AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

FAITH-BASED HUMANITARIANISM IN LEBANON

by
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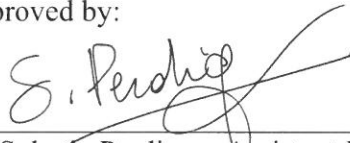at the American University of Beirut

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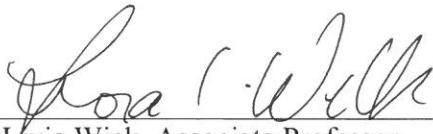
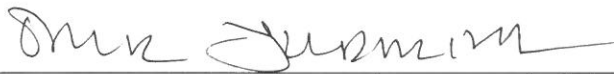## FAITH-BASED HUMANITARIANISM IN LEBANON

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Lebanon

Despite the secularization and professionalization of the humanitarian sector, religious principles and sensibilities continue to influence the humanitarian aid of faith-based organizations and beyond, even if they are not always visible at the surface and even though they conflict at times with the "secular imperative" of humanitarianism.

This thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork with three Christian organizations providing aid to Syrian refugees, which enabled me to scrutinize in detail the aid worker's daily processes of meaning-making and distinction. I found that individuals working in faith-based organizations constantly renegotiate the place of religion in their work. They navigate tensions and paradoxes that emerge from the contradiction between religious and secular humanitarian principles by concealing the religious character of the organization or conversely, by attributing religious meaning to the aid.

The aid workers reinforce the internal cohesion in the organizations by distinctions on different levels: secularized faith-based organizations distinguish themselves from evangelist organizations and vice versa, and religious aid workers distinguish themselves from non-religious ones and vice versa. This points to the diversity of Christian humanitarian organizations. A final finding is that faith-based organizations rely on networks based on a shared Christian belief, which speaks to the continuous transnational power of Christianity.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Before Mouna visits a refugee camp for a German Christian NGO she works for, she puts on a red vest with the logo of her organization and ties a scarf around her neck. What refugees can see as they encounter her: a friendly, professional aid worker from the organization which sends once a month a doctor or a midwife to the camps. What they do not see: Mouna wears a necklace with a small golden cross which is hidden underneath the scarf. In a similar way, faith-based organizations conceal their religious values and underpinnings behind a secularized, professional humanitarian action.

Modern humanitarianism has witnessed profound transformations in the past century and a half, influenced by globalization, secularization and professionalization. While in the 19th century and before a good part of humanitarian action and charity was organized by religious institutions, the biggest share of contemporary humanitarian aid has been taken over by NGOs and large agencies like the UNHCR. This shift in humanitarian may lead to the deduction that the importance of religion declined in humanitarian action. In contrast, my thesis demonstrates the persisting impact of religion on the discourse and practices of organizations involved in humanitarian aid. The central argument of my thesis is that religious principles and sensibilities continue to influence humanitarian aid in faith-based organizations and beyond, even if they are not always visible at the surface and even though they contradict at times with the secular norms of humanitarianism.

To illustrate how religion still matters for humanitarian action, I analyze the complex network of humanitarian organizations that addresses the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. These organizations vary in many dimensions: there are the large agencies of the United Nations, organizations run by foreign governments, local Lebanese non-governmental organizations, Islamic charity organizations and many more. I will focus on foreign Christian faith-based humanitarian organizations since they take over a significant share of the aid and are theoretically interesting cases to study the interplay between religion and humanitarian aid. The defining feature of faith-based organizations is that they invoke religion in their foundational principles, for example, by referring to God or the Bible.

My case study of three faith-based organizations providing help to Syrian refugees in Lebanon illustrates how religion plays different roles for the organizations under study. Some of the faith-based organizations perceive in the humanitarian crisis a God-given opportunity to share the Christian faith with the refugees and to perform missionary work. Others have adopted a secular, universal language of aid for the suffering and mostly conceal their religious background in their practical work.

My analysis fleshes out how different principles guide the humanitarian action of Christian faith-based organizations. My theoretical considerations avoid essentializing notions of "the religious" or "the secular" in humanitarianism. In contrast, I focus on the practices and experiences of people who work in faith-based organizations and document how they mediate religion and secularism in their daily life. One important aspect are distinctions on different levels: between faith-based organizations, between religious and non-religious aid workers, and between Lebanese aid workers and Syrian refugees.

A. Background: Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Of all countries hosting Syrian refugees, Lebanon accommodates the greatest

number compared to the country's population. 947,000 Syrian refugees are currently

registered at the UNCHR in Lebanon (UNHCR 2019), but the Council of Ministers

and the General Security prohibited the agency from registering refugees in 2016.

Therefore, the actual number of refugees is significantly higher and is estimated to be

1.5 million or more. Until now, the Lebanese government has not created a

comprehensive national refugee response strategy, leaving the work to ministries and

mostly foreign NGOs. The UNHCR coordinates the humanitarian aid with the Syria

Regional Refugee Response Plan.

The presence of refugees in Lebanon has attracted a great number of

humanitarian organizations. The UNICEF office in Lebanon, for example, increased

its staff from 12 people in 2006 to 240 people in 2018, according to one of their

employees. Among the 46 members of the Lebanese Humanitarian INGO Forum

(LHIF), about a quarter of the organizations are faith-based. Their denominations

range from Christian INGOs like Caritas, Diakonia, World Vision, HEKS, Medair or

the Jesuit Refugee Service to Islamic organizations like Islamic Relief. Various local

organizations also address the needs of Syrian refugees.

The social and political environment for refugees in Lebanon can be described

as hostile. Refugees are continuously criminalized and pushed outside the official

status of refugee—Lebanese authorities prefer the term "displaced persons" over

refugees[1] (Naufal 2012). The laws governing their situation change frequently and

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[1] Many people who have found themselves in the situation of displacement
refuse to label themselves as refugees. And obviously, refugee experiences and
identities are not singular and cannot described by one term. Nonetheless, I decided
to use the term "refugee" to stress the violence of war and of forced migration and to

are opaque for most refugees. Furthermore, the legal framework makes it difficult for Syrian refugees to work or to reside legally in Lebanon (M. Fawaz et al. 2018a).

Studies demonstrate that hostile attitudes against Syrian refugees are widespread among Lebanese citizens. More than 90 % of Lebanese have negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees and perceive them as a threat to the national stability and security (Christophersen et al. 2013; Wannis 2014) as well as to the country's value system (Harb and Saab 2014). In addition, the majority of Lebanese believe that Syrian refugees take jobs from Lebanese (Christophersen et al. 2013). Lebanese politicians have repeatedly called for a repatriation of Syrian refugees and increased the pressure on them to return, despite the fact that human rights organizations have documented that refugee's fear of arrests and torture upon return to Syria are well grounded (Khawaja 2018) and have warned against sending refugees back too quickly without guaranteeing solid protection (Mhaissen and Hodges 2019).

The living conditions of refugees deteriorate as their debts and their vulnerability increase. Three quarters of refugees live below the poverty line with less than 4 USD per day, while 58 percent live in extreme poverty (UNHCR 2018). Hence, they depend heavily on humanitarian assistance.

B. Literature Review and Contribution

This thesis contributes to three fields of research: research on the humanitarian response to the refugee crisis in Lebanon, research on the role of religion in a secular age and research on faith-based organizations.

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recognize that international law legitimizes the presence of refugees in Lebanon (M. Fawaz et al. 2018b).

1. The Refugee Response in Lebanon

Most of the studies on Syrian refugees in Lebanon tackle political topics (Geha and Talhouk 2018; Naufal 2012), the impact on the Lebanese economy (Cherri, González, and Delgado 2016) or the refugee's mental health (El Chammay, Kheir, and Alaouie 2013; Kazour et al. 2017). In contrast, studies on the dynamics of religion and secularism—especially from an anthropological perspective—are scarce. Some scholars studied the relationship between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese population in relation to sectarianism and sectarian tensions (Meier 2014; Tınas 2017) or the role of religion for Syrian refugees in Lebanon in coping with the existential experiences of war, loss and rupture (Pesquet 2015). I will build on these previous accounts and especially on Kathryn Kraft's work (2015, 2017) on the aid of Lebanese Evangelical Churches for Syrian refugees.

Although these studies are valuable contributions, none of them traced the implications of the religious and cultural context on the humanitarian response in a comparative way. My aim is to fill this literature gap and investigate how the relationship between Lebanese aid workers and Syrian refugees are shaped by subtle distinctions. Further, I argue that the sectarianized Lebanese identities—meaning that the belonging to a religious confession matters more than individual religiosity—play into the dynamics of religion in the organizations and might even undermine attempts to keep religion out of the workplace.

2. The Secular Imperative of Humanitarianism

The traditional definition of secularism is the strict separation of church and state. In the past decade and a half, scholars like Talal Asad (2015), Charles Taylor (2007) and Saba Mahmood (2016) promoted a more nuanced understanding of the

phenomenon and linked secularism to modern liberal governance and capitalist

nation-states. The study of secularism is interested in how states organize religious

life, in the cultural and political production of modern secular societies and the

dynamic practices of secularism:

> The secular, in other words, is not the natural bedrock from which
> religion emerges, nor is it what remains when religion is taken away.
> Instead, it is itself a historical product with specific epistemological,
> political, and moral entailments–none of which can be adequately
> grasped through a nominal account of secularism as the modern state's
> retreat from religion. (Mahmood 2016, 3)

Modern humanitarianism is not exempted from secular logics. I understand

humanitarianism as a form of biopolitical governance (Fassin 2010b) that does not

only manage and govern the lives and bodies of the beneficiaries of humanitarian

aid, but also affects the people implementing humanitarianism: the aid workers. My

argument is that globalized humanitarian governance has created a paradigm of good

humanitarianism that is oriented towards rationality, material outcomes[2], a

measurable impact, and professionalism. Thereby, a "secular imperative"[3] is imposed

on humanitarian organizations. By "secular imperative", I mean the requirement to

separate between rational, neutral, impartial and professional humanitarian action on

the one hand, and privatized religious beliefs and meanings on the other hand. Public

donors, organizations like the UNHCR and the humanitarian principles of the

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC) perpetuate this

imperative. Most humanitarian agencies have declared their compliance to the

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[2] For a more detailed analysis of the liberal materialist values and faith-based organizations, see Ager and Ager (2011).

[3] May Ngo has also used the term in her work: „Because of the *secular imperative* to maintain strict binaries between religion and the secular, faith-based organisations face particular challenges in navigating through secularism as a global discourse, at various times upholding or refuting this demand in their everyday practices." (Ngo 2018, 146, my emphasis)

humanitarian principles. The League of the Red Cross Societies formulated

foundational principles as early as 1921, including impartiality and religious and

economic independence, and the ICRC declared a modified set of seven principles in

1965 (ICRC 2015): humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary

service, unity, and universality[4]. Those principles contributed to establishing a

humanitarian framework that left little space for religious interpretations of aid. For

example, helping exclusively Christians contradicts the principle of impartiality.

The resulting question is: How do faith-based organizations respond to or even

reproduce the secular imperative? I contend that religious meanings can penetrate the

secular humanitarian discourse and conversely, secular forces can affect private

modes of behavior and meaning-making. Those processes contradict a strict

separation between the public secular sphere and the private religious sphere. In

order to make the dynamics of the secular and the religious in humanitarianism

visible, I draw on Michael Barnett and Janice Stein's concept of secularization and

sanctification:

> Rather than reducing the religious or the secular to a single dimension,
> such as organizational identity, we are interested in the multiple and
> multilevel processes that are responsible for producing *secularization* and
> *sanctification* in different areas of humanitarian action. Secularization
> and sanctification processes are messy, involved in a constant process of
> trespassing and policing, and they are changing as they engage the
> "other". (Barnett and Stein 2012, 9, my emphasis)

One implication of processes of sanctification is that supposedly secular

organizations might have more religious features than expected. In his case study of

Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), arguably one of the most secular humanitarian

organizations, Jonathan Benthall identifies a number of "quasi-religious" aspects that

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[4] For an explanation and discussion of the principles, see Pictet's commentary
(1979).

make MSF a "parareligious NGO". MSF created its own myth by placing medicine and the sanctity of life in the core of their work (Benthall 2008, 99) and the organization offers "a meaningful narrative, a version of faith, an identity" (Benthall 2008, 106). Benthall describes the willingness of humanitarian workers to put their lives at risk to save other lives as a form of martyrdom. For him, this sense of moral duty is inscribed in the tradition of Judeo-Christian charitable values. In a similar way, Didier Fassin argued that the prevalence of the religious in the globalized understanding of life as sacred has resulted in the victory of the religious and that the entering of suffering and compassion into politics turned the humanitarian government into a "political theology" (Fassin 2010b, 321–24, see also: 2010a, 244).

Likewise, supposedly faith-based organization may try to secularize their discourse and practice in order to conform to the secular imperative. I show at the example of Medic-Aid that the organization, despite being faith-based, makes an effort to be professional and rational and to exclude religion from the workplace and their humanitarian programs.

3. Distinctions between Faith-Based Organizations

Research on humanitarianism has produced a vast body of literature that deals with the ethics, the motivations and the politics of humanitarian projects and interventions (Barnett 2009, 2011; Hoffman and Weiss 2017; Smillie and Minear 2004). A rather new question in this broad field tackles the relationship between religion and humanitarianism (Barnett et al. 2009; Bornstein and Redfield 2011; Simkhada 2006) and the role of faith-based organizations in providing aid (Ferris 2005, 2011; Furniss and Meier 2012; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; James 2011).

Faith-based organizations vary to a large extend in terms of the prominence of faith in their actions. Different attempts have been made to classify those different forms. Gerard Clarke (2008, 32–33) distinguished faith-based organizations according to their religious engagement: *passive* (faith plays a role for the motivation of the staff, but not for practice), *active* (faith is important for selection of beneficiaries, but no direct discrimination), *persuasive* (promotion and spreading of the faith is the priority), and *exclusive* (faith is the principal criterion for assessing beneficiaries, action can be militant). Laura Thaut (2009) differentiates forms of Christian humanitarianism: *Accommodative–Humanitarianism* (religious roots, but not a religious practice, closest to secular humanitarianism), *Synthesis–Humanitarianism* (unequivocal religious orientation), and *Evangelistic–Humanitarianism* (aims explicitly to convert beneficiaries).

I show that processes of distinction do not only happen at the level of academic analysis, but also that faith-based organizations constantly distinguish themselves from other organizations in order to reinforce their own identity and affirm their moral system. A crucial point of distinction that I observed during my fieldwork was the evaluation of proselytism. While the more secular oriented faith-based organization strictly opposed any action of proselytism, the evangelist organization claimed that caring for the faith and the spiritual wellbeing of the refugees was crucial for healing the "broken" Syrian refugees.

A second contribution to the literature on faith-based organizations is the section on Christian networks (Chapter II). Although some studies have pointed out that the networks of faith-based organizations are an asset in comparison to secular organizations (James 2011, 112; Ferris 2011, 617), a closer investigation on the contribution of those networks to the humanitarian programs had yet to be done. I

found that the managers of the faith-based organizations I studied built up powerful informal networks. These networks are beneficial for fundraising and to extend the humanitarian programs pursued by managers. The glue for the networks was a shared Christian belief which created a relationship of trust.

C. Methodology

Ethnographical inquiry enabled me to display subtle channels of influence in every-day interaction which large-scale studies, official documents, NGO reports or statistics might overlook. In order to understand the lifeworlds of humanitarian workers, I conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve aid workers and directors of faith-based organizations and participant observation and I collected documents from the organizations. Additionally, I accompanied an aid worker to the refugee camps for a day to observe the interaction with the refugees and to attend an awareness session.

Three organizations served as case studies, two are German and the other is American-Lebanese. These diverse cases permitted me to compare different interpretations of faith-based humanitarianism employed by the organizations under study. Although it would have been fascinating to take organizations of other religious backgrounds into account, for example Islamic organizations, I decided to limit my study to Christian organizations. The reason is that I found it compelling to explore how a common underlying foundation, the Christian notions of active compassion and charity, translate into very different practical outcomes and designs of humanitarianism. In sampling the organizations, the feasibility of fieldwork was

an important selection criterion[5]. Also I tried to survey organizations which are connected in order to explore how faith-based organizations draw distinctions among each other.

The first case study is Medic-Aid, a German association that was founded in 1979. "The wish to help, which is also a central point in my Christian belief in the God of the Bible, motivates me every day", said the CEO about the foundation in an interview published in an annual report. Medic-Aid understands itself "as a Christian, but interdenominational aid organization, we rely on God's guidance, His love, His protection and His blessing on all our activities in general and our lives in particular." The organization acknowledges the "Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations at Disasters" as their normative foundation.

The Lebanon office in Zahle has a staff of fifteen people and consists of one German country manager and mainly Lebanese humanitarian employees of different religions. In 2016, the Lebanon program had a budget of 600,000 Euros. Medic-Aid's "mobile clinics" distribute basic medical care in several camps in the Bekaa valley; the organization also offer awareness sessions about family planning and provide psychosocial support to refugees.

In a preliminary conversation with an aid worker from Medic-Aid, she recounted that another Christian organization they cooperated with had once put religious messages in a food box distributed in refugee camps, an approach that she rejected vigorously. In order to scrutinize the processes of distinction between

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[5] This excluded, for example, the organization Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, a relief organization under the roof of the Evanglical Church of Germany. Their aid program in Lebanon is coordinated by the regional office in Amman, so interviews in person would not have been possible.

different faith-based organizations, I decided to include the American evangelist organization Lebanon Hope as second case study. Their three main strategies are humanitarian aid and education, relational engagement, and spiritual discipleship. The primary goal of Lebanon Hope is to share the Christian faith and to build up a leadership of (converted) individuals who will eventually carry the ministry back to Syria. The entire staff are Christians. The co-founder told me that he sees the organization as a faith-based organization in the first place, not as a humanitarian organization. Therefore, Lebanon Hope offers bible studies, church services and religious teachings for children, but they also provide food and health programs. The organization opened two churches, one in the south of Lebanon and one in the Bekaa valley: "We can't call them churches legally, they are worship gatherings" (Interview with co-founder of Lebanon Hope). Lebanon Hope was founded in response to the war between Hizbollah and Israel in 2006 to reach out to people affected by the conflict in the south, including Bedouins and Dom people. Later, they turned to displaced Iraqis in Lebanon and now to Syrian refugees.

The third case study is the German Protestant Church in Beirut which supports individual Syrian refugees and occasionally forwards donations by German parishes to humanitarian projects in Lebanon. The church is not a faith-based organization in the strict sense of the word and could be rather described as church organization. Nevertheless, I included this organization because their small-scale activities show another aspect of Christian-motivated humanitarian aid apart from the formalized NGO sector.

German and French traders who lived in Beirut founded the community in 1856 to facilitate church services, communions, baptisms and funerals. After World War I, the community experienced a split between their French and German

members. The church is now located in Hamra. The community collects offerings in the Sunday services and directs them to organizations like the Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf or to support afternoon schools for refugee children in the Bekaa valley—or to Medic-Aid (Lange 2016).

I changed the names of the organizations (Medic-Aid and Lebanon Hope) in order to protect their identity and anonymity and I refrained intentionally from referencing sources from the internet pages of the organizations as the hyperlink would reveal the real name. Likewise, I used pseudonyms or only the position of my interlocutors.

The small number of interlocutors and the short amount of time for the research allow only limited generalizations. But since the people I talked to had a remarkable degree of reflexivity, the conversations quickly reached depth which enabled me to collect substantial material and to build rapport. Analyzing the interviews and the observations with anthropological attention and sensibility revealed patterns, tensions and contradictions of social life produced by religion and secularism. The relevance of those tensions and contradictions exceeds the limits of my case study.

My personal interest in the intertwinement of religion and politics represents the junction between my undergraduate studies of political science and my work as a journalist for weekly Protestant newspapers. In my graduate studies in Beirut, I have been researching sectarianism in Lebanon and conflict studies, but one big issue arose throughout all courses: the situation and experience of Syrian refugees in Lebanon which has not lost no urgency eight years after the outbreak of the war in Syria. I felt that the social dynamics around the topic had yet to be grappled by an adequate, profound academic understanding. Hence, I made the decision to

contribute to this emerging field of scholarship and formulate a research question that allowed me to analyze the humanitarian refugee response and make sense out of it from the perspective of religion and politics.

The chapters are organized around different levels of analysis. The first chapter regards the organizational level and connects contemporary debates on impartiality and proselytism with the history of humanitarian interventions in Lebanon and of Christian missionaries. In the second chapter, I argue that the faith-based organization's transnational informal networks on the base of a shared Christian faith distinguish them from secular organizations. In the third chapter, I investigate how individual aid workers navigate their religiosity in the workplace and the resulting tensions and contradictions. The last chapter turns towards the practical side and examines the impact of the religious concepts and underlying principles on the effective work in the refugee camps. Additionally, I write about the encounters between aid workers and refugees and about the subtle social distinctions that surfaced in the interviews.

CHAPTER II

DEBATES ON IMPARTIALITY AND MISSION
IN A HISTORICAL LIGHT

In February 2018, I attended a conference in Berlin called "Christians in the Middle East facing pressure and persecution," hosted by the Gustav-Adolf-Werk, the diaspora organization of the Evangelical Church in Germany. The Gustav-Adolf-Werk was founded in 1832 and aims to support the German protestant diaspora and protestant churches worldwide. The overall narrative of the conference was that Christians in Syria are particularly vulnerable to persecution, and therefore need financial assistance from their German Christian "brothers and sisters." This goes in line with the mission statement which refers to the biblical verse Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gustav-Adolf-Werk 2014a). The mission statement leaves no doubt that the organization refers with "household of faith" to Protestantism.

It is certainly important and generous to help Syrian Christian communities to rebuild their churches. Human rights organizations found extensive proof that the so-called Islamic state targeted systematically non-Sunni Muslims and non-Arabs, like Assyrian Christians, Yezidis, Turkmen and Shabaks, killed or abducted them or forced them to convert—on a massive scale (Amnesty International 2014; Human Rights Watch 2014). Yet, I found myself irritated by the vague, homogenizing title of the conference which suggested that Christians are persecuted or under pressure in *all* parts of the Middle East—which is not the case. Also, I began to wonder why the organization decided to help only Christian communities and excluded other

minorities and communities. How would they know that the specific church communities they chose in Syria would be the ones that are most in need of help? Additionally, the narrative of solidarity with Christians in the Middle East reminded me of the humanitarian discourse which legitimized European interventions on behalf of the Christians in the Middle East in the 19th century. A parallel is the particular *interest* in Christians in the Middle East that was key for the European states as well as it is still for the Gustav-Adolf-Werk.

After the conference, I assumed somehow that the Christian organizations that I study now in this thesis would mobilize a similar discourse of Christian solidarity. But on the contrary, I observed that they were very careful to highlight their compliance with the humanitarian principle of impartiality and emphasized that they do not select beneficiaries according to religious criteria.

Considering history as a "dialogue between past and present" (Carr 1951, 10), I will go back and forth between historical and contemporary humanitarian debates in this chapter. In the first part, I attempt to illustrate how European humanitarian interest in the Middle East shifted from an interest in helping solely Ottoman Christians to impartiality. I trace the humanitarian interventions of European states in the Ottoman Empire, specifically during the Maronite-Druze conflict in 1860, and the charitable activities of the German Protestant church community in Beirut and then move to understandings of impartiality of faith-based organizations today.

In the second part, I explore the connection between another historical phenomenon in light of current debates between faith-based organizations: Christian missionaries in the modern Middle East and the contemporary controversy on proselytism. I contend that the position on proselytism is one of the key aspects that distinguish faith-based organizations and their approaches to humanitarianism.

A. European Interest in Ottoman Christians in Mount Lebanon

Many scholars see the foundation of the Red Cross by Jean-Henri Dunant after the battle of Solferino in 1859 as the starting point of modern humanitarianism (Grossrieder 2002; Hoffman and Weiss 2017, 42). Recently, historians have shifted the focus from the European stage of humanitarianism to the history of humanitarianism in the Middle East (Watenpaugh 2015) and investigated "humanitarian interventions" of European states in the region in the 19th century (Rodogno 2012). They countered that the historical origins of humanitarian interventions lay in the 19th century and early 20th century foreign policies of European states in the Eastern Mediterranean region and their relations to the Ottoman Empire. At that time, foreign humanitarian aid in the Middle East was closely entangled with the activities of missionaries and with the imperialist endeavors of the European states, and one part of the Ottoman population was of particular interest: The Christians. Contracts known as "capitulations" between the Sublime Porte and European states granted France the right to "protect" Latin Ottoman Christians and in the same manner, Russia was authorized to protect the Orthodox (Salt 1993, 10).

In the 19th century, France and Great Britain undertook several "humanitarian interventions" on behalf of the Ottoman Christians whom they perceived as an endangered and persecuted minority. Paradoxically, while the European states legitimized the interventions on behalf of the Ottoman Christians with a humanitarian discourse, indigenous populations in the territories controlled by Europe faced massive violence or even extinction. The Aborigines in Australia, the Congolese in Belgian Congo and the Herero and Nama in German South-West Africa for example were completely exempted from European humanitarian

compassion (Mahmood 2016, 41–42; Rodogno 2012, 67)—those atrocities "did not call for 'international" protection" (Asad 2015).

The logic with which British and French politicians justified the interventions and fashioned themselves as saviors of the Christians was grounded in the general distortive and orientalist European perceptions of the Ottoman Empire. Europeans imagined Europe as civilizationally superior in terms of morality, religious beliefs and political systems. British evangelicals emphasized the link between the superiority of Christianity and the superiority of European civilizations (Salt 1993, 11–12), a logic that also inspired the dissemination of Christian missionaries to the Middle East. The perception of the Ottoman Empire and Islam as backwards, despotic and uncivilized that prevailed in Europe influenced the Ottoman exclusion from the European family of nations (Rodogno 2012, 102). European politicians believed that Ottoman Christians had to live under the "Ottoman Yoke" (Salt 1993, 22) and saw what they perceived as the Ottoman Empire's lack of effort to protect them as a proof of its barbaric character. This image allowed European politicians to disregard the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, to violate the doctrine of non-intervention in sovereign states and to intervene on behalf of the Ottoman Christians.

In 1843, the Ottoman Empire decided to divide the Emirate of Mount Lebanon into two administrative regions in an attempt to settle violent struggles between Christian and Druze elites. The decision happened against the backdrop of the reformatory spirit of the *Tanzimat* and was encouraged by European diplomats. Ussama Makdisi comments: "Mount Lebanon became the location for a host of competing armies and ideologies and for totally contradictory interpretations of the meaning of reform" (Makdisi 2000, 11). The northern district was now under Maronite rule and the southern district had a Druze governor. Instead of establishing

order, the reform backfired. It increased sectarian tensions and the Christian-Druze fights culminated in a civil war in 1860. Massacres against Christians occurred in Dair al-Qamar and in Zahle and many Maronite and Greek Orthodox Christians fled to Damascus (Rodogno 2012, 215). While the English backed the Druze and were interested in maintaining the unity of the Ottoman Empire, the French military intervention was inscribed in Napoleon III's imperial aim to establish an "Arab Kingdom" belonging to France in Mount Lebanon (Traboulsi 2012, 37–38).

Under the guise of restoring order and peace and reacting to a public outcry in Europe regarding the massacre of Christians, Britain and France decided to send military forces to "protect" the Christians from the Druze during the civil war of 1860. The intervention was aimed mainly to protect European nationals like missionaries and Christian refugees. France played out its self-asserted role as protector of the Maronites in Lebanon. In fact, the ships mainly cruised in front of the coast or transported refugees from Dair al-Qamar, Sidon and Tyre to Beirut. The intervention helped Christians flee from the mountains to the coastal area, but it was not sufficient to stop the massacres (Rodogno 2012, 211–12). The Ottoman military was far more present in Mount Lebanon than the British and French forces. Also, the Ottoman authorities under Fuad Pasha were able to convince the Maronites and Druze to sign a peace treaty and they founded a—scarcely funded—relief program. Apart from the military intervention, the European states also established a relief committee. Its resources of the European relief, which was coordinated by a central relief committee, were soon used up and the committee was only able to help the refugees on the coast who were mainly Christian, leaving those in the inland without aid (Rodogno 2012, 230–31; L. T. Fawaz 1994, 170).

Finally, diplomats from Prussia, France, Great Britain, Russia, Austria,
attempted to settle the conflict on a diplomatic level. With the participation of the
Ottoman grand vizier in Istanbul, they drafted a statute called "Règlement for the
reorganization of Mount Lebanon," which was ratified in 1861. The statute
established the *Mutasarrifiyya Jabal Lubnan*, an Ottoman governorate headed by a
Christian governor in Lebanon that persisted until Lebanon became a French
mandate in 1920 (Akarli 1993, 31).

B. The Social Work of the German Protestant Church in Beirut

Humanitarian aid for the Christians who were affected by the conflict was not
only sponsored by European governments. Christian institutions in Beirut were also
involved, including the German Protestant Church. In the following section, I sketch
the humanitarian and charitable activities of the church combined with a short
overview about the history of the church, and I illustrate the shift solidarity with
Christians only to a more inclusive understanding of help. This account is mostly
based on the chronicle *Geschichte der Evangelischen Gemeinde zu Beirut* (History of
the Protestant Church of Beirut) which was written by pastor Gustav-Adolf Kriener
in 1958 and republished and updated in 1986 by pastor Jürgen Eisenberg.

Historical records of German protestant church communities outside of
Germany date back to the times shortly after the reformation in 1517. The first parish
in the Middle East was founded by traders in Smyrna (Izmir) in 1759. Most
protestant communities abroad were established by traders and diplomats in the 19th
century against the background of industrialization, colonialism and growing
international trade relations. German traders established branches in the main
capitals of Europe, South America and the Middle East and founded church

communities, for instance in Constantinople in 1843, in Alexandria in 1856, in Jerusalem in 1853 and in Cairo in 1864. The German Protestant Church in Beirut was founded in 1856 by German and French traders to facilitate church services, communions, baptisms and funerals (Wellnitz 2003, 17–24).

Several church-related associations assisted the emerging diaspora churches financially, such as the Hermannsburger Mission, the Jerusalemverein (Jerusalem Society), or, most importantly, the Gustav-Adolf-Verein (Gustav Adolf Society, today Gustav-Adolf-Werk). Sources suggest that the Jerusalem Society's aim to "support and augment the Christian ventures in the holy land" (quoted from: Kriener 1986) met with the endeavors of the Prussian, Swiss and French protestants in Beirut to found a church. From 1856 on, the Gustav Adolf Society Königsberg (Eastern Prussia) transferred annually 300 thalers to the parish in Beirut. Support came also from the Prussian royalty: The kings Friedrich Wilhelm III and Friedrich Wilhelm IV sponsored and protected the German diaspora communities in the course of their general engagement in the interest of protestants (Fuhrmann 2006, 116; Wellnitz 2003, 50).

In the context of the conflict between Maronites and Druze in 1860, the Beirut Protestant Church undertook its first humanitarian activities for the displaced and wounded. In his annual report to the Superior Church Council in Berlin, Pastor Krämer describes the situation in Beirut as follows: "All shops were closed, huge crowds of armed Druze and Muslims marched through the streets of the town, mocking and mistreating each Christian" (Kriener 1986, 23). The war affected the American Mission, which had to close their schools temporally, more than it did the

German-speaking church, but it left the members troubled and in fear. Germany[6] sent

money and clothes to meet the immediate needs of the displaced. Kaiserswerther

deaconesses established an orphanage and accommodation for widows and worked

as nurses in new hospitals in Beirut and Saida. Pastor Krämer established and

maintained the hospital together with the German Committee which managed the

donations from Germany. The Anglo-American and German Committee was able to

provide 15,000 displaced people in Beirut with food (Khalaf 2012, 240).

The accounts of missionaries and priests in Lebanon of the events were clearly

biased. They sided with the Christians of Mount Lebanon and depicted the Druze as

violent plunderers and murderers. The German pastor Krämer was no exception.

Krämer's interpretation of the events overlaps with the way in which French

politicians depicted the war. He construes the events as a continuation of a century

long war of Islam against Christianity under the complicity of the Ottoman rulers:

> The reasons of those unfortunate events are manifold; their sources lay
> not only in the present, but fall back upon a distant past. For the atrocious
> sceneries of the bygone year are only a section of the uninterrupted chain
> of similar destructive fights which the Islam, in longer or smaller
> intervals and at different places, has waged against the confessors of the
> Cross; a destructive fight which was induced and lead by the Turkish
> government with the smart use of the religious fanaticism of the
> Mohammedan population of Asia which has risen to highest anger.
> (quoted from: Kriener 1986, 19)

Krämer does not explicitly state whether Druze or Muslims were able to

benefit from the humanitarian aid the churches provided. But he sided clearly with

the Christians and condemned the actions of the Druze.

World War I marked a deep rupture for the church in Beirut as it led to an

ultimate division between the German and French. After the war, the French mandate

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[6] It is unclear in pastor Krämer's letter if he means German state or churches.

government took over the deaconesses' orphanage and school and gave cemetery and parsonage to the newly established French speaking protestant parish. A second German institution, a hospital funded by donations of the Protestant St. John's order, was forced to sell its property to the French (Kirchen n.d.). In 1929, some deaconesses reopened a school near the Sanaya garden in Beirut. A new pastor begun in 1930 and a new church building in Ras Beirut was completed in 1939. But the church had lost all its ties to Swiss and French protestant churches and from 1934 on, it belonged in its entirety to the centralized church Deutsche Reichskirche which was under the control of national socialists.

During World War II, almost all Germans left Lebanon and the activities of the church were paused again. A reopening after the war was difficult because the newly independent Lebanese state had confiscated the estate of the church and the parsonage. Also, the parish was not able to find a pastor. In 1954, the new pastor Gustav-Adolf Kriener arrived in Beirut and in February 1955, the parish reconstituted itself as the "Protestant Church of Beirut with German as prayer language". The new name signified that the church was independent from the German state, but legally connected to the German Protestant Church. A new statute adopted not only Old and New Testament and the Lutheran and Heidelberg catechism, but also the Barmen Declaration, the foundational document of the Bekennende Kirche (Confessing Church) which opposed the Nazi government.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Lebanon's economy flourished and so did the parish. For the pastor, the fields of activities diversified. He offered pastoral care for tourists and for seafarers in Beirut's harbor. In 1973, the parish employed a social worker who would care for German-speaking people in need of help. The main help-seeking groups were German women married to Lebanese men, "stranded" or imprisoned

Germans and elderly people (Frieda Schmutz in: Kriener 1986, 60). The social work changed when the war broke out in 1975: the parish was not able to employ a social worker continuously due to the dangerous situation in Beirut. Tourists avoided Beirut and more than half of the church members left the city. The social worker was now more occupied with visiting the elderly people and holding contact with the German-speaking families who suffered from the war misery.

From the beginning of the war on, the parish decided to start an emergency relief program. The program was financed by donations from church members in Beirut and abroad, by the revenues of the Christmas bazaar and by the aid of the *Diakonisches Werk,* a charity organization of the German Protestant church. The parish was able to support individual cases and to send money to Lebanese charities like orphanages, refugee organizations and hospitals. The parish house with the air-raid shelter became a sanctuary for German-Palestinian couples and refugees. The two social workers moved from "West Beirut" to "East Beirut" to care for the church members on the other side of the so-called "Green Line". In 1984, artillery shells hit the church and destroyed the windows and parts of the walls.

Today, the Protestant church occasionally acts as an intermediary between German church communities and humanitarian organizations for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The former social worker recounted that German parishes contacted the church in Beirut several times and asked if they would forward their donations for refugees. Also, the Beirut parish itself has established a social fund that is designated for Syrian refugees and they directly collect offerings from Sunday services to give to organizations like the Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf, the Joint Christian Committee (JCC), to support afternoon schools for refugee children in the Bekaa valley—or to the German faith-based organization Medic-Aid (Lange 2016). In

individual cases, the parish has assisted Syrian refugees with their applications for family reunion at the German embassy:

> One can achieve less and less, but sometimes, we could settle a few things. In one case, [the application] got lost in the many laundry baskets [of the embassy], then someone has enquired. Sometimes we could give moral support and tell the people how far the process is. […] For many, that was very relieving. (Interview with former social worker of the parish)

The Beirut parish has abandoned any form of the religious selectiveness that once might have determined their humanitarian efforts. The former parish's social worker has clearly condemned humanitarian activities that are only accessible for Christian refugees from Syria or Iraq and any humanitarian activities with a missionary component and the pastor emphasized that the parish does not only support Christians—two young man who receive support are Shiites.

> Recently, we have been supporting a Syrian in Damascus who is in a poor condition. He had a handicapped son, now the second son is paralyzed as a result of an accident. From time to time, he contacts us in a discreet and careful way, and then we give him assistance. This is a form of individual case assistance. The other cases that we support with our social work of the church community are rather people who came back from Germany. But we won't check if they are Christians. (Interview with pastor)

The person who returned from Germany to whom the pastor referred is a young man of Lebanese origin who committed a delinquency in Germany and was deported to Lebanon, without even speaking Arabic well. According to the pastor, often the people themselves contact the church and ask for help.

C. Faith-Based Organizations Today Emphasize Impartiality

Should one expect that faith-based organizations continue to prioritize the principle of solidarity over the principle of impartiality, given the history of humanitarian interventions in the Middle East? Solidarity would mean that they

explicitly chose "to side with a group of people and their political cause" (Dijkzeul and Moke 2005, 677), for example Christians. Impartiality, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, means that the humanitarian organization "makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavors only to relieve suffering, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress" (Pictet 1979).

In a typology of humanitarian organizations, Dennis Dijkzeul and Markus Moke (2005) distinguish organizations that tend to prioritize impartiality (e.g. ICRC, MSF, Oxfam) from organizations that prioritize solidarity (e.g. religious NGOs). They admit that religious organizations "tend to cluster towards the solidarity pole, but once they grow and professionalize more, they tend to stress impartiality and independence more strongly" (Dijkzeul and Moke 2005, 691). The distinction between secular impartiality and religious solidarity indicates a broader pattern, the dichotomization between religious humanitarianism and professionalism, which also appeared in the discourse of my interlocutors. The underlying assumption is that religiously inspired humanitarianism is less professional and rational and thereby inferior. Consequently, faith-based organizations feel the need to explicitly prove their professionality and accountability.

The small faith-based organizations that I studied during my fieldwork, including the German Protestant church, endorsed univocally the principle of impartiality. My interlocutors from Medic-Aid, from field workers to the director, made it very clear that help should by no means distinguish the beneficiaries according to their religion. This emphasis legitimizes their work in a humanitarian context that fosters principles like impartiality and neutrality. One reason for the endorsement of impartiality can be the requirements and conditions of donors. Public

donors, for example the German ministry of foreign affairs requires from

organizations applying for funds that they comply with the international

humanitarian principles—including impartiality—and with the code of conduct of

the ICRC (Auswärtiges Amt 2014). Additionally, the German Council for

Humanitarian Aid which consists of national ministries and humanitarian

organizations proclaimed 12 basic rules for humanitarian aid, out of which the third

says:

> Humanitarian aid must not be conditional on political or religious views,
> neither should it promote them. The sole criterion for evaluating the
> priorities of aid is the need of the people. (German Humanitarian
> Assistance 2013)

The humanitarian workers of Medic-Aid justified impartiality by pointing out

that it is more ethical or by stating that helping anyone is an expression of a good

heart.

> *Rima:* They [the organization] should not differentiate between any
> religion whether it's a Christian or Muslims or between any nationality.
> (Interview with Rima)

> *Ziad:* When you have a good heart, it's easy for you to help anybody.
> You are not going to look for this, *y'ani*[7] any person you're going to
> help, you're not going to ask: "Oh, what's your religion?" You help that
> person. Don't ask about the background in your religion. (Interview with
> Ziad)

One interlocutor used the impartiality argument to underline the non-religious

character of Medic-Aid:

> *Luisa:* Do you feel the fact that [Medic-Aid is] faith-based effects in any
> way that work?

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[7] It is common practice for Lebanese to mix words from the Lebanese Arabic
dialect into English. In order to maintain the natural way of speaking of my
interlocutors, I kept the Arabic expressions and filling words. They translate as
follows: *innu:* that, *bas:* but, *khalas:* enough, *y'ani:* that means, *'anjad:*
really/seriously.

> *Mouna:* No, actually it doesn't at all, because, I know [Medic-Aid] is a Christian based organization and most of our help goes to Muslims. It definitely doesn't affect it. And there has never been any discrimination in any way or disrespect to anyone because of their religion. (Interview with Mouna)

The employees of Medic-Aid formulated an opposition to a practice which would favor Christians over Muslims in humanitarian aid. By enunciating the principle of impartiality and by stressing that help reaches members of all religions, they assured themselves that they act correctly and according to the humanitarian rules. In a similar way, bigger faith-based organizations like World Vision International try to debunk the "myth" that religious motivation necessarily limits the ability to comply with humanitarian principles (Mlay 2004, 50).

When it comes to evangelical organizations, the principle of impartiality can conflict with principles that faith-based organization regard as more important, for example relationship building. The emphasis on building relationships with refugees was central to the discourse of Lebanon Hope, as they regard it as a means towards their aim to "change lives and transform communities". In her case study of Lebanese Evangelical Churches, Kathryn Kraft (2015) observed the churches put a major emphasis on building close relationships with the Syrian refugees by regular home visits and use the church as a community space where the distribution of aid supplies and communal activities take place. The close personal contact between volunteers increases the chance to evaluate needs not according to the cold assessment of actual need and vulnerability, but rather to distribute aid rather to refugees who show interest in church service and befriend volunteers.

Ironically, even the Gustav-Adolf-Werk, the organization that I have cited in the beginning of this chapter for their emphasis on helping Christians in the Middle East, tries to point out that their help is not completely partial. A report about aid for

the protestant Armenian community in Aleppo quotes the general secretary for the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches in the Middle East who states that not only members of the Armenian community benefit from the assistance: "On the food lists and on the lists of patients of the clinic are the names of Armenian Christians, non-Armenian Christians and non-Christians. No one is turned down" (Gustav-Adolf-Werk 2014b). This goes back to my earlier statement that faith-based organizations feel the need to prove their professionality and inclusiveness as a response to the "secular imperative". Although the Gustav-Adolf-Werk directs their help to a Christian community in the first place, not to a community from another religion, the organization highlights that everyone can receive aid in order to present itself as impartial and to legitimize its approach.

D. The Controversy of Missionary Activities

Long before the establishment of the German Protestant Church in 1856, foreign missionaries had arrived in Lebanon and tried to reach the population through the provision of education. French Jesuits had opened their first school in Kisrawan already in 1733. They left the country later and returned in 1839 to open a school in Beirut. Protestant missionaries from Britain and the US had established a boys school in 1810 and in 1866, the American missionaries opened the Syrian Protestant college which is now the American University of Beirut (Traboulsi 2012, 59–61). Several Christian missionary institutions began their outreach in the Ottoman Empire, for example the American Board of Missions, the American Bible Society or Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (Salt 1993, 31). The American Protestant missionaries brought the first steam-powered printing press to Beirut in order to publish an Arabic translation of the bible (Auji 2016). As the attempts to

convert Ottoman Muslims failed, the missionaries turned towards the Eastern Christians of Maronite or Orthodox denomination to promote individualized understandings of religiosity and to reform Eastern Christianity, which they considered as backward (Mahmood 2016, 46).

Greek-Orthodox, Catholic and Maronite churches reacted to the "protestant challenge" by building their own schools and Sunni notables opened schools for the Muslim youth (Traboulsi 2012, 61). Denouncing the presence of missionaries purely as a form of cultural imperialism would miss the nuances and ambivalences of the encounter and the resilience of Ottoman Arabs (Makdisi 2009, 9–10).

Today, local Protestant and Catholic churches have mainly taken over the religious and charitable activities from Western churches (Tejirian and Simon 2014, 205). As for evangelical churches, the approach to missionary work has shifted. Instead of building institutions like schools or churches, they "bring skills that are needed by the society and conduct their ministries from within" (Tejirian and Simon 2014, 206). In the case of Lebanon Hope, as I will show in Chapter IV, "ministry from within" means to train volunteers about health and engage with them in the same context in a conversation about God and the Bible as well as to train Syrian Christian converts to eventually continue the ministry back in Syria.

The history of Christian missionaries in the Middle East and the link between charitable organizations and missions in the late 19th and early 20th century might nourish the suspicion that Christian humanitarian organizations still try to convert beneficiaries to Christianity today. In fact, positions on the legitimacy of proselytism among faith-based organizations are very diverse. Lynch and Schwarz (2016) show that Christian organizations have very divergent understandings of conversion, of ethically correct religious activities in the humanitarian context and of interpretations

of the humanitarian Code of Conduct. Some distinguish between proselytism and witnessing or between proselytism and evangelism, the latter meaning only to offer resources, but without the coercive component. Other religious humanitarians suggest "lifestyle evangelism", meaning that the humanitarian staff provides an example and builds relationships with the receiving population (Lynch and Schwarz 2016).

My fieldwork equally points to a diversity of understandings and evaluations of missionary activities in the humanitarian context, even within organizations. I suggest that a key aspect which distinguishes different faith-based humanitarian organizations from each other is the attitude towards the legitimacy of missionary activities.

I build on the work of Mary Douglas to analyze the debate about missionary activities. For Douglas, symbols and words bear an underlying, implicit meaning which can be uncovered by analyzing how people classify actions as good or bad, as right or wrong (Douglas 2001, vii). Drawing on Lévi-Strauss, Douglas identifies systems of cultural dichotomies like male/female, pure/impure, around which symbolic boundaries and modes of distinction evolve. In her best-known publication, *Purity and Danger,* first published in 1966, Douglas investigates how notions of cleanliness and uncleanliness, of holiness and sanctity, result in systems of classification and symbolic boundaries which bear moral significance. She justifies this structuralist approach by saying that "over-systematization is necessary for interpreting the beliefs in question" (Douglas 2003, II:4). Douglas observes that so-called native or indigenous religions in general do not distinguish so markedly between sanctity and uncleanliness, holiness and impurity as modern societies do. She explains that it is not the dirt itself which is impure, but the *place* of dirt. Dirty

shoes are considered dirty when they are on the dining table, but not on the floor;

food itself is not dirty, but dirty plates in the bedroom are considered untidy

(Douglas 2003, II:36–37). The system of classification—such as where dirt is

considered as dirty and where not—results in system of purity and touches questions

of sacredness. This order protects the cultural unity of a group and generates social

cohesion, social identity, and, ultimately, society itself (Douglas 2003, II:115).

Boundaries work at different areas: Douglas distinguishes external boundaries

(community boundaries), internal lines of the system and body boundaries. Order in

society makes disorder possible (Douglas 2003, 2:88). What illustrates internal

boundaries better than cases when they are crossed? What makes boundaries more

visible than lawbreakers? For classification systems and social structure carry a

moral significance, as they manufacture deviance and they inscribe order on the

body. Douglas's interest in deviancy and exceptions can be read as a parallel to

Foucault's study of the social exclusion of madness (Foucault 2003).

More than fifty years after Douglas has published *Purity and Danger,*

boundary talk became *en vogue*—not only in the discussion about national

boundaries in light of hundreds of thousands of refugees crossing them, but also as

an analytical tool. Social sciences use the concept of boundaries to study social and

collective identity, inequalities of class, ethnicity and gender or national and spatial

boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002).

With Douglas, we can ask the following questions regarding humanitarian

ethics: Where does an internal or external boundary exist? What fits in the

classification system and what is considered as deviant? What happens if there is

disagreement about a boundary? Drawing on my fieldwork, I argue that two main

symbolic boundaries import: the boundaries between different faith-based

organizations which embrace missionary work and those which refute it; and the boundaries between aid workers and refugees.

The attitude on missionary work has repercussions for the way the humanitarian projects are designed and the way they approach refugees. My interlocutors of the three faith-based organizations evaluate missionary activities very differently. Positive understandings of missionary activities derive from setting a good example with personal lifestyle and actions, sharing a particular character of God and building relationships towards building up a local leadership that can continue the ministry in Syria. Others denounce missionary activities because they believe that they make aid partial and conditional. In part, the disagreement can be explained by theological disagreement: evangelical organizations like Lebanon Hope are more inclined to link missionary activities to humanitarian aid than Protestant or Catholic organizations. I will unfold the different understandings of mission in more detail. The pastor of the German Protestant church in Beirut defines mission as follows:

> Missionary work, if at all, should be in the sense of Jesus so that people see, they are doing something for us. They can ask: Where does that come from? But we as a church community do not connect that with an explicit missionary intention. We don't give them money so that they are baptized, plainly said. I know that this is the understanding of some, but these are rather evangelical organizations. … There are different understandings of mission. First and foremost, mission is annunciation, giving the gospel the opportunity to walk. We quote Luther who said, the gospel walks alone and it has its impact. I am not creating the impact at all. (Interview with pastor)

While he acknowledges the centrality of mission and the possibility of attracting people to Christianity by showing a good example and lifestyle, his understanding is passive. He thinks that the gospel "walks on his own" and that he does not have to contribute to its dissemination.

The CEO of Medic-Aid rejects missionary activities completely because they conflict with the unconditional character of humanitarian aid. He underlines this by referring to humanitarian norms, by citing Jesus as an authority and by pointing to the Christian theology of the absolute, unconditional gift:

> I don't think it is ethical because I don't believe that Jesus would have wanted that one says, 'when you come to the church service, you'll receive a bag of rice'. It is not okay to connect that. Humanitarian aid must be free from an objective. Only the person in need should be in the focus, and we signed that, there are principles by the International Committee of the Red Cross … many years ago, 30 years ago, we signed that we do not connect missionary activities to our humanitarian aid. (Interview with Manfred)

Lebanon Hope has a completely different approach. Spreading the faith is central to their program and self-understanding and the stated mission is first and foremost to "make disciples of Jesus Christ." Their strategy is to reach the Syrian and Iraqi refugees while they are in Lebanon and build up an indigenous "leadership" of converted Syrians who they hope will eventually spread the faith back in Syria by an "irresistible" lifestyle.

For Christian organizations, Lebanon is a particular context to work in. The important Christian population, the well-established church structures and the recognition of Christians as a principal part of the society make it easier for Christian organizations to operate in Lebanon as compared to other refugee-hosting countries like Jordan and Turkey with majoritarian Muslim populations. There, Christian activities and especially evangelical outreach are more limited. Jordan, for example, expelled a number of foreign missionaries in 2008 (Mustafa 2008). The managerial director of Lebanon Hope underlines the freedom missionary organizations enjoy in Lebanon.

> Sharing your faith in Lebanon is somehow legalized by the Lebanese constitution. You are in a free country. You can perform any act with

your free religion. You can relate yourself to any religion you want. There are no restrictions on them. … It's a free atmosphere and a free environment. (Interview with managerial director of Lebanon Hope)

In their communication with donors in the United States, the organization draws a specific image of the humanitarian context in Lebanon. In a conference call, the directors of Lebanon Hope in Lebanon and in the United States reported about the situation of the organization in 2019 in a manner not much different from a podcast or live radio show. They emphasized that other humanitarian agencies are withdrawing their aid and that refugees grow more and more angry and desperate. They also claimed that children are sold into prostitution or live on the street and that violence and anger are growing within the population. The directors present the grim situation as a chance for Lebanon Hope which is ready to "step in the opportunity that the Lord provides."

Although, the UNCHR notices an increasing gap between the funding they would need and the funding they actually receive (UNHCR n.d.), the amount of funding was stable in the past two years. An evaluation of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan by the UNHCR reports 1.24 billion USD in 2017 of funding and 1.4 billion USD in 2018, taking into account the reports of 65 and 85 organizations, respectively (LCRP 2017, 2018). That shows no significant decrease but rather an increase (which could also be explained by the increased number of organizations that reported their funding). In that light, the discourse of Lebanon Hope and their emphasis on the withdrawal of donors appears to be a communication strategy that should motivate donors to support them. They fashion themselves as more steadfast and trustful towards the refugees than other organizations and as one of the few organizations that care about the spiritual well-being of the refugees.

Currently, Lebanon Hope is building a "ministry center" in the Bekaa valley with an aid distribution center, a playground, a school and a chapel. For Lebanon Hope, helping is inseparably bound to spreading the message of God and to the Christian motivation to act compassionately and the obligation to help:

> We want to have the opportunity to share with them the love of Jesus Christ and that they would accept him as their savior, but that would not end there. We would have an opportunity to disciple them and deepen their faith, so they would have a lifestyle that would be irresistible to the people in their neighborhoods and communities and in their family units. (Interview with founder of Lebanon Hope)

For the employees who realize the projects, the concrete objective and motivation may look a bit different. Nadine, one of Lebanon Hope's staff members, sees her task less as sharing a religion or a faith but more as sharing a specific idea of an essentially good and benevolent God. In her view, this is an image that does not exist in Islam.

> I want a relationship with the people, and I believe that the way God is characterized in Islam—I don't believe that's what God is really like. … I have come to understand and trust that there is a character, there's a being there that is everything that you would [find] in any Grimm's fairytale of as what is good. We have a sense of good, right and wrong, of fairness and unfairness. It's part of our nature, beauty, art is placed. … So it took me a long time to think there was good in God. And there's not any good in Islamic thing. So for me, I said if I share something I want to share the character. I don't want to share religion. I don't care about that. (Interview with Nadine)

In contrast to the argument of Medic-Aid and others that missionary activities make aid conditional, the founder of Lebanon Hope claims that their approach is precisely not conditional.

> By giving them a cup of cold water, by giving mattresses to Syrian refugees, supplement food items, education, that gives us access into their life, but we do it unconditionally, you don't have to go to church first. You don't have to do anything first in order to receive that aid. That aid is given and if you don't want to go any further on the journey, that's okay. We are not happy about it, but that's okay. (Interview with co-founder of Lebanon Hope)

However, the dependency of refugees on the informal tented settlements on humanitarian aid and their vulnerability—many are not officially registered and live below the poverty line—could increase the coercive component of the missionary activities. They might feel obliged to attend bible lessons in order to continue receiving food. Therefore, it has to be questioned whether refugees actually perceive the aid of evangelical organizations as unconditional and non-persuasive when they know that the main purpose of the organization is to share the faith. Kathryn Kraft showed that aid from outspokenly Christian organizations in Lebanon can evoke feelings of uneasiness among Muslim refugees, and even create a sense of coercion to be grateful, to attend religious offers like Sunday messes or bible lessons in return (Kraft 2017). In addition, Omri Elisha (2008) reconstructs in a study on evangelical outreach in the United States the inherent power dimension of giving between the one who gives and the one who receives aid and highlights the friction between the "unconditionality" of aid in the evangelist discourse on the one hand, and the unavoidable conditionality of charity on the other.

My point is that competing evaluations of missionary activities create boundaries between faith-based organizations. The visibility of missionary organizations can create suspicion and anxiety against faith-based humanitarianism in general which affects other Christian organizations (Ferris 2005, 323). These other organizations might feel the need to distinguish themselves from the evangelical organization. They might demonstrate even more thoroughly their impartiality and secularism to avoid giving the outlook to be Christian in order not to be put into the same category by refugees –we have seen this with Medic-Aid and their emphasis on their impartiality earlier in the chapter.

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Missionary activities can perpetuate symbolic and social boundaries between Christian aid workers and refugees. An incident which made this boundary especially visible was when the evangelist organization Heart for Lebanon distributed food packages in an informal refugee settlement and put a Christian religious message inside.

> The refugees were telling us that [Lebanon Hope] was providing services and then all of a sudden they stopped because they were including religious [inaudible] in their services and the refugees did not want them. They don't receive those services anymore. I don't remember if they were giving out food or something else, but they stopped the distribution. (Interview with Mouna)

When I visited Medic-Aid in Zahle, several of the humanitarian workers I talked to mentioned the incident. Apparently, it had stirred discussions among the staff and the general opinion towards it was that Lebanon Hope had crossed a boundary by distributing a religious text in the camp. From the perspective of the Medic-Aid staff, Lebanon Hope stands outside the boundaries of humanitarian aid, a dangerous deviant from the humanitarian norm.

The perspective of Lebanon Hope shows the incident in a different light. An aid worker from Lebanon Hope told me that putting the religious text in the food box was a singular incident and not part of the organization's policy. A person "who wasn't thinking about that" saw that there was leftover material by a donor and put it in the boxes. She said it was in 2013 and she recalled that the text was probably related to Christmas. What makes the incident delicate is that at that time, Lebanon Hope and Medic-Aid were still cooperating, and Medic-Aid paid for the boxes—this explains why the aid workers of Medic-Aid were so upset about it.

This incident shows how divergences about the role of missionary activities in humanitarian aid can complicate the cooperation between faith-based organizations.

Medic-Aid and Lebanon Hope finally stopped their cooperation because they disagreed on the importance of spiritual aid—or activities that intend to spread the faith—although Medic-Aid office in Lebanon started under the management of Lebanon Hope when they opened it in 2012.

As I asked the managerial director of Lebanon Hope about any situations of conflict, he responded in an evasive way and stressed the reliability of the organization:

> *Luisa*: Have there been situations of conflict, for example, I could imagine that a very religious person, a Muslim person would might feel offended by someone approaching them and trying to talk with them about the Bible. Have there been situations like this? And how do you deal with those?
>
> *Rawad:* To be to be frank and honest, I don't know. I am sorry. It's not I don't know. We don't have a record of one incident. There could be some small, small very minor incidents, but I don't recall one, which is good. Our approach is: we provide the food, we provide the physical health and we invite people to come to awareness sessions. This is the key thing that what we discovered: first you give the help, don't condition it with any other activity or program you have. (Interview with managerial director of Lebanon Hope)

I was not able to verify all details of the incident. Was it recently or was it when Lebanon Hope and Medic-Aid were cooperating? What exactly did religious texts consist of? Did Lebanon Hope actually retreat the help after the incident or not? In any case, it indicates the anxiety it caused among the Medic-Aid staff and the conflicting understandings of how religion is allowed to play into humanitarian action.

To conclude, humanitarianism by foreign states in the Middle East has shifted historically from helping only Christians towards a broader understanding of aid that aims to not make religion as a criterion for help. This humanitarian principle of impartiality informs the approach of faith-based humanitarian organizations and, in

some cases, is even used as an argument to downplay the religious character of the organization. Further, I have argued that the attitude towards missionary activities in humanitarian aid divides faith-based organizations and creates boundaries between the organizations. The following chapter moves from conceptual questions to channels of influence and networks faith-based organizations have at their disposal.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN NETWORKS

If Christian humanitarian organizations do not give partial aid and if most of them reject proselytism, what is it, then, that makes them a Christian organization, apart from a religious reference in the mission statement and the personal religiosity of some of their staff members? I suggest to shift the criteria of distinction from the identity and values of the organization towards the practical level and scrutinize the manner in which faith-based organizations operate differently from secular organizations. My fieldwork showed that managers of faith-based organizations are often extremely well connected and have accumulated social capital they can mobilize to increase their humanitarian impact.

The social capital scales up to a powerful network which is different from professional networks because the underlying assumption of shared faith increases the willingness of the other part to contribute money or resources to support the humanitarian purposes of the faith-based organization. I will demonstrate that in this chapter with two examples. First, I illustrate how the pastor of the German protestant church used his network with former parishes to fundraise money for humanitarian organizations in Lebanon. Second, I show how the CEO of Medic-Aid has built up a strategic network with politicians, businesspeople and local partners in the countries where humanitarian responses are taking place to make the projects more efficient.

I use the term "social capital" in accordance with Pierre Bourdieu who defines it as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession

of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual

acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 2011, 86).

A. The Pastor of the German Church and the "Beirut Angels"

The contributions of local faith communities to humanitarian responses are

often underrepresented in the literature on humanitarianism, especially as the

charitable money and the individual remittances which are mobilized by religious

communities are hard to measure due to the informal character—and are thus poorly

documented (Ferris 2011, 609–10; Cordier 2009, 672). This section illustrates the

small-scale humanitarian efforts of the German protestant church in Beirut. After the

onset of the Syrian war in 2011, the church was often approached by church

initiatives in Germany that sought to help Syrian refugees and were looking for a

way to transfer their donations to them. According to the pastor, this happened

especially when the German awareness of the war in Syria was at a peak.

> All of that happened at the time when the Syrian crisis was especially
> pressing. Parishes [in Germany] addressed our parish directly. They saw
> it on television, collected spontaneously money, and only then they
> thought about how to transfer the money there. They researched and saw,
> there is a German parish, and approached us. (Interview with pastor)

The Beirut community then directed the donations to their partner projects.

Apart from this passive, intermediary role, the pastor himself also took the initiative

to raise money for the project the church supports after he visited one of the projects.

> I introduced myself everywhere when I arrived and then drove with the
> director of JCC to a school in Nahme in the south. For the first time, I
> realized how things work here and which difficulties Syrian children face
> to receive a school education. Also, I was impressed by the school…
> They lead a hand-to-mouth-existence. (Interview with pastor)

During my interviews with humanitarian workers, I observed that for many,

visiting the informal tented settlements of refugees or, as in the case of the pastor, the

schools for Syrian children, had a special relevance. Witnessing the dire situations

and the struggles of the people—and of the organizations trying to help them—often

set off a deeper reflection about values, materialism and one's own position in the

society (I will come back to this more in depth in chapter IV). After the pastor saw

the difficult situation of the school, he felt compelled to support them. In order to do

so, he mobilized the contact network he had built up during his years of practice as a

pastor. This, in return, inspired his former parish to start fundraising activities for the

schools.

> Then, I drove home, sat down and wrote letters. To friends, to my former
> parish in Korbach, to the Rotary and Lion's Club that I know, also to my
> old parish in Athens, their social welfare association. I found open ears.
> Since the end of October, 14,000 Euro have been collected. I was really
> excited. When you know someone in person, they know that [the money]
> goes through good hands into good hands. They also see, when he is
> telling it to us, then it is a real emergency. And they like to help. They
> organized things in the parish, it's simply beautiful. They folded angels
> out of old songbooks and attached a wooden head with confirmands.
> They call them now "Beirut Angels" and sell them. Before Christmas,
> they sold I don't know how many Beirut Angels. It circulates. (Interview
> with pastor)

The "Beirut Angels" became a material symbol of the help for Syrian refugees

in Lebanon. They demonstrated the importance of churches in raising awareness of

humanitarian crises and their "important public education roles" (Ferris 2005, 322).

They also showed that the church community in Germany brought the Syrian refugee

crisis "home,"[8] made it domestic and integrated the fundraising in the associative life

of the community.

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[8] In her ethnography about elderly Finnish women who knit in order to donate it to
humanitarian projects, Liisa Malkki points to the importance of the "domestic" and
social aspects of humanitarianism: "Both helping and giving are very popular forms
of associational life, and social life more generally" (Malkki 2015, 133−34)

Following the call for donations by the pastor, many individuals decided to donate money to the schools for Syrian children in Lebanon, even people from whom the pastor had least expected support.

> I wrote an article for the parish's newsletter. After that, donations arrived every week. Some people gave 10 Euro, 20 Euro, 100 Euro, 50 Euro. It animated them to give. I know most of the people. But I was surprised about some, why do they donate? One is the father of a confirmand who has left the church. … Suddenly I see: 200 Euros. This person donates 200 Euros because of a newsletter article written by the one with whom he had an argument. It opens the hearts when you make people aware of a concrete need in personal way. There is a trust that the help arrives. (Interview with pastor)

For the pastor, the trust which emerged from a personal relationship and his ability to mediate the urgency of the situation were core reasons for the willingness of the people to donate. In a way, he built up a transnational network of aid, which is directly connected to the underlying Christian values of charity and the identity of the Christian church. Instead of using his social capital to individual self-promotion, the pastor used it to mobilize solidarity.

> It is still the trump card of the church that we have the possibility to mobilize people and to speak to something that is inside them. It is easier for us, we have, so to say, the "power base". At least for now. (Interview with pastor)

At the end of the conversation, when my recorder is already off, he says that the Christian networks are a great treasure and that helping lies in the very nature of the church. So in other words, that charity is ontologically connected to the church. The attractiveness of donating to the church can also be linked to its perceived reliability – while people often know and trust the pastor and transmit the trust on the church and church-related projects in total, it is probably rare that they know people from professional organizations. In addition, people might be suspicious against big professionalized organizations due to various newspaper reports about corruption

scandals (Maisch 2018). Another factor could be that the social pressure to donate for the church is bigger when the bag for the collections is passed around during the Sunday service and neighbors and friends would potentially notice and judge a person who passes it without having inserted some coins.

B. Medic-Aid's Network

Studies have affirmed that the faith-based organization's network distinguishes them from secular organizations: "Religious organisations have an enduring and extensive network of congregations, affiliates, organisations, and individuals. These horizontally and vertically organised networks constitute highly effective channels of communication as well as channels of human and financial resources." (James 2011, 112, see also: Ferris 2011, 617) As I assert now, not only the Protestant church and their parishes, but also faith-based humanitarian organizations like Medic-Aid use the faith networks to augment their impact on two levels. They have a strategic network with influential politicians and good contacts to local Christian partner organizations in the countries where humanitarian action takes place.

First, the CEO Manfred has established a dense and impressive network of businesspeople and politicians who are happy to do a favor for Medic-Aid and to support their work in various ways. The network originates from local contacts in the area of the headquarters in Bavaria and from active networking at Christian events. Thus, Manfred attends regularly the International Berlin Gathering (Internationale Begegnung in Berlin) which is organized by the Foundation for Basic Values and International Understanding (Stiftung für Grundwerte und Völkerverständigung).

He also told me proudly that he has attended eight times the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, an annual networking event with the US president himself

that is organized by the Christian organization "The Fellowship Foundation". The purpose of the National Prayer Breakfast goes beyond offering casual chat by some coffee and croissant and to "concentrate social capital" (Bourdieu 2011, 87). The "Fellowship Foundation", also called "The Family", is actually a powerful fundamentalist Christian organization. They use the Prayer Breakfast to recruit new members (Burton 2018), to introduce political leaders to their unorthodox image of Jesus, and to act as a lobby with a dubious political agenda: "During the 1960s, the Family forged relationships between the U.S. government and some of the most oppressive regimes in the world" (Sharlet 2008, 24).

Through this network, Medic-Aid's CEO was able to gain the support of Airbus: the company allows them to use test flights or delivery flights to carry aid supplies to emergency regions for free. For instance, thanks to these connections, Medic-Aid could bring quickly supplies to the Philippines after typhoon Haiyan in 2013; they deploy the contacts purposefully and become effective and quick, despite their small size.

Here is another example of how Medic-Aid's CEO was able to profit from the contacts he gained at one of those events when Medic-Aid wanted to send aid to Kenya to respond to the famine in East Africa in 2011:

> I had met the vice president of Kenya, Mister Musyoka, at the Berliner Begegnung, and I wrote him and announced that we will bring aid supplies with a charter plane to Nairobi. As the customs duty is very corrupt there, I asked him if he would mind to come to the airport at our arrival so that we don't face any difficulties. He actually came. In that way, we could bring the supplies out of the airport and the customs duty couldn't enrich themselves. (Interview with Manfred)

When talking about the acquaintances of the Christian networking events and other strategical contacts, Manfred always mentioned the names of those people, who were, with one exception (the wife of a CEO), all male. He talked openly about

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those connections and about the benefits that he was able to bring Medic-Aid through them.

The country manager of Lebanon was very well informed about the "Christian breakfast meetings", how she calls them. She also knows about the connections Manfred has to Airbus, which indicates that the latter is keen on the efficacy they reach through the connections and which they might not be able to obtain with solely funding by donations or by governmental funds. It would be interesting to find out whether the employees of Medic-Aid like the Lebanon country manager are aware of the political agenda of the organization behind the Prayer Breakfast and how they evaluate the connection of their director to them.

A second kind of network, different from the strategic contacts to high-ranking politicians and businessmen, is the network with local religious organizations in the countries where humanitarian aid is needed. In the case of typhoon Haiyan, the aid workers were accommodated by a German Christian missionary, she has been working on the Philippines for a few decades. In Lebanon, Medic-Aid cooperates with an orphanage run by nuns.

What distinguishes these "Christian" networks from other kinds of professional networks? Medic-Aid's CEO Manfred mentioned that there was an *a priori* trust and connectedness through the shared faith that allowed him to ask his acquaintances for big favors. For example, he did not shy away from asking the vice prime minister of Kenya to come to the airport to receive the aid supplies because he expected that he would be willing to support the humanitarian purpose of Medic-Aid. The following conversation with the country director of Lebanon illustrates the particularity of this network:

Vanessa: It is underestimated that there are actually incredibly many people who have a religious background and come to those events. ... I believe that those connections are much stronger through the religious aspect. It is somewhat less professional, but through the professionality, you cannot achieve such contacts and connections. But through the religious aspect, it is deeper, as in 'we share a faith, we share a worldview'. This is stronger as just saying, 'we work in the same sector, let's meet and see how we can support each other'. ...

Luisa: Brothers and sisters in faith.

Vanessa: Exactly. It is stronger in this field. ... I am not always at ease with that, because I usually think: I don't share your faith! But we can work together anyways. (Interview with Vanessa)

Through the shared belief and world view, solidarity grows fast and action can quickly follow. Medic-Aid's CEO affirmed that trust and closeness emerge from knowing the other person is also a Christian. Also, businesspeople and politicians who seek actively contact with other Christians through networking events might be more inclined to engage in philanthropic activities that allow them to demonstrate their compassion and their willingness to use their influence to alleviate human suffering. Conversely, those Christian networks could be seen as a space enforcing disclosed backroom meetings or as a form of nepotism, especially as the political agenda of "The Fellowship" is dubious.

This form of informal Christian network, inasmuch as it brings together people who share the Christian faith, might exclude non-believers. Vanessa's last statement indicates that she personally feels detached from those kinds of networks as an agnostic person and she even considers them less *professional*. This reveals something about her understanding of faith-based organizations. On the one hand, she devaluates the Christian networks by pointing to their lack of professionalism and by creating a hierarchy in which professionalism ranks higher than the semi-private religious connectedness. On the other hand, she acknowledges the efficiency

of the networks and their positive contribution to the humanitarian aid, which reverses the hierarchy.

To conclude, while secularism and a professionalism paradigm dominate the humanitarian discourse and while faith-based organizations are keen to highlight that their work is neither partial nor that they proselytize, in the domain of personal relations and networks, shared Christian religion creates a space of connectedness that is crucial for the work of faith-based organizations. The religious component makes the informal network especially powerful. In the two stories that I have described, networks built up in the context of churches or events like the National Prayer Breakfast are indispensable for fundraising or for facilitating humanitarian projects. These networks are bound to specific people in leading positions of the faith-based organization who mobilize their social capital and the compassion of their acquaintances for the profit of their organization.

My emphasis on to the social capital of faith-based organizations could itself be seen as a part of a secular materialist discourse which values religious features of faith-based organizations in terms of their contribution to humanitarianism (Ager and Ager 2011, 460). Yet, I contend that the existence of those networks points to the persisting transnational power of Christianity that may be concealed by the adaptation of faith-based organizations to secular humanitarian norms on the surface. Jonathan Benthall stated: "throw religion out of the door: it flies back by the window" (Benthall 2008, 169). If we examine the Christian networks in light of the "secularization thesis," a popular view in 20th century sociology which predicted a general decline of religion due to progress and modernization and the retreat of religion to the realm of the private, we may state that the force of faith for interpersonal relationships has not at all disappeared. These interpersonal

relationships are shaped by a religious feeling of connectedness and trust and, like in the case of the pastor, centered around church institutions. The relationships influence and secure the working of faith-based organizations in the humanitarian field at different levels and sustain a transnational Christian network.

In the following chapter, I will trace more extensively moments of tension or in which aid workers negotiate the role of religion in the workplace and in their own views, as well as the construction of humanitarian subjectivities in faith-based organizations.

CHAPTER IV

HUMANITARIAN SUBJECTIVITIES

Many studies on faith-based organizations discuss conceptual aspects of faith-based organizations or their role in a global context of humanitarianism (Ager and Ager 2011; Ferris 2005, 2011; Hollenbach 2014; James 2011). These macro-level analyses cannot explain what it means for an individual to work for a faith-based humanitarian, or, in other words, what constitutes a humanitarian subject in a faith-based organization. The individual humanitarian subjectivities are precisely what I explore in this chapter.

I address the various motivations of aid workers, analyze understandings of help and how aid workers negotiate their own religious sensibilities—in relation to a "secular imperative" in the humanitarian context. Embedded in my analysis of humanitarian subjectivities, I investigate processes of secularization and sanctification in a case study of Medic-Aid. Firstly, I analyze how the country coordinator frames the role of religion in the workplace by mobilizing a secularized discourse. Secondly, I elucidate the various reasons that individuals give for working in the humanitarian sector. Then, I analyze three cases in which religious sensibilities affect humanitarian work. Rima, an employee of Medic-Aid, uses a sanctified discourse of humanitarianism which distinguishes between religious and non-religious aid workers in a subtle way. I trace how the personal conversion of the CEO impacted Medic-Aid's broader orientation in order to illustrate how the individual religious sensibilities are intertwined with the identity of the organization itself. Finally, the story of Mouna, another employee of Medic-Aid, leads me to a

reflection about the conflict between the secular imperative and sectarianized identities in Lebanon.

A. A Secularized Workplace?

On the day of my first visit to the office of Medic-Aid, I take a van from Beirut to a central roundabout in Zahle where Vanessa, the German country coordinator of Medic-Aid, picks me up with a rented car. We take a turn at a shop that sells colorful suitcases and shotguns. The area is middle-class residential, a few cars with stickers of the organization park next to the office building. One car has an additional sticker that says there are no guns on board. At first, I think that it is a joke, but a staff member explains to me that it facilitates passages through checkpoints. The office rooms look like an apartment: there is a big kitchen, a bathroom with a bathtub, a room with a dining table, plastic chairs and a big Christmas tree with a Santa Clause hat on top. A German flag partially covers one of the doorways while posters with facts and figures inform about the situation of refugees in Lebanon.

The country coordinator Vanessa shares her office with two other employees. Folders and files are accurately stored in a shelf, a big calendar hangs on the wall and the room is a bit stuffed. A red Medic-Aid vest is casually thrown over one of the office chairs. The Lebanon office of Medic-Aid has 15 employees. All of them are Lebanese, except for one Russian employee and the German coordinator. Vanessa tells me that it is common practice for Medic-Aid to hire only (German) expatriates, not locals, for the management positions in the field offices, the justification being avoiding nepotism. Vanessa highlights that Medic-Aid's religious principles barely influence their practical work in Lebanon.

The religious background of [Medic-Aid] has never changed anything at the composition of the team, absolutely not. … We don't employ only Christians and in the interviews in the recruitment process, I don't ask at all: "What's your religion?" Also, the headquarters do not impose this [requiring potential employees to belong to a specific religion] … Ultimately, if you want to be promoted in the headquarters of [Medic-Aid], the religion or your firmness of faith might play another role. But not in the field teams, absolutely not. (Interview with Vanessa)

According to Vanessa, employees usually do not mention that they are from a Christian organization when they go to the refugee camps. As for the first contact with government employees, public authorities or the managers of the camp, Vanessa adds: "We don't go there and say, 'hello, we are Medic-Aid, and by the way, we are Christian.'" For her, an overt Christian self-fashioning contradicts the humanitarian code of conduct and principles like neutrality and impartiality.

Often, faith-based organizations give their practice a secular outlook and appearance and adapt to the requirements of professional humanitarian action (Ferris 2011). Alastair and Joey Ager (2011) assert that "while secularism is in principle 'neutral' to religion, in practice the secular framing of the humanitarian regime marginalizes religious practice and experience in the conceptualization of humanitarian action at both global and local levels" (Ager and Ager 2011, 457). The authors juxtapose a religious framing of needs, motivations and responses in humanitarianism with a liberal materialist framing of reason and materialism. They argue that "functional secularism" accommodates those different discourses. For them, secular means to be ideologically neutral. Building on Charles Taylor's concept of the secularization of public life and the privatization of religious belief, the authors assert that in a functional framework, there is a broad array of secular public contexts and domains where faith-based thinking is considered legitimate. Therefore, "faith-based actors in humanitarian arenas need to demonstrate publicly

defendable practices, not 'privatized' commitments" (Ager and Ager 2011, 460). Faith and religious traditions are only valuable if they contribute material value to humanitarianism, like social capital or community structure (ibid.). Since many faith-based organizations employ professional workers and emphasize that they reject proselytism, it is often difficult to distinguish faith-based and from secular organizations (Ferris 2011). There are pressures from governmental funders or the NGO community on faith-based organizations "to adopt more secular—or at least less overtly religious—approaches to humanitarian endeavors" and to follow professional standards (Ferris 2011, 615). As a result, faith-based organizations camouflage their religious identity and implement the secular imperative.

Several examples suggest that Vanessa consciously circumvents the issue of religion in her daily work. She says that she does not know who from the staff is religious and who is not. In job interviews with potential employees, Vanessa does not ask them about their religious denomination. To her, the fact that Medic-Aid employs also Druze and Muslim individuals means that they are not confessional in practice—although everyone in the office seems to know who is Druze and who is Muslim.

Consciously or not, Vanessa ignores that the secular practice to keep religion away from the workplace might work well in other parts of the world where religious identity is subtler, but not when it is imported to Lebanon. Here, where identifying the confession of the opposite person is a daily practice, there is no need to ask directly. Not only is the confession stated on the ID cards, but with some exercise, it is easy to decipher it by the name: Ahmad or Mohammad are common names for Muslims, Ali or Hussein are Shiite names. Maroun, Tony or French or Armenian first names are considered Christian names. The family name is an additional hint,

and if the religion is not clear by now, the question "where does your family live?" gives the last clues. In fact, militias used this practice at checkpoints to identify (and often kill) members of other confessional communities during the civil war. Individual religiosity does not play a role in this game of reciprocal identification. Even if a person considers herself as an atheist or believes in Buddhism, she will find herself in a system where she is constantly read according to her name as a member of a specific religious community.

Despite Vanessa's effort to secularize the workplace, that is to favor norms of professionalism and secularism over religious categories, religion is not entirely concealed in the workplace of Medic-Aid. She admits that Medic-Aid's logo with the Christian fish introduces a hint of religion into their work and that some of her colleagues draw their motivation from faith, but she highlights that humanitarian aid is always on the foreground.

> I try to avoid talking about politics and religion with the team, also when we have a Christmas dinner, a shared meal or a team event. There is no place for that at the workplace, especially in an organization. Sometimes, it does come to the surface, for example when I asked the person in charge of MHPSS [mental health and psychosocial support] if she wants to talk to you and she said: "Yes, but I am not religious." In fact, I was surprised, I had thought she was religious. And we don't talk about faith. When I ask, they tell me something, but I don't ask. I think, that is none of my business. When someone wants to share it with me or when the topic shifts to it, one may talk about it. But I'm not like "So what's your religion, what do you believe in?". (Interview with Vanessa)

During the course of the interview, she mentioned more and more examples in which religion does play a role in the work of Medic-Aid, especially in the headquarters in Germany. In her job application, she had to disclose her religion. The headquarters offers a daily morning prayer to volunteers. According to Vanessa, the elder generation of Medic-Aid staff especially is very religious and often signs emails with "Blessings" or "May God protect you," but she never felt compelled to

reply in a similar religious language. While religious affiliation does not matter for country coordinators or staff on the ground, she has the impression that being Christian might facilitate a career in the headquarters. During the interview, it was difficult for me to reconcile Vanessa's secularized discourse with the blinking 3D Santa Claus that decorated the desk of one of the aid workers and the Christmas stickers on the windows, so I brought the conversation to that issue:

> *Luisa:* An acquaintance of me used to work at Caritas and told me that sometimes, a bishop passes by or that they celebrate worship. Do you have a Christmas celebration? My feeling is that Christmas is almost trans-regional.

> *Vanessa:* Indeed. We do have a Christmas celebration, but I think in a way, Christmas does not have to do anything with religion anymore. You can see, there are things [decorations] hanged up. They were all hanged up by people who are not religious. It is more about gathering. Also, at home, we celebrate Christmas, although the majority of my family is zero religious. Also, we don't have a morning prayer, but they do a voluntary morning prayer in the headquarters. The training for [Medic-Aid] was hold in the Baptist church … There it is omnipresent: 'we are religious', and in the morning, there was a prayer circle. Of course, one prayed with the others, even if elsewhere [interrupts herself]—I did not choose [Medic-Aid] because it is religious, and I think, most people don't. But because they are strong in humanitarian aid, they are quick and flexible because they are a small organization and therefore more flexible in many aspects. (Interview with Vanessa)

The ambiguity of the non-religious Christmas celebration in the office and the prayer during the training exhibit a tension between the official secularized discourse and the daily practices of the organization where religion emerges at the surface. It is interesting how Vanessa frames these situations. As for the Christmas celebration, she emphasizes that Christmas is void of any religious meaning. Indeed, especially in Lebanon with its long history of religious coexistence (and probably decades of capitalist promotion of Christmas consumerism), Christmas decorations can be seen in all neighborhoods. Walking through Beirut in December, I observed that neighborhoods like Hamra with a majority of non-Christians use decorations with a

less religious connotation, thus referring more to the cultural aspect of Christmas, not the original religious meaning of Christmas: lights, Santa Claus in Coca-Cola fashion, Christmas trees. On the other hand, neighborhoods with a majority of Christian inhabitants like Ashrafieh display decorations with a direct reference to the story of Jesus's birth, most popularly a manger with a representation of Jesus as a baby, Mary and the shepherds. The decoration in the Medic-Air office belonged more to the first category, the cultural one without direct religious references. Against this backdrop, Vanessa's argument that Christmas "does not have to do anything with religion" is understandable. Yet, her refusal to interpret the office Christmas celebration as religious can also be seen as part of a "secularized discourse" which conceals the religious identity of Medic-Aid.[9]

As for the account of how she hid her own agnosticism during the training, it is interesting to note how detached she talked about herself. Instead of referring to herself in the first person with "I", she used the German third person pronoun "*man*", which I translated into "one". This pronoun as a rhetorical tool makes the story more distanced and points to the unease Vanessa has probably felt when participating in the prayer and to her unease of disclosing an act of concealment to the interviewer.

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[9] In Germany, a debate about the public celebration of Christmas emerged when a boulevard newspaper published an article about the renaming of a Christmas market in Berlin to "winter market" in 2014 (Herrmann, Seidl, and Weinl 2014). Although it turned out that the information was wrong and that the market was actually called "winter market" since it opened two years before (Schönauer 2014) and although Christmas markets are arguably more about the excessive consumption of mulled wine than about the celebrating the birth of Jesus, newspaper articles began to discuss the correct place of religion in the public sphere, the role of religious traditions and the secular state and political correctness. The standpoints in the polemic reached from conservative voices who saw the Christian traditions in danger to polemics that suggested to rename the markets to "End-of-Year-Markets" instead—an allusion to the myth that the GDR called angels "End-of-Year-Wing-Figure" (*Jahresendflügelfigur*) to avoid the religious connotation (Schubert 2015).

Curiously, she interrupts the personal and emotional account by returning to the safe ground of talking about Medic-Aid's (non-religious) qualities as a humanitarian organization and by highlighting their flexibility and their rapid responses to humanitarian emergencies. She explicitly says that the religious character of Medic-Aid does not influence her choice to work for them. This statement is inscribed in the broader humanitarian discourse in which professional values like flexibility, rationality and impact eclipse questions of faith—in the end, professionalism matters more than religious values. This indicates the extent to which the humanitarian field has been secularized and that the impact of the "secular imperative" reaches the level of individual choices. But my analysis has also shown that a certain amount of ambiguity concerning religion persists—as long as the secular commitment is fulfilled.

B. The Fulfillment of Help

When I asked my interlocutors about their motivation to work in the humanitarian sector, religious ideals do not play a big role. Rather, they talked about their idealism, their intrinsic desire to help other people. They mentioned that they really like the work, that it gives them a good feeling or fulfills them or that it offered them a career opportunity after having worked in a hospital or in the private sector. What mattered for many was also the material aspect: the job provided the livelihood and it might be better paid than others. Another interlocutor stressed that she is very aware of being in a fortunate, privileged position and that her work contributed to her wish to share a bit of this privilege; to use it in order to help.

> I felt like I really enjoy much more working with a community than with
> one person only. I don't know, helping people gives me satisfaction. So
> it's maybe a little selfish but I think I really do enjoy working in a

humanitarian organization. … Like sometimes I see like posts [in social media] about people dying in Africa or something and then I think to myself like I'm kind of helping somewhere. So it makes me feel happy. (Interview with Mouna)

I like the idea of helping people [and] when I know that [Medic-Aid] needs a midwife, I feel *innu* this is challenge, one for me. And this is a new career *innu* for me to take care of the patients in the camps. (Interview with Caroline)

Not only the "recipients" of aid but also humanitarian workers themselves—the "givers"—have a strong need: the need to help, the "need to be part of something greater than themselves" and to be part of a "community of generosity" (Malkki 2015, 4). Some see the humanitarian work as a way to escape from their safe national home, and long for "the world outside"—this applies more to the expatriate workers than to the local staff:

I went into humanitarian aid because—even if this might sound a bit idealistic—because I simply couldn't bear the thought that people who are in need do not receive help. Already when I was a kid, when I saw that in the television, I thought that someone must go there, someone must help, it is so easy to help. Even if it is not that easy. But also for non-idealistic reasons. I simply like the work, I like its dynamic and I like that it brings me around the world. Also the adrenaline. Here, the operation is quite comfortable, but I like when there is some excitement and when one has to react quickly. This is, well, it is fun for me. Even when you should not say "fun" too often in humanitarian aid. But still, I think it is an exciting job that also broadens the horizon. (Interview with Vanessa)

In a globalized age, the humanitarian sector offers career opportunities that promise global mobility, excitement and adventure, which indicates also the extent to which humanitarianism has become normalized and integrated into the global economic structure. A whole humanitarian industry has emerged that includes a job sector, trainings and study possibilities. European universities in Europe opened various options for graduate studies in "humanitarian action and peacebuilding" or the like. Compounds and guesthouses were built to accommodate expatriate

humanitarian workers. Ultimately, the humanitarian sector provides the livelihood for thousands of people, expatriates and local workers.

For most of the aid workers of Medic-Aid, the reasons to work in the humanitarian sector were neither explicitly religious nor secular. Religious sensibilities simply did not matter for their motivation. Rima is an exception. She had an intriguing perspective on humanitarian work in connection to religion.

C. Sanctified Meanings of Help

The following portrait shows how religion can influence how aid workers understand humanitarianism. In ethnographic fieldwork, it is a challenging to build up rapport with interlocutors, to reach a certain depth in the conversations. Not with Rima, the accountant of Medic-Aid. She was very open to sharing her thoughts and convictions, talked vividly and in an engaging way. My presence as an interviewer has probably shaped the course of the interview. My impression was that she started the conversation with an emphasis on the importance of religion for aid workers, then moved to a more secular humanitarian discourse before hesitantly coming back to her stance that religious humanitarianism is more legitimate or even superior to secular humanitarianism.

I asked if she considers herself a religious person and she replied: "Yes, proudly". Indeed, she was wearing a golden necklace with a portrait of Mar Charbel, a popular saint for Maronite Christians. Rima attended a Catholic school in Lebanon, regularly goes to church on Fridays and Sundays and celebrates Christmas with her church community, not with her family. In her perspective, being religious is a central aspect of being a humanitarian worker.

I'm a religious person and from my religious beliefs *innu* I will do whatever I can just to help any person who is in need at the camp or outside the camp. So, I don't see any person is a humanitarian if he's not religious. In a way or another, they are linked to each other. For me they are linked, you have this connection between them. (Interview with Rima)

Rima derives her motivation to help from her faith. Her imagination of humanitarianism is inspired by her faith, her religiosity helps her to make sense of her own work and her experiences as a humanitarian worker. This link between faith and humanitarian work is a subtle distinction between religious and non-religious aid workers and portrays religious people as superior humanitarians. I was curious about this statement, so towards the end of the conversation I asked Rima to specify:

Luisa: Do you think a person who's not religious can be a humanitarian worker?

Rima: Listen, for me and I believe for the NGO, it doesn't need to have any religious background to do all the help or to do all the services [the NGO] is doing for the refugees. And for every NGO you have a code of conduct that you have to follow. But this code of conduct, it doesn't make you a human. … If you don't have this inner peace and you don't have this, how would I say it, if you're not convinced by what you are doing, and if you don't have this mercy in your heart, you can't deal with those refugees. … For me, if you are a religious person you would be able to help. Not only giving them medication. It's not only giving this and this to this refugee, but it differs wherever you are giving this pen with love to this refugee. *Y'ani*, I can offer something but if you are religious, I feel you can draw a smile or make someone feel happy or feel loved even for one minute of his life. *Y'ani* this is the difference *bas innu* if a person is not religious, yes, he can do a humanitarian job. But if you are a religious person you can do it with more love. You enjoy doing it. For you, it will not be like a job you make money out of. It will be a job: you are enjoying seeing people happy. At the end of the day you'll remember: Oh I made this family happy and I helped this child and you will feel blessed to have the opportunity to do this. (Interview with Rima)

Rima sanctifies her understanding of help. For her, Christian religious commitment deepens the help and adds an additional layer to it. Helping is not only about distributing aid supplies, but about "giving with love" and with more enjoyment and about making people happy. According to her, Christians, or religious

people in general, have a disposition to help others (Ngo 2018, 114). Curiously, at another point of the conversation, she made a statement that seems to contradict her distinction between religious and non-religious humanitarian workers:

> For me, wherever the politics or wherever the religious interferes with the humanitarian job than it's not a humanitarian job *'anjad* that it's like you have to be a blank page, an empty page and you deal with all the people whoever they are. Even if even if they hate Christianity, even if they hate for example [Medic-Aid] because it's a German NGO and related to the West and it's not an Arabic NGO. Whatever they say, *innu khalas* you have to keep it in mind *innu* these are people who are in need and sometimes they don't understand what they are facing. *Khalas* you have to deal with them. (Interview with Rima)

Here, Rima reproduces "official" humanitarian talk and alludes to the humanitarian principles of neutrality which proscribes to take sides or to engage in any religious or political issues and of impartiality which orders to help everyone in need. Besides, the imperative to help everyone who is in need overlaps with classical Christian notions like loving the stranger as oneself or the Parable of the Good Samaritan. To make sense out of these overlapping discourses, I found May Ngo's ethnography of an evangelical church and faith-based humanitarian organization in Morocco inspiring and helpful. She refused to adopt clear definitions of those terms and preferred to make visible the complex mechanisms of reference, the dynamics and the fluidity of categories like religion, secularism and humanitarianism (Ngo 2018).

Rima's dynamic understanding of humanitarian aid corroborates Ngo's theory. Rima emphasizes that humanitarian work has made her aware of her own privileges. She has become more critical of the materialism of her own society after she had visited refugee settlements and had been confronted with the living conditions of the refugees. The social difference between her living conditions and that of the refugees increases the obligation for a religious person to help. By that, working in the

humanitarian sector has intensified her religious sensibility. Helping is a way of life

that is accountable before of God; not helping when one has the means to help is

selfish:

> If for me I suppose, I saw any person at the camp who needs like
> medication and I have this medication and I didn't give him this
> medication [when] I leave in the night. I will be afraid *innu* there's God
> at the end of your life who sees you every day, who watches your
> actions. You will feel *innu* he gave me this thing and I can offer it to
> others. Why would I not do this if I can do it unless I'm selfish?
> (Interview with Rima)

According to Rima, medication or any other goods that can possibly improve

the situation of others are given by God with the purpose to "offer it to others". God

may judge her for not complying with this imperative. This charges "helping" with a

religious load, helping becomes a religious obligation.

I asked Rima if there is a Bible story that she relates to humanitarianism, and

she recounted the "feeding of the multitude":

> I remember when Jesus had one fish and everyone was complaining *innu*
> we have one fish on one bread and it's not enough to feed the 6,000
> people. And he did the miracle and the one fish … was enough to feed
> the 6,000. So for me, I feel *innu* if I have like this one bottle of
> medication or this basket of food or this one bread—and why would I
> keep it to myself? Or why would I differentiate between the people in the
> camp? Why would I choose this one [refugee]? Because he is Christian
> and not this family because they are Muslim? *Innu* I would try to be as
> balanced or as fair as possible and *innu* this story … shows *innu* if you
> have one fish and he was able to feed the 6,000. So if you have only one
> thing *y'ani* you can change the life of many people. Even if it was little
> for us, it means a lot for those refugees. (Interview with Rima)

The moral of the story is that even if one has only a single fish to give, one

should give it—and this is already a way of caring for others. She derives her

imperative to help from her religious sensibility, and this also influences her

humanitarian imagination.

Rima might have made this connection only in the interview situation when I asked her specifically about a Bible story, but throughout the interview she drew similar connections. I understand this account as "vernacular theology," a theology that has "neither the desire nor any pretense to provide the kind of coherent systemic theology that one might expect from biblical scholars and theologians," but rather focuses on the meaning people "on the ground" attribute to concepts(Elisha 2008, 167–68). It is not relevant how accurately she recounted the story compared to the version in the Bible which mentioned 5,000, not 6,000 people, but the "reproductive imagination" (Malkki 2015, 19) which connects previous knowledge to new imaginaries, in this case the Bible story to her work as an aid worker.

When Rima says that the choice of the beneficiaries of aid should not be guided by their religion, she interweaves the Bible story with humanitarian discourse and particularly with the humanitarian principle of impartiality. The principle of impartiality is defined as making "no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress." (ICRC 2015). Finally, the connection between the Bible story and Rima's own lifeworld in the humanitarian context confers meaning to her work.

Individual Religious Sensibilities Influence the Organization

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I had assumed that Medic-Aid had always been a faith-based organization, but this assumption was disconfirmed when I researched about its history and its logo, particularly through a telephone interview with the CEO of Medic-Aid, Manfred. He and his brother had founded Medic-Aid

when they were in their early 20s and neither of them was religious at the time.

According to Manfred, it was his brother's idea after a journey with friends on which

they ended up in Morocco.

> They experienced for the first time hardship in a developing country
> from their own observations. When they came back, they had the desire
> to do something for people who are not well. This wish was there in 1979
> when we founded our association. (Interview with Manfred)

In the early years, faith was not important for Medic-Aid. That changed when

Manfred had a severe illness, met Christians in the hospital and his brother gave him

testimonies of people who recounted how faith had changed their life for the better.

Manfred became more and more interested in Christianity and finally converted and

began to go to a protestant free-church parish. Manfred did not mention how his

brother got in touch with religion and also did not make explicit from what he

converted, but I assume he was a non-believer before. I understood his use of the

word "conversion" (*Bekehrung*) as a marker of the turning point that describes how

life changing it was for him. The new faith of the two founding members of the

association left its marks on the organization as well. For instance, Medic-Aid

became a partner of other Christian organizations, and the brothers decided to change

the logo by inserting a reference to the Christian faith:

> Before, we had a different logo that consisted only out of letters. After I
> have been converted, I said, let us transform the "D" into a fish. Then,
> my brother developed the logo on the screen [of the computer] with the
> fish. But we are still not a typical Christian organization because we do
> not carry out missionary activities. (Interview with Manfred)

Medic-Aid's logo consists of the letters in black lower case letters with white

borders. To the right, there is a red curve which resembles the waves of a heart beat

displayed on an electrocardiogram. It refers to the medical aid the organization puts

at the center of its work. The letter "d" is now shaped in the form of a rotated

Ichthys-fish almost standing on its head. A red dot inside the letter indicates the eye of the fish and a part of the fish's tail is covered by the letter "i".

The symbolism of the fish emerged in the early Christian church and was popular mainly in the 2nd to the 4th century AC. As the fish was also a common symbol in Roman and Greek culture and therefore was not suspicious, early Christians who faced persecution used it as a secret symbol to mark meeting places and to identify other Christians in a covert way (Coffman 2008). The initial letters of the Greek words and profession of faith "Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter" form the word fish in Greek, Ichthys, as an acrostic (Hassett 1909). The symbol of the fish also alludes to numerous Bible stories, like the one about the feeding of the multitude. Similar to its function as a secret identifier, the fish in the logo identifies Medic-Aid as a Christian organization without creating too much suspicion and without being noticed by people who are not informed about its presence.

The fish in the logo of Medic-Aid is subtle. One would not necessarily notice it without knowing about it. It also escaped my attention when I visited the website of Medic-Aid and even when I inserted the logo into the presentation for the proposal defense. Only in the interviews did my interlocutors bring the fish to my attention. Apparently, Manfred wanted the fish to be in the logo as a Christian signature, but he calibrated in a way that it is not too obvious or conspicuous.

It is noteworthy that Manfred, right after explaining why and how they altered the logo, felt the need to stress that Medic-Aid is not a "typical Christian organization," which is for him connected to missionary activities. He creates a boundary between Medic-Aid, a moderate faith-based organization, and other, typical faith-based organizations which proselytize.

The subtlety of the Christian symbol can be an advantage for Medic-Aid when operating in contexts in which an overt Christian self-representation might create suspicion among the beneficiaries of aid—like refugee camps. It is less visible than the cross in the logo of Caritas or in the logo of World Vision. But it is there. In Lebanon, Christian symbols like a cross, prints or figures of the virgin Mary or of Saint Charbel are quite common, but occasionally, I have seen a fish sticker on a car. Therefore, I assume that most people would recognize the fish as a Christian symbol.

D. Religious Jewelry and the Secular Imperative

The interviews with aid workers suggest that it can be challenging for humanitarian workers to locate their religious sensibilities within a secular code of conduct, even in faith-based organizations like Medic-Aid. Mouna is Lebanese and identifies herself as Christian, but she said that she is not a religious person anymore, and that she stopped going to church "because I'd rather sleep long on Sundays."

We talked about appropriate behavior for aid workers in the camps and she told me admiringly that one of the employees always takes off her shoes when she enters a tent. Mouna thinks this is very respectful—other team members just leave their shoes on. In her opinion, the visual appearance of aid workers should not underline the inherent difference and inequality between humanitarians and the refugees:

> I think it's important for the NGOs to be modest while providing the
> services like I would never go in heels to the camps. ... But it's good to
> make the people feel that we are both like human beings. So I'm not that
> much more important than you are. I'm not more important full stop.
> You know, I just have the—I just can help you. (Interview with Mouna)

Mouna depicts an image of a universal equality where the self and the other, the aid providers and beneficiaries, belong to the same universal humanity. Why is it important for her to stress this universal equality? Maybe to counter the popular

discourse in Lebanon which considers Syrian refugees as second-class people who steal the jobs of Lebanese or even as criminals; a general refugee system in which the refugees are denied basic rights such as a registration status and in which curfews and restrictions make the lives of refugees harder to live. Simple gestures like taking off the shoes show that the aid workers respect the refugees and recognize their human dignity. Why taking off the shoes cannot overcome the inequalities and why giving always entails a power relation will be discussed more detailed in the next chapter.

Other than the socio-economic and legal difference between aid-workers and refugees, there is also the religious difference since most refugees are Sunni—and Medic-Aid is a Christian organization. What does that mean for the code of conduct regarding the visual appearance of religion in a camp? I noticed that Mouna wore a necklace with a golden cross and a heart, so I addressed it in the conversation.

> *Luisa:* I don't know if it's too personal but I noticed you were wearing a cross. When you go to the camps—
>
> *Mouna:* [immediately] No, I don't remove this. *Y'ani* I don't remove these two ever like even when I shower or sleep or anything. Maybe it would be better if I removed them *bas innu*, I don't.
>
> *Luisa:* And did you get any reactions?
>
> *Mouna:* No, I never got any reaction actually. *Y'ani* no one looked at me in a weird way or said something, you know. It never happened. Also, I usually wear a vest and an ID cards [makes the gesture of a wrapping scarf around her neck]. Sometimes it doesn't really show. Also, it's a very tiny cross. [thinks a moment] But for me, I think it's better if I don't wear it. I know that it's probably recommended that I don't wear it. *Bas* I do.
>
> *Luisa:* Yeah, when you said about the high heels, I once like thought about the same when I was teaching in a refugee camp or refugee housing in Germany. So before I went there, I always kind of thought about what I'm going to wear. Should I wear my stylish yellow cloak or just something like this? I don't know.

Mouna: Mmm. I get your point *bas innu* for me personally, *y'ani*
whether I'm working in a humanitarian organization or not. Like, so
when you see a Muslim woman, you would know she's Muslim because
she has the veil so I don't think me wearing a cross is that big of a deal.
So it's similar to me. Yeah, but I'm not doing it to show people that I'm
Christian. I'm wearing a cross because I want to wear it. So that's why I
don't remove it. (Interview with Mouna)

This dialogue displays an inner conflict. On the one hand, Mouna is convinced
that Medic-Aid should not convey a religious appearance in the camp. She seems to
have incorporated the secular humanitarian norms and the "secular imperative". This
implies that displaying Christian symbols could create a barrier or even a hierarchy
between religious Muslim refugees and the aid workers.

On the other hand, she refuses to take off the necklace in the camps—she never
takes it off. She justifies her behavior by referring to another obvious religious
symbol, the Islamic headscarf, and by pointing out that her humanitarian "outfit," the
red Medic-Aid vest and the ID cover the religious symbol. Like the humanitarian
vest covering the cross in the case of Mouna, the "secular imperative" of
humanitarian aid might therefore cover individual religious sensibilities, but also
deep-lying sectarian social divisions.

What is the meaning of the cross symbol in this context? In Lebanon, a
codified and institutionalized sectarian system categorizes every individual into a
sectarian identity and subjectivity. Eighteen official religious sects are in charge of
the personal status of its members and a complicated quota system organizes the
distribution of political and administrative positions according to sects. Sectarian
identities are institutionalized "historical constructions; their intensity and centrality
to modes of political mobilization is based on specific political, ideological, and
geopolitical contexts" (Salloukh et al. 2015). In other words, sectarianism is the
political perpetuation of an imagined community which is defined by confessional

boundaries. According to Ussama Makdisi (2000), the point of departure for modern sectarianism in the Middle East lies in the historical developments of the 19th century, namely the breakdown of the Ottoman empire, the increasing impact of Western colonialism, and the emergence of concepts like nationalism and citizenship.

Scholars have contested the overemphasis of the sectarian in conflict studies, as it reduces sectarian affiliation to an essential identity and carries the assumption that sectarianism is an a-historical, stable social reality (Gause 2014; Haddad 2017). Yet, sectarianism is a powerful concept to understand social processes. The transgression of sectarian identities by means of religious intermarriage or conversions is not intended by the sectarian system which produces and perpetuates a sectarian citizenship and social difference (Mikdashi 2014; Deeb 2017).

The omnipresence of religious symbols in Lebanon therefore does not necessarily express the religiosity of the population, but but rather act as markers of sectarian identities and distinctions. Ever growing statues of saints and The Virgin Mary, sculptures e.g. of the word *Allah* like on a central square in Tripoli or flags of sectarian political parties assure that a passer-by cannot miss the majoritarian religious sect of a neighborhood.

The religious symbolism even enters the space of jewelry and fashion. Muhib Shansaz, an anthropologist at the Lebanese University, notes:

> The person who does not have adequate space for expression usually resorts to expressing their convictions through symbols, rather than behavior. We can divide people who wear such jewelry into those who wear them as an accessory and a symbol of fashion, and those who wear them to express sectarian elements of their personality. (Al-Khatib 2012)

In the case of Mouna, the cross might represent her identity as a Christian and her belonging to the Christian sect rather than her religious belief—given that she

doesn't identify herself as a religious person. I will come back to the sectarian dimension of the relationship between Syrian refugees and Lebanese in the third chapter.

The analyses in this chapter illuminated different aspects of humanitarian subjectivities. The interview with the country director of Medic-Aid shows that despite the effort to secularize the workplace, contradictions and tensions constantly emerge at the surface. Vanessa's uneasiness with the prayer during the training and Mouna's uneasiness with what she perceives as "secular imperative" to avoid religious symbols in the camps reveal that both secular and religious forces and imperatives are at work in a faith-based organization, and that navigating those forces can be challenging for humanitarian workers. They are not necessarily motivated by religious reasons, but for some, like Rima, religiosity gives the help a deeper meaning and at the same time distinguishes religious from non-religious humanitarian workers.

All the moments represented above point to the ambiguity and complexity of religion internal to faith-based organizations. In the next chapter, I turn to the humanitarian practice and describe the daily work of a midwife in a refugee camp. This leads me to an analysis of the relationship between humanitarian workers and refugees as well as to an analysis of the impact that the experiences of working in the camps has on the aid workers.

CHAPTER V

HUMANITARIAN ENCOUNTERS

In the previous chapters, I have mapped out how the rather secular organization Medic-Aid and the evangelist organization Lebanon Hope understand humanitarian aid. I have focused on broader discourses of impartiality and proselytism, on the meanings individual aid workers attribute to help and on how they negotiate religion and secularism on the workplace. Now, I examine how the different approaches play out in the humanitarian practice by drawing on observations made during an awareness session of Medic-Aid in a refugee camp and I draw on an in-depth interview with an aid worker of Lebanon Hope. Particularly, I trace how Lebanese aid workers distinguish themselves from refugees; I ask how the two organizations attempt to *transform* the refugee communities with health education and I analyze the subtle obligations for refugees inherent to the programs.

A. Distinctions between Lebanese Aid Workers and Syrian Refugees

Medic-Aid's team allowed me to accompany one of the aid workers to a health awareness session for women in a refugee camp, or, in NGO-speech: an "informal tented settlement". The organization regularly sends a bus with a doctor or a midwife to the 30 camps they operate in. They visit each camp once or twice a month. The bus is equipped with medication, a blue stretcher for patients, and a heater. Everything gives a clean, but slightly used impression. I drove with the driver Bilal, the field worker Ziad and the midwife Caroline with the bus on a bumpy road through the Bekaa valley, a rural area with many agricultural fields, seldom

luxurious villas and occasional refugee settlements. Some consisted of one or two tents, others were whole tented neighborhoods. The tents were covered with tarpaulin with the logo of UNHCR, the face of politician who run for elections or advertisements. Some roofs were secured by car tires. Half-readable and broken signs next to a few camps indicated that Mercy Corps, the European Union or other humanitarian organizations have funded projects and are were charge of the camp. Finally, we passed by a sign saying "Beauty Land, 500 m". It showed to the same direction as the camp, but actually referred to a big estate, presumably a clinic for beauty surgeries. The camp was not so much a beauty land but a settlement of several rows of tents between bare fields, one field enclosed by a fence with barbed wire. Children played on an improvised swing that hangs from one of the metal struts of the fence. A boy held a piece of wood like a shotgun and a young woman hung up laundry on the barbed wire. A man passed by with his small flock of sheep and goats.

In the camp, Bilal and Ziad got off and announced our arrival to the Shawish, the manager of the camp who was an elderly man who wears a red and white Kaffiyeh and traditional long clothes. Shortly after our arrival, women gathered next to the entrance of the bus. Some of them carried babies on their arms, wrapped in a blanket, or held a small child by their hand. All women wore a headscarf, some of the elderly ones had a traditional facial tattoo. One by one entered the bus to consult the midwife for health issues. Caroline, the midwife, then invited the pregnant women to come to the awareness session. Caroline told me that most of the women had vaginal or bladder infections, probably due to the bad water quality. Usually, she distributes vitamins and supplements to the pregnant women, medication against headache or infections or condoms or birth control pills if the women ask for it. She also said that many of the women married and gave birth before they turned 18 and

that it was not uncommon for a woman to deliver seven or more children. She did not perform examinations, except measuring blood pressure or the weight. In case she encountered more serious cases, she referred the women to a doctor. I asked Caroline if she remembered the names of the women, but she says no, only sometimes.

During my visit in the refugee camp and during the conversations I had with the humanitarian workers, I observed several modes of distinction between the aid workers and the refugees which emphasized the social hierarchies and boundaries. The levels of distinction are socio-economic, religious and national-linguistic. When Ziad, the field worker, talked about the situation of refugees, there was a certain bitterness in his voice. He pointed out that the Syrians lived in similar circumstances at the other side of the border except that now they received assistance from the UNHCR, a stove and some earned additional money by working irregularly on the farms. Thereby, he suggested that their life in Lebanon was better and he ignored the violent and involuntary aspect of the forced migration.

While Caroline was doing the consultations, a van came to the camp to sell fruits and vegetables. The drivers shouted their selection into an amplifier. Ziad brought to my attention that they used the word in Syrian dialect for Orange, *bered'an* instead of *laymun,* the Lebanese word. Later, another car arrived. We observed what happened from the inside of the bus, overlooking the scenery. The man opened the trunk and took out a big bag that first fell on the wet ground. With the help of some young girls, he carried the heavy load away. Inside the bag was a huge piece of meat, apparently cow meat as they called the word *baggara*. Again, Ziad noted the Syrian pronunciation. Partially, the comment could have been made to

inform me about the different Arabic dialects. It could also be seen as a linguistic

distinction from the refugees.

For the way in which Lebanese perceive Syrians refugees, the sectarianized

collective memory is crucial. Daniel Meier (2014), building on Maurice Halbwachs

and Nadine Picaudou, understands remembrance as a collective work and collective

memory as socially shared perceptions. He claims that the perception of Lebanese

towards Syrian refugees is deeply shaped by sectarianized memories of the civil war

(1975-1990) and the Syrian occupation (until 2005). According to Meier, especially

the influx of Palestinian refugees who had lived previously in Syria to Lebanon

frightens the Christian population as it reminds them of the divisions of the civil war

and the battles with the Palestinian Fedayeen. To add to that, the popular narrative of

the "war of the other" to which mainly other countries contributed (Larkin 2010)

shifted the responsibility of a perpetrator from Lebanese actors to external players

like Syria.

Rawad from Lebanon Hope interpreted the Lebanese-Syrian history as a

positive challenge for Christian humanitarian organizations by inscribing it to the

Christian discourse of "loving thy enemy" and forgiveness.

> The Christian community in Lebanon was the main community, I mean:
> Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelicals. All of them have been affected
> negatively by the Syrian existence in Lebanon of almost 40 years. They
> came in 1977 left in 2005 and they dominated the country politically. All
> the system was controlled by them and the Christian community had
> many conflicts and many battles between the Christian militias and the
> Syrian troops in Lebanon. But again, if you look at it now, these people
> are here. That might mean her parents, uncle, father, grandfather were
> fighting the Christians here. But now, the Christians are serving the
> Syrians. And we're saying that not as a matter of showing off, but as a
> matter of showing love. This is the true love. If I've survived a car
> explosion, I was displaced twice in my life with my parents, with my
> family. That's because of the Syrian existence in Lebanon and the
> negative effect of it. But I have no hatred towards these communities in
> my heart. On the contrary. I want to help them, on purpose. We insist to

go and reach these people because it's not their fault, first. And we are not the ones that should judge and take revenge and these are not our values. Our values are to go and respect and love and help the people. (Interview with Rawad)

Rawad described that especially the Christian community was affected by the occupation and he points to his own biography as an internally displaced refugee. Many of the Lebanese aid workers had difficulties to revisit their opinions on Syrians before engaging in the humanitarian work.

Another theme where the distinction from Syrian refugees came to the fore was the discourse on fertility. Caroline expressed that she feels bad about the refugees, especially about the children. She mentioned that she was frustrated that her message was not conveyed.

> *Caroline:* When I started here, I used to go with another Midwife. She told me how to do it. Day after day *y'ani*, I feel that it is so easy to help refugees with medicine or to see their pregnancy, if it's okay or not. In every awareness session I do, I talk about how to take contraceptive pills to put an idea, to stop being pregnant. No one understands because of their husbands *y'ani* and this the Syrian culture, *ma b'arif*, I don't know. So this is …
>
> *Luisa:* Is it frustrating?
>
> *Caroline:* Yes! I mean I'm sad about them. *La innu* I know because they live in such a nasty place. They don't have anything *y'ani* so poor and they give birth to [more] children. *Innu* why? You shouldn't you do that. If you were at your country if you were at Syria, okay! *Innu* no one is responsible. But you are refugees in another country. Innu for what? And you cannot even teach the child. (Interview with Caroline)

In a similar way, Ziad said about the awareness sessions that the information went into one ear and out the other. "It is in their religion" to have many children, and often, the women who had attended the awareness session were pregnant when they saw the midwife the next time. Partially, the opinion of the aid workers towards refugees can be explained by the personal experience: on the way back, Caronline and Bilal talked about the struggle to afford the tuition at a private school for their

children—how would refugees in camps ever be able to guarantee a school education for children?

But the health awareness sessions and the opinions of the aid workers on the fertility of Syrian refugee women are part of a broader discourse on fertility which is connected to the debate on demography. Especially Christians mobilize the fear that with an increasing Muslim population, the proportion of Christians to the population might shrink even more. The last population census was in 1932, but it is estimated that the proportion of Christians compared to the total population has declined during the last decades. In this environment, every variable which could possibly lead to an alteration of the demography is highly politicized—although it is unlikely that Syrian refugees gain the Lebanese citizenship on a large scale and effectively change the political representation.

The accusation of poor women for having too many children reminded me of the 2018 film *Capharnaüm* by the Lebanese director Nadine Labaki that received international appraisal. In the film, a young boy from a poor Lebanese family, Zain, accuses his parents for having him brought to life. The idea is that poor families should not get so many children and that only families that can afford to care properly for their children should be allowed reproduction. Behind that lies the Malthusian logic that population growth will lead to resource scarcity and should therefore be limited, for example by making contraceptives widely accessible, and an underlying distinction between middle class and lower class.

B. Can Aid Be Unconditional?

The aim of aid workers to provide unconditional help might clash with the inherent obligation to return and unspoken expectations, especially in evangelical

programs which combine humanitarian aid with spreading the faith. I have mentioned that in the first chapter. During my fieldwork, I realized that underlying expectations to return also occur in the work of Medic-Aid. I am using here the vocabulary of Marcel Mauss's gift exchange from his groundbreaking 1925 essay "The Gift". Mauss states that in society, there is a twofold obligation: to give presents and to reciprocate them. He observed that among natives in northern America, the potlach—a traditional exchange of gifts—created social structures and perpetuated hierarchies in the social order (Mauss 2007).

1. "Health Discipleship"

Lebanon Hope's approach to health awareness aims to create a community health education that is sustainable and that is "owned by the people" and that continues to exist even after the retreat of the NGOs, not only to create awareness. I talked to Nadine who worked in the health program of Lebanon Hope. Instead of covering a large number of camps, Lebanon Hope decided to focus on a more in-depth approach and on sustainability. According to Nadine, the organization avoids the camps in the region around Bar Elias because there are many mosques and Islamic aid programs, as well as the regions in the north where there are Shiite villages and Sunni camps: "they stay away from there to not mix the Christian in there", so they chose more "neutral" camps.

In six camps, they have a "train the trainers"-program, meaning that they train female volunteers from the camps that were chosen by the community, in health issues, who then teach seven or eight families and other women. The trainers are women, they started with 50 trainers and at the end of the two-and-a-half-year program, half of them were still in Lebanon. The communities can choose

themselves the topics they want to learn, popular themes are skin infections and "women's infections". Nadine decided not to compensate volunteers: "I think we got a little bit more belief sustainability and passion out of it." For Nadine, health means not only physical health, but contains also a healthy relationship with others, with oneself and with God.

Nadine is inspired by the concept of community health evangelism (CHE) that emerged in 1980 and that weaves evangelist, spiritual aspects into the program. In order to clarify her personal approach, Nadine uses a religious vocabulary:

> We don't do health awareness. For me, health awareness is similar to evangelism. You tell someone about God, how great that is, for me that's health awareness. When someone from MTI [Medical Teams International] or World Vision or the UN goes in a camp and says: come, I'll tell you about measles, then this is health evangelism for me. What we are doing is health *discipleship*, in religious terms. You will do it; you will understand it. You are only here because you want to be here, and you must tell the others. We give you the opportunity to continue, to do it yourself. And that you'll understand it. It is not teaching, that is the difference. (Interview with Nadine)

Likewise, Alistair and Joey Ager (2011, 464) suggested that while proselytism is generally proscribed by faith-based organizations, programs of awareness-raising and psychosocial programs promote the transformation of social relations or of attitudes in a similar way as proselytism. These programs might be a form of "unselfconscious imperialism" (ibid.). It is interesting how Nadine distinguishes herself from other forms of awareness session by calling them "evangelism".

Through the close contact with the refugee women in the camps, Nadine was able to establish a deeper knowledge about the causes of some of their health problems. For example, she learnt that a few young, unmarried women had vaginal infections that usually only appeared when women had sexual intercourse. She was puzzled and could not find an explanation for the infections. Were all these girls

raped? Later, she found out underwear made out of synthetic materials caused the infections, and by changing the kind of underwear, the women were able to prevent the infections. Another time, there was a number of childbirths for an unexplained reason. The women had gone regularly to examinations. After a while, Nadine learnt that the women had actually only gone to an ultrasound examination that was close-by and cheaper than going to the hospital for a serious examination. But the ultrasound was not sufficient: it couldn't diagnose that the women had pre-eclampsia and eclampsia.

Many times, the refugees invited the field workers to have coffee and tea with them. Nadine stressed that this is important for them.

> We had coffee and tea with them and this was the other thing that surprised me. They said the other NGOs don't do it. 'We've invited them many times to show our thankfulness and they don't do it.' They say they don't have time and when they do come they will not touch it or they barely will touch it as if we're dirty people and they feel that the NGO workers feel that they're dirty, that they can't have it clean and they're going to catch a disease from it. And that is something where [Lebanon Hope] stands out. (Interview with Nadine)

This statement does include a distinction from other NGOs. But it also points to the reciprocity of help, aid is a form of exchange. The refugee women offered hospitality in return to the aid supplies or the training they have received, and they perceived the rejection of the invitation as hurtful. The opportunity to perform hospitality is especially important in exile: Seçil Dağtaş found that Syrian refugee women in the Turkish province of Hatay used the custom of hospitality to subvert their status as "guests" in the foreign country and to be hosts themselves (Dağtaş 2018). In Maussian terms, the refusal of other aid workers to accept the invitation for coffee can be seen as a refusal to engage in a deeper relationship and to recognize the other on the same level.

In the training program, Nadine starts to talk after a while not only about health and diseases, but also about God. Some of the volunteers were illiterate, so they taught them how to read numbers so that they can read the blood pressure gage.

> That is when I first introduced some of the religious concepts. They knew we were Christians because we work for [Lebanon Hope]. … I told them, look, there is that crazy thing that God has counted the number of hairs on our head. We've just done all this number stuff. Like God knows number of hears on our head. I know my brush. I got loose hairs every day. It changes all the time, how crazy if God knows that? How much more does he actually care about us as a person? … I'd rather talk to them about the character of God. … It was all about that God actually cares about you. And certainly in Islam, Muhammad said to read the *injil* [Bible in Arabic] and he said the Psalms and the Proverbs were fine, we mostly focus on that. They love stories, they like Parables. (Interview with Nadine)

The way how she introduces Christian morals is subtle, she chooses an approach and bible parts she knows are most acceptable to Muslims. Apart from talking about God, she also introduces the prayer for the refugees:

> What I had started on doing though long before that was, I said: 'One thing I want to tell you is I pray for you during the week when I'm not here. So tell me what you want, if there's something you want me to pray about.' Prayers are totally acceptable to Muslims and I did pray for them, so I was like tell me what you care about in each camp. But then they were like no we want you to pray *now*. So I'm like, okay I'll pray now. And that meant a lot to them. … So it was emotional psychological care for them that it had to be done now. It's part of caring for the human being. (Interview with Nadine)

2. *"Health Awareness"*

Also the program of the quasi-secular organization Medic-Aid is not free from obligations. Medic-Aid aims to transform societies and to change the lives of the women in the camp. Here are my observations from the health awareness session. In the afternoon, Caroline, Bilal and I return from the lunch break in the office to the camp where a young man showed us room we should use for the awareness session; the women was already gathering. They seemed to be excited about the event and

indeed the whole atmosphere was cheerful—apparently, the meeting was a social gathering for the women.

The concrete floor was slightly wet, the tent had no window and only a lamp brought light. The walls were covered with a yellow tissue, there was a pocket in one side of the tent wall in which I saw a Qur'an and there was a rolled up carpet, so I assumed that the camp inhabitants used the tent as a prayer room. Plastic chairs were stored in one corner, the man who showed us the tent gives one to Caroline and to me. Caroline did not seem to care about distributing chairs to the refugee women, some took a chair, some sat down on the concrete wall and others just remained standing. It took a while until all of the women were settled, Caroline counted 24 women in total. Many of them had a baby or a little child with them. Bigger children played in the entrance of the tent.

Caroline started with the session on reproductive health, which was basically an interactive lesson on pregnancy, childcare and contraception. She showed laminated pictograms of women to illustrate her explanations and asked many questions. The attention of the women varied, some engaged with her and answered the questions, others were quiet.

One pictogram with the heading *tandhim al-'aiyla,* family planning, showed that women should have children between the age of eighteen and thirty-five and that they should wait two years before the next pregnancy. Caroline explained how to bathe a child correctly, which symptoms of pregnancy were normal and when a pregnant woman should see a doctor. She showed pictures of correct breastfeeding. Caroline had told me earlier the women in the camps usually breastfeed their babies up to six months—something that a Lebanese woman would refuse to do, according to her.

As she begun to talk about condoms and the birth control pill, the younger, probably unmarried girls who stood next to the entrance were sent out. Caroline mentioned that she uses the pill as well. Caroline's manner of talking is very experienced and engaging; it is obvious that she has performed the awareness session multiple times.

The health awareness sessions by Medic-Aid aim to disseminate knowledge on health and to transform the reproductive behavior of refugees, with longer spaces between two pregnancies and without child pregnancy. The women get access to information about health that are otherwise difficult to reach in the absence of access to internet or to regular doctor visits. The Lebanese healthcare system is mainly privatized and although the UNHCR covers 75 percent of hospital costs, the remaining 25 percent and the transportation to the hospital are a sensitive amount of money for many refugees. In fact, 40 percent of UNHCR expenditures for health go into maternity care (Karas 2017). Therefore, knowing which symptoms are part of a healthy pregnancy and which are dangerous and should be checked by a doctor is a form of empowerment through knowledge. This does not mean that traditionally knowledge about pregnancy shared within the community is downplayed, but that this knowledge is complemented. And knowing how to keep oneself healthy during the pregnancy could prevent illnesses and further health difficulties.

After the talk, Caroline distributed diapers and wet tissues. One woman asked if she could have tissues for herself and she received a package. Caroline told me later:

> Most of the women come not for the awareness session, but for the diapers that cost only a dollar. Once, an elderly woman was insisting that she wants to have diapers, and although I usually only distribute them to women with children, I gave it to her. Some women use them themselves when they have their menstruation. (Interview with Caroline)

The diapers and wet tissues were an incentive for the women to attend the awareness session. Caroline did not distribute them during the consultations in the morning. Here emerges another contradiction: although the Lebanon country manager of Medic-Aid explicitly reiterated that help must be unconditional and must not be bound to any conditions, the diapers could be seen as an incentive, as in "You only get the diapers if you attend the awareness session". How many of the women would come without the diapers at the end? The attendance of the awareness session is what the refugees are expected to "return". Another expectation might be a "rational" handling of the goods. The humanitarian aid is a form of "gift exchange" where the obligation to return is not always visible.

To sup up, my fieldwork suggests that the rhetorical question "can aid be unconditional?" can be answered: no, there are always dimensions of conditionality. As for Medic-Aid, the condition for receiving diapers is to attend the awareness session. In the case of Lebanon Hope, the condition for receiving the health training is that the refugee volunteers are expected to share the new knowledge and that they listen to explanations about God.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

"A magic dwells in each beginning" is a famous line in Hermann Hesse's poem "Phases". After more than three months of intensive fieldwork, research and writing, I am inclined to add that a magic also dwells in each ending (and to be honest, an exhaustion as well). Looking back to my fieldwork, I found it incredibly inspiring and fulfilling to find in the ethnographic research the magic and vividness that I had known before only from my work as journalist, but not in academic research. This magic stems precisely from the encounter with humans, from the possibility to ask them questions and to make sense out of what one sees and hears. I am also thankful for the privilege to pursue a research that went way deeper than my journalistic researches have led me before. Before continuing the reflection about the research process, I briefly recapitulate the methods, the theories and the guiding themes.

The thesis was based on ethnographic fieldwork including twelve ethnographic interviews and participant observation. This method enabled me to scrutinize in detail the daily processes of meaning-making and distinction. Comparing three Christian organizations (an evangelical American-Lebanese organization, a German Christian NGO, and the German Protestant Church of Beirut) displayed the various forms of humanitarian-religious concepts.

In terms of theory, I have been drawing on literature on secularism and religion, on Mary Douglas's work on boundaries, on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of social capital and on Marcel Mauss's essay "The Gift", among others. I opted for a

dynamic and fluid understanding of religion and secularism rather than for a quest for the essence of religion. Translated into analysis, I traced processes of secularization and sanctification and aimed to display tensions and contradictions rather than a coherent definition of "the religious" in humanitarian aid.

Three main tropes of the thesis are the continuing religious influence in humanitarianism, the dichotomy between religion and secular humanitarianism and the subtle distinctions on various levels.

Firstly, I have argued that the secularization of humanitarian aid caused the emergence of subtle contradictions and tensions in faith-based organizations that speak to the continuous influence of religion in humanitarianism and the persisting global power of Christianity. Aid workers navigate those tensions by concealing the religious character of the organization or conversely, by attributing religious meaning to the aid. Another indicator for the continuities of Christian influence in humanitarianism are the transnational networks which leaders of the faith-based organizations have built up. These networks are based on a specific connectedness which emerges from the shared Christian faith.

Secondly, a guiding theme was the dichotomy between religious and secular humanitarian values. One example is the opposition between religious solidarity and secular impartiality. The "secular imperative" of humanitarianism devaluates religion by marking it as less professional than secular humanitarian aid. Likewise, Christian networks are considered as less professional than other forms of networks.

Thirdly, individuals working in faith-based organizations constantly renegotiate the place of religion in their work in order to respond to the "secular imperative" of humanitarianism. They reinforce the internal cohesion in the organizations by distinguishing themselves on different dimensions: secularized

faith-based organizations distinguish themselves from evangelist organizations and vice versa, religious aid workers distinguish themselves from non-religious ones and vice versa, and Lebanese aid workers distinguish themselves from the Syrian refugees. The relations between aid workers and refugees are also embedded in political sectarianism in Lebanon and the collective memory of Lebanese-Syrian history.

The thesis took me on a physical and intellectual journey. Taking up the fieldwork in the humanitarian field and visiting the organizations meant not only getting acquainted with a particular cosmos with its own logics and technical language and abbreviations[10] and to learn to understand the complexities of this extremely diversified sector. It meant also to revisit some of the assumptions I had before the research process. I learnt that faith-based organizations can be secular in many aspects. Moreover, I realized that my own previous ideas of good humanitarianism had been influenced by a secular bias and by the assumption that humanitarianism works better without mixing too much religion into it. Also, I think differently now about the activities of Lebanon Hope. At the beginning of my research, I was firmly convinced that combining humanitarian work with sharing faith is not ethical, especially as the target is one of the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon. Although in my personal opinion, activities of sharing faith with refugees are problematic, I came to admire the community based and relationship based approach of Lebanon Hope which gives them a deeper knowledge about the communities so that they can tackle health issues more effectively and maybe even treat refugees in a more dignified manner. This change of thinking came mostly

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[10] For example: MHPSS for medical health and psychosocial support, ITS for informal tented settlements, WASH for water, sanitation and hygiene.

through the almost four hours long meeting with Nadine, one of Lebanon Hope's field workers, who impressed me by her effort to improve the situation of refugees and who was incredibly reflective about the cultural and social aspects of the health situation of refugees.

In terms of analysis, I recognized that the concept of "boundaries" which I intended as analytical arc in my thesis proposal did serve well to understand distinctions between different faith-based organizations. But other observations were better explained by processes of secularization and sanctification or by social distinction.

Originally, I had planned to complement my study with a section on the perspectives of refugees on faith-based organizations, but unfortunately, that was not feasible in the amount of time I had for the research. Not being able to letting the refugees speak for themselves and to include their perspectives conflicted with my ideal of a just and appropriate representation. Therefore, I strongly encourage further research to tackle the following question: what does it mean for refugees to be a beneficiary of faith-based organizations?

Finally, there is a lack of scholarship on other forms of faith-based humanitarianism in Lebanon. Other researchers might want to scrutinize the contribution of Islamic organization, of local church and mosque communities. An interesting aspect that would also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of faith-based organizations is their relationship to secular organizations or to the Lebanese state.

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