on the road. The story of Hagar represents that migrants are people who are dwelling in a nobody's land where God takes care of them. Refugees show through the story of Hagar that God is an Empathizer. The story of Job shows that migrants are

people who dare to question God, but keep holding on to their faith, patiently. And lastly, the story of Mary symbolizes that migrants are people who stand by their rituals, without any material attachment and with positivity and thankfulness.

In all these lessons drawn from the fieldwork towards Migration theology, it is shown that Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq are a Locus Theologicus: they form an inspiration for Migration Theology and moreover, for Christianity.

## Discussion

Before concluding this thesis, it is important to explore the limitations of and critical questions towards this research, as well as suggestions for further research. First of all, it should be noticed that much more research was done than described so far. More interviews were done for this research. In the Netherlands, interviews took place with Christian refugees and theological experts who work with refugees. In these conversations, more topics were highlighted that are interesting regarding the subject. But because of the storyline of this thesis and the maximum length, this was not included in the final version. This material may be useful for further research.

Regarding the interviews, a few critical remarks can be made. First of all, researchers are dependent on the people they meet and the connections they have. The starting point in Lebanon was a Christian organization, which is why most of the people that were interviewed belonged to a Christian community. Therefore, it is less surprising that they were still believers and faith was important to them. It would be interesting to see if refugees that are not part of or participating in a church would have the same experiences as the respondents in this research.

Another critical remark can be made about the gender of people participating in the research. Most of the participants were women. Men were harder to find, because of their work schedule and possibly also because they are not so outspoken about faith as women. It could be that the way women experience their faith differs from the way men experience it. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that everything said by women is applicable for all refugees.

Not only the fieldwork, but also the literature review has limitations. Not all sources in Migration Theology were used because of the limited time span of the research. It can be that other sources contain information that is relevant for the main question. As a consequence, it is possible that differences between the literature review and fieldwork are already mentioned somewhere else.

Next to the limitations of this research, there are also suggestions for further research. First of all, as already mentioned, more interviews were done with different groups that may be interesting to discuss. In addition, the observations and interviews in this research were only done with Syrian and Iraqi Christian refugees. It would be interesting to see if other groups of refugees are experiencing the same. This comparison could show whether there are typical characteristics for certain groups of refugees. This could put the conclusions of this research in another light.

To conclude, it may also be interesting to put the results of this research in another perspective. Although it is scientifically hard to compare Christian refugees in Lebanon and the Western society, it is certain that refugees can function as a mirror for behaviour in Westernized society. Through all the stories told in the conclusion, lessons can be extracted for people living in the West.

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## Appendix 1

### Appendix 1 – Half-structured interview questions

1. Who are you?
2. How's your life story in global lines?
3. Why did you come to Lebanon?
4. How did you get to Lebanon?
5. How was you raised religiously and what changed about that during your flight?
6. What does religion mean to you, what do you find the most important part?
7. What kind of rituals are important to you?
8. What do you normally pray?
9. Imagine that you could go back to the day you left, what would you say to yourself?
10. Imagine that you could go back to the day you left, what would you say to God/Jesus?
11. Imagine that Jesus would be here, what would you tell/ask Him?
12. Can you go back to a memory that you were really upset during your flight, what was it and what would you like to say to God in that situation?
13. What can people learn from refugees?

### Appendix 2 – Overview interviewees

Gender	Church domination	Country	Age
Woman	Chaldean	Iraq	39
Woman	Chaldean	Iraq	40 ish
Man	Chaldean	Iraq	48
Man	Chaldean	Iraq	50 ish
Woman	Armenian Evangelical	Syria – Aleppo	25
Woman with son	Assyrian Orthodox	Syria	50 ish and 20 ish
Woman	Assyrian Orthodox	Syria	65 ish
Woman	Assyrian Orthodox	Syria	20 ish
Woman	Assyrian Orthodox	Syria	30 ish
Woman	Assyrian Orthodox	Syria	71
Woman	Armenian Evangelical	Syria – Aleppo	27

Man	Armenian Evangelical	Syria – Aleppo	41
Family	Armenian Orthodox	Syria – Aleppo	45 ish
Woman	Greek Orthodox	Syria	40
Woman	Armenian Evangelical	Syria – Raqqa	35 ish
Woman	Armenian Orthodox	Syria – Aleppo	41
Woman	Armenian Orthodox	Syria	28
Family	Armenian orthodox	Syria	18 – 40 – 45
Woman	Syriac Catholic	Syria	40 ish
Woman	Syriac Catholic	Syria	35 ish
Woman	Chaldean	Iraq	50 ish
Woman	Chaldean / Evangelical	Iraq	41
Woman	Evangelical	Syria	33
Man	Evangelical	Syria – Aleppo	28
Converted (so not part of the research)			
Woman	Converted	Syria	30ish
Family	Converted	Egypt	35ish
<b>Total</b>			
5 man 3 families 17 woman	6 Chaldean 6 Assyrian orthodox 4 Armenian evangelical 4 Armenian orthodox 2 Syriac catholic 2 Evangelical 1 Greek Orthodox 2 converted	18 Syrians 6 Iraqis 1 Egyptians	5 between 20-30 8 between 30-40 9 between 40-50 3 between 50-60 2 above 60

## Appendix 3 – Atlas Ti.9 overview 24 Group Codes

Group code	Code	Comment
Theory - Pilgrimage	Abraham, Armenia carrying cross Dangerous roads, Dessert Exodus Experiencing pilgrimage Kurdistan Other countries on the road Same room, Small bag Staying on the streets	Refugees tell different stories which relate to being on pilgrimage or being on the road to the promised land, as also is associated with the story of Abraham and the Exodus. Furthermore, going to other countries first and then to Lebanon is part of that. They sometimes experience this as carrying their cross.
Theory - Steadfast faith	Always continue Being stronger Big faith Blind faith Couldn't survive without faith Faith Faith should be stable Hold on to faith Put God first Stay close to God	Many refugees have a steadfast faith, which does not decrease but still keeps growing. They first of all describe this faith which they hold on to as blind and big. Next to that, faith in God is part of this, which belongs also to the things that they thought others can learn from refugees. Another correlation between these two is that refugees mention that one should stay strong in life, which is also something they mention with the lessons learnt.
Theory - Vulnerability	Afraid, Bad situation Blast, Clothes Difficult, Dispensing pills Emotional exhausted Fear, Feeling down Hardest day Life is not peace, No joy Nobody cares Not deserving Pain, Sad, Sadness Scared, Stressed Tired, Traumatized Uncertainty, Vulnerable situations, Weak, Worried	From the theory, it is said that refugees are vulnerable and therefore they are the ones who deserve to be looked after. In their own words, they experience their vulnerability in their refugeeship, but also in their emotions and life stories. Therefore this code contains some negative emotions that refugees experience, especially fear and sadness. Next to that, they describe several situations in which they are vulnerable.
Theory - Hope against all hope	Better situations coming Give God praise Hope Small hopes Travelling	Although hope is not a common theme among refugees' words, they of course represent hope in how they act in life. For example, they give God praise in any situation and have the idea and belief that better situations are coming. Sometimes this presents itself in small hopes.

Theory - Identity	Adapting Armenian Assyrian language Being a refugee Discrimination Gods plan Iraq not their home Lebanon as home Losing birth place Positive refugeeship Second home Treated less	Getting and forming a new identity as refugee is influenced by several things. First of all, many refugees find their identity not only in their ethnicity, but also in their religion, like being Assyrian or Armenian. Next to that, they do not always experience Lebanon as a strange country, but as a second home that is associated with a positive refugeeship, compared to how they thought about refugeeship before. Next to that, they also experience discrimination sometimes, which is the flip side. Their identity is also found in being Christian or following Gods plan.
Theory - Liturgical symbols	Baptized, Blessing Communion, Devotional book doing good deeds Donation, Easter Eucharist, Fasting Festival, Giving away money Icon, Incense Lighting candles Lord's prayer Memorized prayer, Offering Power of prayer Practice religion, Prayer Prayer to stay with me Prayerbooks, Praying Rituals, Sacraments Saint, Saints Singing, Virgin Mary Wearing a robe, Worship	The most common liturgical symbol is prayer, almost every refugee names this as being important for him or her. They have several ways in which they practice their prayers. Next to that, they have other rituals, like the sacraments, although these are not named very often. But also the small rituals like lighting candles or fasting. Next to that, they also practice their religion in daily life and give away money because of this. And last of all, also saints are considered important, especially the Virgin Mary.
Theory - Eucharist	Communion Eucharist	The Eucharist was not mentioned many times, but in observations it was seen very often.
Theory - Church community	Arabic orthodox church Armenian church Bisshop, Choir Church, Church activities Different churches Evangelical church Latin church, Leadership Preaching, Religious camps Summerschool Youthgroup	Refugees find a lot of courage and hope in the church and all other kinds of things. Some of the refugees also describe the choir and preaching explicitly when they talk about the church. Many of the refugees talk about their own church, which is of course one of the oriental churches in the Middle East. There are some differences seen between leadership styles, and the bishop is appreciated. Also activities next to the Sunday service are viewed positively.

<p>Stories about Syria</p>	<p>Bodyguard, Bombing  Covering hair  Cutting Jesus head, Daesh  Differences, During war  Forcing for conversion  Healthproblems  Injured, Islam  Islamic threatening  Job, Job affected  Job and healthproblems  Kidnapped, Killed  Life in Syria, Nail polish  Not deserving, Passed away  Rockets, Spionage  Syria, Terrorists  Warzone, Willing to stay</p>	<p>In what refugees tell about the war and their situation in Syria, they highlight several aspects. First of all, they talk a lot about the horrific events that are caused by the terrorists or Daesh. Next to that, they also experienced the war in daily life through rockets and bombing. In this, sometimes the Islam was mentioned. This situation caused them to lose their job or it caused health problems. The life that they described about Syria is filled with this, but also describes some of the normal life before the war.</p>
<p>Reasons to leave</p>	<p>Attack, Attending army  Bad situation, Daesh  Dangerous, Education  Holiday  Leaving because of danger  Leaving unexpected, Military  Not planning to flee  Persecuted, Sickness  Threatening, Tired  Unsafe</p>	<p>Refugees describe different reasons for leaving Syria and Iraq. First of all, it was dangerous, for example attacks, Daesh or threatening. Next to that, some of them had to enlist in the army which made them leave. Also many of them were not planning to leave and stayed after a holiday or in a rush. Also tiredness or education was a reason.</p>
<p>Bible</p>	<p>Abraham, Bible  Biblestories, Biblestudies  Bibleverse, Exodus  Food to the soul  Reading Bible  Stopping waves  Story of the Bible, Storytelling  The Bible and his meaning  Using the Bible, Water  Word of God</p>	<p>The Bible is important for many refugees. They give several descriptions of what the Bible means for them, like food and water. Next to that, they describe several stories and verses out of the Bible that are important to them. And lastly, they tell about what they do with the Bible, like reading it or doing Bible studies.</p>
<p>Theodicy</p>	<p>Away from God  Blaming God, Doubt  Fall in faith  Feeling angry  Feelings of theodicy  God allows this?  God does not answer  Questioning faith, Upset  Why is this happening?</p>	<p>Some refugees are having a phase in their life in which they have feelings about the questions of Theodicy, like doubt or anger. This comes forth from questions about faith and why things are happening when God can stop this. They blame God for this.</p>

Development in faith	<p>Changed faith, Closer to God          Difficulties built you          Evangelical, Faith changed          Faith developed          Faith increased, Growing faith          Growing in spiritual life          Knowing God more          Rebuilding faith, Referring to God, Religion is changed          Rethinking faith</p>	<p>Refugees experience that their religion develops, that it changed, and on the other hand that their faith is increasing or growing.</p>
Refugeeship	<p>Accepting donations, Aid          Arriving, Being a refugee          Clothes, Denial phase          Donations, Equality          Escaping, Feeling home          Feeling not at home          Feeling welcome, Having nothing, Humanitarian works          Humiliated, Insults          Language          Leaving everything, Lifestyle          Losing and starting over          Lost everything          Missing, Missing Syria          Moving on, No rights          Nobody cares, Not at home          Not feeling like a refugee          Not going back          Not knowing anyone          Not missing Syria, Outsider          Positive refugeeship          Refugees, Residency.          Safe, Sickness          Standing on the outside          Starting from zero          Starting over, Syrians are less          To forget, Travelling          Treated less, Unequal treatment          Unfair situation</p>	<p>In the life of a refugee, several themes are found among the interviewees. There is a contradiction, because some refugees experience their refugeeship as positive and they are happy that they left their country of origin. On the other hand, there are refugees that are still not feeling at home in Lebanon. This also had to do with the unequal treatment that they sometimes notice in their life. Syrians are seen as less. On the other hand, they also receive help, but sometimes they find this hard because they are dependent on others. But they really have to start from zero, because they lost everything they once had. Last of all, many are busy with getting a residency.</p>
Importance of faith	<p>Couldn't survive without faith          Faith is light          Having nothing but beliefs          Life is meaningless without faith          Stayed the same, You need God</p>	<p>Refugees think very positive about their faith, in this way that they cannot live without it, and sometimes it's all they have. Faith is therefore like a light.</p>

<p>Religious experiences</p>	<p>Dream Experiences Get out of your boat Miracle Signs from God Waiting for a sign Word of knowledge Work of God</p>	<p>Many refugees describe things they experienced which are not scientifically explainable. For example miracles, either positive or negative things. Also some of them had dreams in which they felt that God spoke to them. They also saw a lot of things as coming from God, like signs, or things which they framed as works of God or sayings of God.</p>
<p>Gods providence</p>	<p>Destiny, Everything is in God Glory to God, God arranges God closes doors God gives directions God interfered God is all-knowing God is polishing, God is right God is the beginning and end God judges, God knows best God makes refugees God makes solutions God opens doors, God perceives God provides, God sends people God shows the way God telling to leave God wants them to leave God watches over us God will tell, Gods plan God's purpose God's will, God's will be done Happening for good cause If we believe or not Interference, Not mad Open to God, Providence of God Reaction to Gods providence Receiving an answer Referring to God, Relying on God Seeking Gods will, Test of faith Testing providence Trails for people God loves</p>	<p>One of the main descriptions from refugees about God was His providence. He arranges the life of refugees and nothing happens without a reason for them. In describing God's providence, they experienced several situations in which God interfered to show them the way to go. This was not always in a good way, but sometimes God also tests the faith of the refugees. Therefore, they also describe how they react or should react to God's interferences. Last of all, this corresponds with God's character which is omniscient and the beginning and end, therefore His will and plan is the best.</p>

Lessons learnt	Altruism, Appreciation Appreciation, Basic needs Belief in God, Challenging yourself, Characteristics Conquer the obstacle Courage, Difficulties built you Don't be attached Don't give up, Empathy Everything will work Focus on God, Happiness Help others, Helping others Injurance, Making stronger Making you stronger Material things not important Money, Not be weak Passing through, Patience Perceiving, Positive Spirit is important Stay strong, Staying strong Strength, Trust God Trust in God, Weak, Will	When refugees are describing what they have learnt through being a refugee they name different things. First of all, they learned that they became stronger through the situation and in this sense that difficulties can build you up. And this also leads to the idea that you should stay strong and you should not give up. Next to that, they started to appreciate their situation more, even though they have less, especially money. It also led to some characteristics like courage, willpower, patience and happiness. They learned to have empathy and help others, and last of all, to trust and focus on God.
Be close to God	Be close to God Close to God, Connection with God, Go to God God be in front, God is close God is on the side, God is with you, God never leaves alone God's children, Keep faith Look up to God	Many refugees experience that God is close to them, He is on their side. Next to that, this is a connection with the call to stay close to God and to stay with Him.

<p>God is ...</p>	<p>Father, Father of refugees          God answers, God as a father          God as an old man          God as backbone, God as father          God blesses, God does not change, God encourages          God gives, God gives answers          God gives comfort, God gives power, God gives safety          God heals, God helps          God is a father, God is fair          God is generous, God is good          God is good with us, God is helping, God is leading          God is life, God is light          God is love, God is near          God is the one, God lead me          God leads, God listens          God loves, God of the powerless          God protects, God returns          God saves, God speaks          God takes care          God talks, God wants good for me, God watches over us          God will not leave, Good Helper, Holy Spirit, in action in contact, Lord and Savior          Love, Nothing is impossible          Other descriptions, Safety          Shepherd, Strength from God          Taking care, Trust God</p>	<p>God is named many times in the interviews in all kind of contexts, but they describe God in several ways. Mainly, God is described as good, in action, in contact, giving safety, taking care and a loving father. Next to that, there are some other descriptions in which God is described in other ways, and He is also given some names or functions. It would be interesting to see what kind of image these different characteristics describe and what kind of God this leads to.</p>
<p>Positive feelings</p>	<p>Gift, God's work          Happiness, Happy          Joy, Not afraid          Not angry, Positive          Positive thinking          Positive through God          Positivity, Rejoice          Smiling, Thankful</p>	<p>Although many things are difficult for refugees, they also describe positive feelings. Most of all, they describe that they are thankful for everything they received. This and other things cause happiness. Next to that, they try to keep up the positivity. They praise God for that.</p>
<p>Important people</p>	<p>Detached from friends          Family          In this together          Relatives          Sacrifice</p>	<p>Family is really important for many refugees, sometimes they are living apart from them and that makes them sad, or they live close to them and that makes them happy. Also relatives and friends are important. Even so important to make sacrifices for them. This also gives them the feeling that they are in this together.</p>

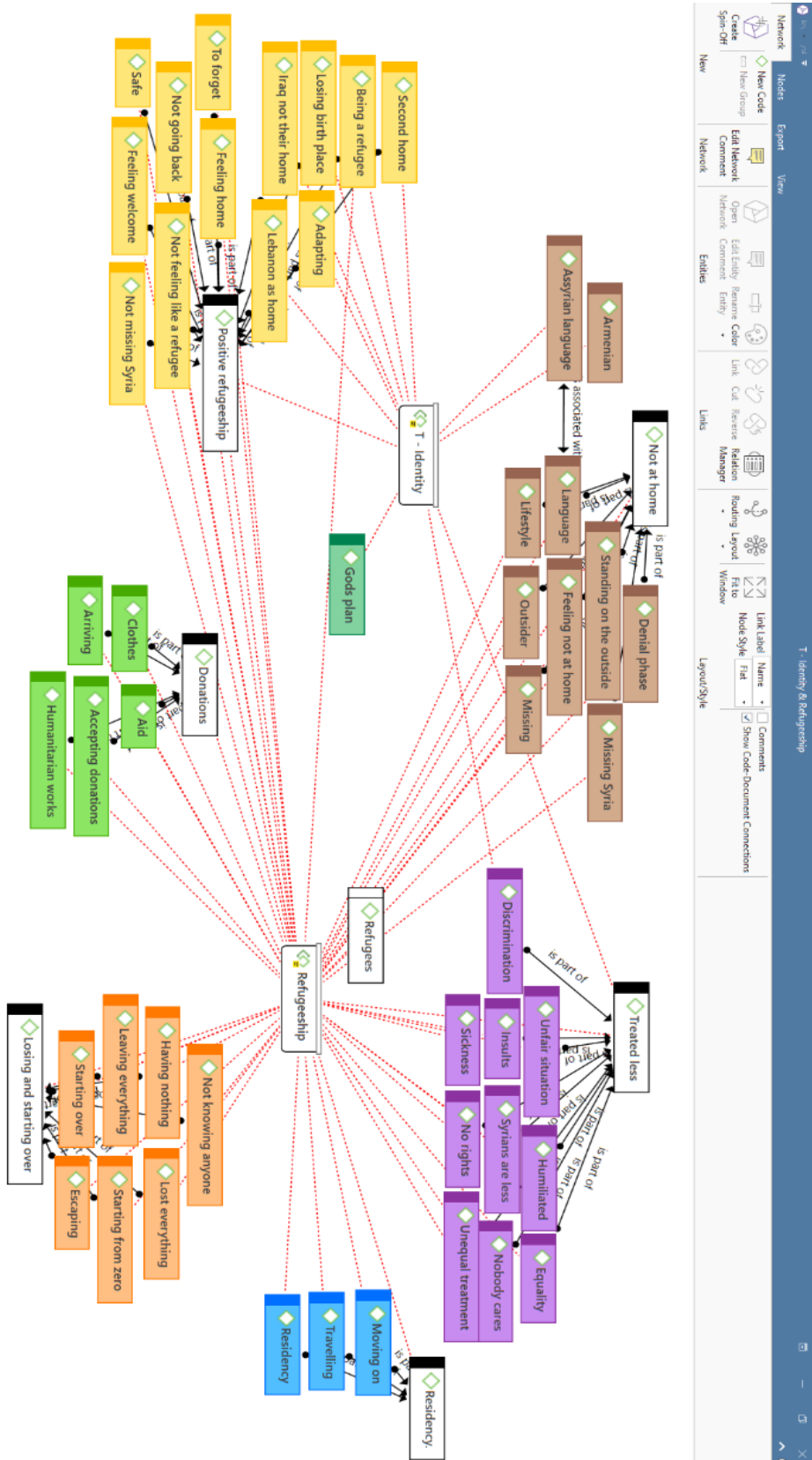
Feeling peace	Inner peace, Live in the moment Love and peace Mental health, Peace	
Jesus	Jesus, Jesus is life Jesus is one Jesus is waiting Name of Jesus, Stopping waves	
Lebanon characteristics	Choosing good things Difficulties in Lebanon Financial crisis, Lebanon Lebanon is open-minded Openminded Stolen, Temptations	Lebanon is experienced in different ways. First of all there is a gap of open-mindedness in the countries they come from (Iraq, Syria) and the way people in Lebanon act and think. This also contains temptations for refugees. On the other hand, they find the situation in Lebanon difficult.
Rest	Accident, Act good After the waves Analytical beliefs Born again, Comfort Comparing, Crying helps Day before leaving Discussions with Muslims Eternal life, Fleeing directly Forgiveness, Franciscans Freedom, Future Liberation, Limited Own faith, Performing What is going to happen?	
Future	Death is like a crown Eternal life Freedom, Future Travelling What is going to happen?	Refugees are still looking to the future and are looking forward to it, especially if they want to travel to another country. On the other hand, they sometimes do not see any positive future or are afraid of it, and therefore they also look forward to eternal life.

## Appendix 4 – Codes in Numbers

Code	Quotations	Different people	Percentage	Category
Difficulties in Lebanon	20	13	54	Discrimination
Treated less	23	13	54	Discrimination
<b>Discrimination total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>19</b>		
Family	38	18	75	Ecclessiology
Church	30	17	71	Ecclessiology
Different churches	14	9	38	Ecclessiology
Importance of people	12	7	29	Ecclessiology
Church activities	8	5	21	Ecclessiology
<b>Ecclessiology total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>96</b>	
Growing faith	24	16	67	Faith
Faith	29	13	54	Faith
Close to God	18	12	50	Faith
Importance of faith	12	8	33	Faith
Staying strong - Faith	9	7	29	Faith
<b>Blaming God</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Faith</b>
Changed faith	5	4	17	Faith
Feelings of theodicy	5	4	17	Faith
Questioning faith	5	4	17	Faith
<b>Faith Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	
Characteristics	25	16	67	Lessons Learnt
Making stronger	13	8	33	Lessons Learnt
Appreciation.	13	7	29	Lessons Learnt
Staying strong	8	7	29	Lessons Learnt
<b>Lessons Learnt total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	
Losing and starting over	19	10	42	Losing and starting over
Not at home	11	8	33	Losing and starting over
<b>Losing and starting over total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>58</b>	
Residency.	18	12	50	Pilgrimage
Dangerous roads	17	10	42	Pilgrimage
Leaving unexpected	14	10	42	Pilgrimage
Experiencing pilgrimage	17	7	29	Pilgrimage
Biblestories	28	6	25	Pilgrimage
Other countries on the road	8	6	25	Pilgrimage
<b>Pilgrimage total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	
Positive refugeeship	19	13	54	Positivity
Prayer	79	22	92	Religious Life
Biblestories	28	18	75	Religious Life
Religious experiences	31	15	63	Religious Life

Rituals	28	11	46	Religious Life
Using the bible	15	11	46	Religious Life
Saints	23	9	38	Religious Life
Practice Religion	7	6	25	Religious Life
The bible and his meaning	8	6	25	Religious Life
Eucharist	4	4	17	Religious Life
Metaphysical	3	3	13	Religious Life
Sacraments	3	2	8	Religious Life
<b>Religious life total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	
Thankful	31	17	71	Theological mindset
Feeling peace	17	13	54	Theological mindset
Hope against hope	20	11	46	Theological mindset
Positivity	8	5	21	Theological mindset
<b>Theological mindset total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	
Vulnerable situations	21	15	63	Vulnerability
Fear.	24	14	58	Vulnerability
Warzone.	25	14	58	Vulnerability
Sadness	28	13	54	Vulnerability
Terrorists.	20	13	54	Vulnerability
Islamic threatening	11	10	42	Vulnerability
<b>Vulnerability total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	
Taking care	50	22	92	Who is God
Providence of God	49	20	83	Who is God
Jesus	31	19	79	Who is God
God is close	31	17	71	Who is God
in action	28	17	71	Who is God
Good	11	9	38	Who is God
Father	12	8	33	Who is God
in contact	14	8	33	Who is God
Safety	22	8	33	Who is God
Testing providence	14	8	33	Who is God
Love	9	6	25	Who is God
<b>Who is God total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>	

# Appendix 5 – Example of Networking Group Codes



## Appendix 6 – The network of the Main Codes

