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‘Everyone has a story’

**Jordanian Churches Reimagine Middle Eastern Christianity in
Response to Refugees**

Lucy Jane Schouten

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Haraka baraka.

Abstract and Technical Notes

Abstract

Syrian and Iraqi refugees displaced by regional conflicts have become a large presence in Jordan since 2011. The scale of the refugee phenomenon has affected both Christian-Muslim and intra-Christian dynamics in the country. This study examines the response of Jordanian Christians to refugees, as well as to these broader disruptions, based on six months of fieldwork in Amman in 2018 and 2019. I identify the traditions relevant to their response as Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, Pan-Arabism, catholicity, sacred geography, and neighbourly hospitality. Using three case studies among Arab Orthodox, Latin Catholic, and Anglican Christians in Amman, I demonstrate that communities respond to refugees both directly and indirectly by reemphasizing their contributions to their relationships with Muslims and Western Christians. Overall, this study argues that Christians seek to stabilize their presence in Jordan through their response to refugees, as they creatively reimagine their relationships with both the region's Muslims and Western Christians. This argument sheds light on the growing topic of Middle Eastern Christian agency within World Christianity, hospitality within the study of political theology and ethics, and the role of host communities within migration studies.

Lay summary

Jordan is a Muslim-majority country with a small group of Christians who speak Arabic. Since 2011, Jordan has also become home to a large number of refugees who fled wars in Syria and Iraq. My research tries to understand how the Christians in Jordan have interacted with, or been affected by, these refugees, so I spent a number of months in Amman during 2018 and 2019 and talked with Jordanian Christians and others. I found that Jordanian Christians often lived alongside the refugees and helped them in the same way that they would help a poor Jordanian, but I also discovered that they were anxious about Muslims in Jordan, in case they also had to flee their homes like the refugees did. They also worried about the actions of other Christians from outside Jordan, because they were used to working together with other Christians to help refugees, but the new Christian aid agencies had different plans. This meant that when churches decided to either help or ignore the refugees, they were also thinking about how to improve politics and society in Jordan so they could keep living in the Middle East, as they have been continuously doing for thousands of years.

Word count

99,434 words

Declaration of own work

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Lucy J. Schouten 22 February 2022

Introductory Chapter

I travelled to Jordan in 2018 and 2019 to see hospitality at work in the nation with the world's second-highest refugee burden per capita.¹ While there, I was puzzled to discover that while many refugees were successfully receiving refuge in Jordan, the majority of Jordanians – the host community – seemed strangely uninterested in discussing it. In fact, I struggled even to explain the purpose of my research, because the word 'hospitality' had no direct translation into Arabic. I employed a whole range of Arabic vocabulary to describe the concept to Jordanians I interviewed, but my best efforts often produced arguments about which foods a Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, or Iraqi might be most likely to serve a guest. The Arabs I spoke with seemed to enjoy these culinary debates, but I was beginning to wonder if my doctoral inquiry into hospitality was doomed from the start.

Under that depressing impression, I welcomed the chance to lead a discussion on my research during a weekly Bible Study session. I prepared to speak on Matthew 25:31-46. This text – known as the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats – is frequently used to establish the Christian ethical responsibility of hospitality to the poor and to refugees,² and I followed the textual reading with my observations about Jordanian hospitality thus far.

My audience, which included both Jordanians and refugees,³ listened politely to my comments about the Christian responsibility to care for strangers. Seeing that time remained – and no comments appeared forthcoming – I also suggested we read Matthew 25:14-30. This passage – known as the Parable of the Talents – is not typically associated with refugees or hospitality, but I was acting on a hunch that had come to me somewhere between the debates on *maqlubeh* and *mansef*. After the textual reading, I concluded simply that there are some people who are rich in talents and resources, while others have few talents, but this parable teaches that all of

¹ 'Refugee burden' refers to the estimated number of refugees living in a country relative to the native citizen population. This makes it a more useful measure for understanding the potential effects of a refugee population on the host community than the raw number of refugees would be. As of 2015 (this was the most recent official report available when I arrived in Jordan in 2018), Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees relative to its citizens, with 183 refugees to every 1,000 Lebanese. Jordan's refugee population was the second largest after Lebanon, with refugees increasing its population by roughly ten percent. 'Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed 20 June 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7>, 2.

² This scriptural concept has been linked to the refugee phenomenon within arguments for Christian responses to migration. Joshua Ralston, 'Toward a Political Theology of Refugee Resettlement', *Theological Studies* (Baltimore) 73, no. 2 (2012): 363–390.

³ My audience included a Jordanian priest and about fifteen members of the Anglican congregation. About half were local to the area, while the others had fled Iraq after the invasion of the Islamic State (ISIS) in 2014.

us must make good use of what we have. This is especially clear when we consider that our ultimate goal is not money, but eternal life. Everyone has a talent to share.

My simple comments on this passage were somewhat generic, and I expected my listeners to respond with the same polite interest as before. What I did not expect was a flurry of agreement from Jordanians and Iraqis alike. One Iraqi woman in particular responded at length. ‘It has made me so happy to hear about this PhD research of yours’, she said warmly.⁴ ‘You make it clear, Lucy, that even if we refugees are displaced from the homes we lived in, still we should not focus on these bad conditions and not having the ability to host anyone. And this idea of yours is most wonderful, and it actually brings me closer to God’. She continued to speak with great emotion of her desire to, for example, offer hospitality to her family and offer her single talent of love to them and to others. ‘This gives a spirit and an idea to the human being, meaning even if you are poor, you must offer hospitality and you should not wait for anyone to help you before you begin helping others’. This call to hospitality was, to her, not an ethical responsibility of Christian life, but rather it was an opportunity for her to contribute to the relationships she valued regardless of her circumstances, and thus draw closer to God.

She was not alone among the group, in both ignoring my more traditional commentary that described hospitality as a Christian ethical responsibility, nor in celebrating enthusiastically the idea that even the poor and refugees can still offer something to others. The Jordanian priest spontaneously led the group to the story of how the Widow of Zapheneth fed Elijah her last loaf of bread, noting, ‘This is a story of hospitality from someone who had very little’. He even continued to speak of how the world committed a great sin for missing this important reality, for placing an economic value on the number of refugees living or being served in a place. Several Jordanians and Iraqi refugees chimed in with Arabic proverbs and local traditions of hospitality that refuted what they described as an economic model of treating people as numbers.

The Iraqi refugees and Jordanian Christians alike seemed eager, not to receive help while in need, but for the chance to spend their talents in hospitality to someone else. To my surprise, this discussion prompted a flood of new anecdotes relevant to my research, including numerous complaints about how foreign humanitarian organizations were treating their Jordanian partners and refugee recipients. Frustration was not caused by failures to provide enough food or funding, but rather, they complained that these foreign bodies refused their bids for a stronger

⁴ St Paul’s Anglican Church, focus group with author, Amman, Jordan, 8 October 2019, Arabic – translation by author.

relationship. To use the words of the parable, both the Jordanians and their refugee companions said that their single talent was being buried for them.

In other words, while the churches were concerned and, at times, very attentive to the needs of incoming refugees, they did not see the phenomenon of forced displacement from Syria and Iraq as necessarily a unique or pressing problem. Many Jordanians, if not most, had experienced displacement within their recent family history. All had seen Jordan grow and develop in response to repeated arrivals of new refugees from across the region. At the same time, however, a more pressing issue seemed to distress the Jordanian churches, independent of their intent to minister to refugees in their midst. This issue was causing obvious friction in their relationships with Jordanian Muslims, fellow churches, and especially with the many foreign aid organizations that had arrived to help with the refugee crisis. Indeed, George Sabra has written that the types of concerns I witnessed may be found among Christians across the region, and that Christian dynamics may be divided analytically into ‘two basic types of Middle Eastern Christian presence that have arisen in reaction to the Muslim context’.⁵ According to Sabra’s hermeneutical framework, the ‘two ways of being a Christian’ in the region emerge from the relationship of Middle Eastern Christianity to two different bodies: their Arab Muslim neighbours and fellow Christians in the West.⁶

My discussion with Iraqi refugees and their Jordanian hosts revealed a sharp disparity between what refugees hoped for and what they were receiving from others. The Iraqi refugee woman expressed happy surprise that I – as a foreign Christian researcher – had identified her desire to rebuild the relationships she had lost. Indeed, that need to belong to a new community – after events in Iraq had shattered her native ties – seemed paramount to how she understood her plight as a refugee. At the same time, the enthusiasm of the Jordanians for this discussion suggests that they identified with the fears of the refugees they host. They felt themselves unable to entirely meet the refugees’ need for new relationships because of questions about their own essential relationships. Furthermore, it is important to note the way that both the refugees and their hosts framed their concerns and aims with regard to hospitality and welcome. This study

⁵ George Sabra, ‘Two Ways of Being a Christian in the Muslim Context of the Middle East’, *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations* 17, no. 1 (2006): 43.

⁶ The practice of rhetorically dividing the world between those of the ‘East’ and of the ‘West’ is not without difficulties. Indeed, it is arguably a dangerous oversimplification in many cases. I have chosen to employ it within this study, however, to follow the historical and socio-cultural argument of Sabra in his analysis. He writes, ‘Two different Christian responses to Islam have been possible only because there has always been a third player on the scene. This third player has almost consistently been something “Western”, originally in the purely geographic sense of the word but always involving a religious and cultural component’. Sabra, ‘Two Ways of Being a Christian’, 45.

argues that Christians seek to stabilize their presence in Jordan through their response to refugees, as they creatively reimagine their relationships with both the region's Muslims and Western Christians.

Structure of this study

This study has two parts. Part One examines the salience of Sabra's two key relationships – one with Arab Muslims, and the other with Western Christians – in the contemporary Jordanian context. In Part One, I introduce these two key relationships – Christian-Muslim relations and intra-Christian relations – and identify their historical origins and accompanying expectations, then analyse the way these have changed since 2011 through the lens of on-the-ground research in Jordan. First, Chapter One presents scholarly literature to establish the contemporary dynamic for Jordanian Christian-Muslim relations. This chapter is organized chronologically to suggest the existence of three successive, socio-political movements that define Jordanian interfaith relations to this day. Chapter Two then presents findings from fieldwork in Jordan, which are framed and analysed using the three-movement system introduced in Chapter One. Chapters Three and Four proceed in a structure that parallels those first two chapters. Chapter Three introduces three traditions relevant to intra-Christian relations using a series of chronological episodes from the region's history. Accordingly, Chapter Four introduces fieldwork to discuss the ways that Jordanian churches are responding to the current migration crisis with reference to these three traditions. I explore how the dynamic of intra-Christian relations – between Jordanian, other Arab, and Western Christians – becomes damaged by certain responses to refugees, but I also highlight the emergence of a context-specific notion of hospitality within the Jordanian Christian response to refugees.

In Part Two of this study, I examine the actions of Jordanian Christians – a long-term host community – toward refugees through the lens of their contributions to their own society and the transnational networks to which they belong. Importantly, I frame this response without the assumption that life in Jordan is already untenable, but rather I demonstrate that Jordanian Christians continue responding to their challenges in concrete ways. I do so by means of case studies that illustrate three, slightly different responses to the challenges identified in Part One. Chapter Five offers an account of a Latin Catholic congregation in Marka, Chapter Six describes an Arab Orthodox Church in Amman proper, and Chapter Seven explores the response of an Anglican congregation in Ashrafieh. Each of these chapters fuses together the two strands I introduce in Part One by describing the ways that Jordanian churches are responding to the diminishing stability of both Christian-Muslim and intra-Christian relations. While in many ways,

these findings are the most important of the entire study, I have placed them last so that they might be understood in light of the contextual precarity of this community.

Last, I conclude with a chapter that analyses these three case studies in dialogue with one another. By comparing and contrasting the situations of each church – including socioeconomic factors and theological diversity – and the congregation’s approach to refugees, I can identify living models for engagement with refugees for churches not only in Jordan, but also for other churches confronting challenges related to migration elsewhere. Furthermore, I demonstrate that despite the potentially stifling focus on emigration in discussions about Middle Eastern Christianity, congregations in Jordan are crafting tangible approaches to the specific challenges of Christian presence in their context. Finally, I discuss the implications of this research for the relevant scholarly disciplines, as well as others engaged both academically and practically in Jordan and other refugee contexts.

Overall, this study argues that Jordanian Christians have responded to refugees by creatively renegotiating their relationships with Jordanian Muslims and foreign Christians. Their continuing presence in the region rests upon their success in renegotiating these longstanding relationships to emphasize their unique contributions, as does the welfare of both Christian and Muslim refugees in Jordan. The migration phenomenon since 2011 has highlighted tensions in the relationship between Jordanian Christians and both Muslims and foreign Christians, but neither relationship is broken permanently or beyond repair. What is more, these tensions have become apparent over the course of a long-term, numerically significant refugee influx that has continued for eleven years at the time of writing. Understanding the ways that a long-term migration crisis has affected one of the Middle East’s oldest and most stable minority communities⁷ offers insights into the trajectory of the region and the needs of growing numbers of refugees worldwide. Those who wish to assist in the Middle East can best do so if they forefront the need for these Christian communities and refugees to renew the mutually beneficial relationships that define their presence in a given context.

With that in mind, this introductory chapter not only presents information about the structure and methodology of this study, but also argues that the shifting response of professional aid and resettlement agencies to displacement and migration over the last century

⁷ Many Christians in the Middle East have rejected use of the label ‘minority’, saying that their relatively small numbers offer a poor marker of their current and historic contributions to their respective societies. Out of respect for that position, I have largely avoided the term in this study. Its use in this case refers simply to the demographic reality and has no proscriptive aim.

have yielded a de facto narrative that life outside the liberal West is fundamentally untenable, not only in an era of active conflict, but also more generally. This examination is necessary in order to shed light on precisely why Jordanian Christians feel that their own presence is threatened by the way that Jordanian Muslims and international humanitarian organizations treat refugees. Furthermore, such attention to the way that discourses around migration have shifted across the last century clarifies the importance of attention to a host community's context and agency, which is the focus of this study.

Shifting discourses around migration

The shifting discourses around migration help to define the way that host communities and refugees see themselves and their potential contributions to one another. In that sense, this section of the chapter attempts to trace the historical origins of the perception that troubled both refugees and Jordanians when we discussed the Parable of the Talents. I do so by exploring some of the discourses employed among Western humanitarian, admissions, and resettlement agencies. From that perspective, I argue that the last century has produced a rhetorical shift away from framing migration in terms of a migrant's potential contribution, to instead treating hospitality as an optional ethical responsibility. This, in turn, dictates how refugees and host communities, such as Jordan, engage with the international humanitarian regime. Ultimately, the result is a de facto assumption that migrants – and perhaps the host community, as well – should self-evidently desire to leave high-conflict or economically unstable regions. That assumption fuels debates within the global community regardless of whether a given actor wishes to encourage or discourage such migration, and it establishes a wide disparity between presumably desirable host countries – such as the United States or Australia – and presumed undesirable places, including Jordan and the wider Middle East. I begin by briefly describing the tenor of debates around migration roughly a century before my study begins. This time period is significant in helping to demonstrate the emerging contrast between Jordanian expectations – at the time when Jordan was first becoming a nation-state – and the global assumptions that would eventually harden into international treaties and national laws.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, prospective migrants to Europe and North America were often portrayed as a potential commodity within emergent economies.⁸ The

⁸ For scholarship that considers this history, see the following:

Lynn Hunt, 'The 18th-century Body and the Origins of Human Rights', *Diogenes* 51, no.3 (2004): 41-56.

Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945-Present*, (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

primacy of the nation-state system had already arisen, and with it, the importance of national citizenship prompted governments and societies to control their borders with a growing number of laws and procedural measures. Migration debates during this time operated largely on the basis of whether a nation-state would benefit from admitting migrants. Even efforts that might be understood as motivated by humanitarianism in the modern sense sought to persuade a given government that migrants offered economic benefit. Under such conditions, a legal status within the new society was simply a tool that migrants needed to obtain this benefit.

The second world war, however, brought many of these debates under scrutiny. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁹ suggested that international mobility was a personal right rather than an economic strategy of host countries. The UN Convention on Refugees in 1951 ultimately required signatory countries to recognize the value of migrants based on what they needed from their hosts, rather than the economic gain they could offer them. This may be seen as an effort to shift away from the earlier practice of commodification, but I believe that it maintained the promise of intangible benefit to the host country. Although the second world war had ended, and the 1951 convention was arguably responding to concerns about the way that the defeated Nazis had succeeded at imprisoning potential dissidents within their own lands, another ideological conflict already loomed. The language of the 1951 convention made it particularly helpful to Soviet dissidents who sought the opportunities of a Western, liberal society. Such refugees were, after all, being actively persecuted by an enemy state for choosing to embrace Western values.¹⁰ One may see immigration laws as part of the Western strategy to win the ideological fight of the Cold War. After all, how might it demoralize the enemy and galvanize allies to observe many thousands of anti-communist refugees establishing new and better lives under Western auspices? In other words, the 1951 convention and its associated laws framed migration as a path toward both ensuring the human rights of migrants but also, functionally, about the Cold War and a Western effort to make life under communism appear untenable. The potential contributions of Soviet dissidents were recognized as valuable, and the 1951 convention cleared legal hurdles such that they could contribute to a Western society. In that sense, the tenor of debate had shifted only slightly from that of earlier economic benefit. That need not be understood as a critique of the system in and of itself, but rather, I simply want to

Katy Long, 'When Refugees Stopped Being Migrants: Movement, Labour and Humanitarian Protection', *Migration studies* 1, no. 1 (2013): 4–26.

⁹ Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Alexander Betts, 'Survival Migration: A New Protection Framework', *Global Governance* 16, no.3 (2010): 361-382.

note the ways in which migration and international hospitality was still understood as a mutually beneficial process to hosts and migrants alike.

At around the same time, however, an event occurred in the Middle East that complicated these discourses and would continue to inform understandings of migration and humanitarianism by 2018. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which concluded with the establishment of an Israeli state and the forcible displacement of most of the area's Arab inhabitants, the international community faced a new kind of political problem. The newly minted United Nations and its foremost national powers sought to retain a veneer of neutrality about these events. This prevented them from either embracing the Palestinian displaced as allies and refugees of an enemy state, or else from joining in Israeli efforts to fight them as combatants. Instead, the homeless state of these Arabs was labelled a humanitarian problem, rather than a strictly political one. A humanitarian problem could be met with donations of food, shelter, and children's education, and the Palestinians were permitted to join new societies on a case-by-case basis. In this scenario, the migrants – with some individual exceptions – were perceived as offering neither economic nor ideological value. As such, they did not enter into a new relationship with a new host society. While the goods they received under the auspices of the United Nations and other, private bodies largely ensured their survival, they did nothing to resolve the political conflict that had rendered them homeless. Indeed, one might observe that such humanitarian assistance helped to ensnare the Palestinians into a situation of long-term dependency on the humanitarian regime by enabling the countries where they settled – primarily Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria – to exclude them from national citizenship.

This phenomenon would alter Middle Eastern politics in two ways that are relevant to this study. First, it led Arab governments in the region to fear migration in a new way. Riina Isotalo identifies this fear as a 'Palestinization' effect, in which Arab countries discourage the de facto permanence of Palestinian refugee camps within their borders and then resist subsequent refugee inflows for fear that they, likewise, will never leave.¹¹ This phenomenon can be seen in Jordan's barring entry to new Syrian refugees during the time of this study. Linguistic norms reflect this, as Jordanians often refer to Palestinians in Jordan as *naazih* – 'displaced' – rather than

¹¹ Riina Isotalo, 'Fear Palestinization: Managing Refugees in the Middle East' in *Managing Muslim Mobilities: Between Spiritual Geographies and the Global Security Regime*, ed. Anita H. Fabos and Riina Isotalo (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 59.

laajii' – refugee.¹² The spectre of a new 'Palestine problem' uniquely influences discourse on forced migration in the Arab world. Because of the 'Palestine problem', Arab governments who might otherwise welcome the arrival of Syrians as guest workers, for example, resist their settlement in large numbers for fear of the Palestine-related conflicts that still form the stuff of Lebanese and Jordanian nightmares.

Second, however, the Palestinian refugee phenomenon also launched an economic strategy in Jordan that Gerasimos Tsourapas calls refugee rentierism.¹³ Tsourapas sees this strategy beginning with the earliest Palestinian refugees and developing in subsequent migrations, reaching its zenith in the Jordanian response to Syrian and Iraqi refugees since 2011. As an economic strategy, refugee rentierism enables the host government to collect a kind of 'rent' from the international humanitarian regime, in return for allowing these refugees to remain on Jordanian land. In this approach, the refugees are valuable not as individuals or groups who could eventually contribute meaningfully to Jordanian society, but rather they have economic value based purely on their numbers. Scholars who observe the dynamics of the region have increasingly criticized this new approach as a shift away from the longstanding traditions of the area. Leif Manger, for example, notes that while migration has long been accommodated within the Middle East in conjunction with the religious mandates of Islamic and Christian pilgrimage, these traditions seem to be wavering in the face of rising nation-state boundaries.¹⁴ Indeed, this study investigates both the source and contemporary deployment and decline of these traditions with a view toward their effect on Jordanian Christians and refugees alike.

By the early twenty-first century, and with the end of the Cold War, the humanitarian framing that emerged from 'Palestinization' became more dominant around the world.

Discussions about admitting refugees became less about refugees or migrants¹⁵ contributing

¹² *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³ Tsourapas introduces this concept and its origins in the post-2011 refugee crisis, using interviews in English and Arabic in the following paper: Gerasimos Tsourapas. 'The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.' *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (2019): 464-81.

¹⁴ Leif Manger, 'Foreword: Geographies of Domination and Geographies of Resistance', in *Managing Muslim Mobilities: Between Spiritual Geographies and the Global Security Regime*, ed. Anita H. Fabos & Riina Isotalo (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), xii.

¹⁵ This study makes use of the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee' regularly. Much literature within the burgeoning fields of Migration Studies and Anthropology have already been devoted to the question of defining who or what defines a refugee, as opposed to an economic migrant, asylum-seeker, exile, and so forth. The debate is not limited to scholarship, but also concerns issues of legal status, because the designation can be the difference between a person receiving or not receiving international aid, permission to resettle in a third country, or even be forcibly deported back to their country of origin. Such discussions were not, in my observation, as important among the Jordanian host community or the Syrians and Iraqis who lived among them. They tended to use such labels both interchangeably and rarely and referred instead a person's specific

meaningfully to a prospective new society and more about whether the moral obligations of the host society to welcome them outweighed the threats they posed. Richard Falk, for example, asserts that twenty-first-century trade and capital can now traverse borders with greater ease than humans fleeing violence. This accounts for the tone of debate in Western countries, where fears for the identity, security, and economy of host nations override concerns about those fleeing various forms of disaster.¹⁶ Falk notes that within this framework, even a ‘government policy of hospitality’ that is justified on the grounds of the nation’s own economic interest, such as Germany’s welcome to employable Syrians in 2015, may eventually run afoul of exclusionary forces that fear a weakened nation more than they desire a stronger economy.¹⁷ This observation is indicative of a shift away from the framing of economic benefit that I identified within the early twentieth century.

The result has become a competition between humanitarianism and securitization. Indeed, Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli describe the creation of a ‘good refugee/bad refugee’ paradigm that media, politicians, and aid institutions employ in rationing aid and admission for refugees, or in justifying their refusal to grant it. These authors expressed concern at the frequent conflation of the terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘refugee’ with ‘terrorist’, ‘violence/conflict/terror’, and even ‘religion’. They note, ‘This entanglement . . . is contributing to the production of narrow policy responses, exclusionary politics, and a growing trend towards ‘securitizing’ forced migration, rather than treating the global refugee crisis primarily as a question of humanitarianism, or solidarity with fellow human beings’.¹⁸ This negatively affects Christian-Muslim engagement worldwide, of course, as immigration policies that consider Muslim refugees more dangerous than valuable are often ‘entangled’ with interfaith relations and integration

place of origin. Within Jordanian political and social discourse, additional debates have arisen about the difference between a ‘displaced’ Palestinian, a Syrian ‘refugee’, and an Iraqi ‘guest’, or even a Levantine neighbour, Arab brother, and Christian stranger. This is not a legal study, however, but an exploration of lived practice, and the communities I engaged with had no power to make legal distinctions in any case. For that reason, I primarily describe the Syrians and Iraqis who fled to Jordan because of conflicts at home as ‘refugees’ in the informal sense I heard the word used in Jordan. I occasionally use the term ‘migrant’ when citing secondary literature that describes migrations of the past or elsewhere in this way. See the following: Riina Isotalo, ‘Fear Palestinization’, 67.

Dallal Stevens, ‘Legal Status, Labelling, and Protection: The Case of Iraqi “Refugees” in Jordan’, *International Journal of Refugee Law* 25, no.1 (2013): 1-38.

¹⁶ Richard Falk, ‘Refugees, Migrants, and World Order’, in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*, ed. Luca Mavelli and Erin K. Wilson (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017), 28.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁸ Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli, ‘The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Beyond Conceptual and Physical Boundaries’ in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security, and Hospitality in Question*, ed. Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield International, Ltd, 2017), 1.

problems within the society.¹⁹ The focus, in other words, is less about what refugees could offer or even what they might need, but rather on whether the host society can afford to offer a kind of optional almsgiving to the politically unfortunate. Indeed, Wilson and Mavelli continue their analysis on this same premise of affordability when they note that unlike Western nations, the countries neighbouring places of conflict are ‘already overwhelmed with refugees’ and thereby constrained by real economic and political limitations to admit no more.²⁰ Even while they advocate for nations to admit refugees, they are not admitting the idea that a host community could benefit from doing so.

The discourses surrounding migration have evolved by abandoning the notion that migrants have something to offer a new, two-way relationship with a prospective host society while maintaining the idea that their fate should be determined by a matrix of their needs and how much charity their hosts can afford. The underlying assumption of the Cold War, however, remains intact, but instead of a selected political enemy determining which nations ought to produce refugees, a kind of broad socio-political assumption renders half the globe suddenly unsuitable to human life. As Manger writes,

Certain spaces – spaces in the South, of course, are violent by nature, whereas other spaces – “our” spaces, of course – are defined by peace, democracy, and rationality. Such an understanding drives policies in the security sector away from “our” spaces toward “their” spaces.²¹

Even scholars who attempt to dissect the political intrigues of individual governments and promote the claims of refugees struggle to separate themselves from the basic assumptions of affordability and need based on national origin. Mark Gibney, for example, refutes claims that refugees from the Global South abuse the asylum process of wealthier, Western states for economic gain. Employing empirical data and assessments from the United States State Department, he argues that refugees overwhelmingly flee from the world’s most politically violent nations.²² He seeks to undermine claims that political violence is random, impossible to predict or prevent, as Gibney concludes, ‘We have a very good idea of where violence will occur and who its victims will be’.²³ In this type of discussion, Gibney is seeking to remove the moral

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Manger, ‘Foreword’, xi.

²² Mark Gibney, ‘Certain Violence, Uncertain Protection’, in *Global Changes in Asylum Regimes*, ed. Daniele Joly (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 16.

²³ Gibney, ‘Certain Violence, Uncertain Protection’, 28.

argument of a nation's claim that refugees are unduly burdensome and transfer the moral force of victimhood to refugees caught in complexities beyond their control. The suggestion that migrants are helpless victims who must flee lands of irretrievable hopelessness, however, does not make them attractive candidates for a mutually beneficial relationship with a new society. To repeat, even efforts to insist on the economic value of migrants – a return to the earlier discourses – can run afoul of such unattractive representations.

The discourse of helpless victimhood in need of rescue has likely been furthered by certain realities of late twentieth- and early-twentieth-first century migration. Dramatic differences in religion, language, and social expectations meant that these refugees needed far more than a new passport to participate in Western societies. Another important factor missing from many immigration debates, but painfully obvious to churches and other welfare organizations that sought to help new arrivals, was the fact that many Western societies preferentially admitted refugees who had spent years or decades living in the complete dependency of international refugee camps. Such experiences meant that refugees often arrived without many basic life or job skills, such as time management, which became a major obstacle to their ability to contribute, at least in the short-term.²⁴ All this occurred in the same vein as the aforementioned 'good refugee/bad refugee' paradigm, in which the refugees who await international decision in refugee camps are 'good' and more worthy of the limited number of rescues a state can afford, rather than those who seek a more proactive approach to migration.²⁵ As already stated, however, I believe that discussions that prioritize migrant helplessness, and above all, that view the places where migrants come from as hopelessly backward, risk missing the target regardless of whether they admit them or not.

Jordan in a time of migration

Importantly, my explorations of hospitality in Jordan occurred at the height of these debates between humanitarianism and securitization. By 2018, an estimated eighty-six percent of the world's refugees lived outside Europe and North America.²⁶ For the Middle East, the migration crisis did not begin in 2015, but in 2011, when the Arab Spring protests sowed the seeds for the

²⁴ Troy David, interview by author, Deseret Industries, Provo, Utah, December 2014, English. Davis worked as a counsellor with LDS Developmental Counselling Services and specialised in helping newly resettled refugees to develop competitive employment skills.

²⁵ Wilson and Mavelli, 'The Refugee Crisis and Religion', 8

²⁶ United Nations reports suggested the number of refugees currently displaced exceeded any since the second world war. See 'Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed 20 June 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd75..>, 2.

largest refugee-producing conflict of our time.²⁷ Nonetheless, relevant fields of scholarship have continued to focus disproportionately on the reception of a small proportion of refugees who leave the Middle East, Asia, and Africa for Europe and North America.²⁸ In reality, most refugees in the twenty-first century flee conflict for a neighbouring country, which likely faces many of the same religious, economic, or political challenges as their home country.²⁹ Jordan is one such example.

The year of 2011 is already known as a watershed year for Arab history, though its precise importance may be debated for years to come. In January 2011, a disproportionately unemployed, but highly educated, under-thirty population helped launch a series of pro-democracy protests from Tunisia to Egypt and into the Levant. These movements called for a renegotiation of the social contract between the de facto dictatorships that replaced Arab nationalist movements after 1967 and their increasingly educated – but increasingly poor – citizens. In Syria, however, such protests were quickly repressed with almost incredible amounts of violence, and by 2012 observers had come to call the conflict a civil war. When in 2014, the conflict morphed and shifted into already-unstable Iraq, members of both countries fled their homes in numbers so great, that the migration has now been identified as the largest refugee crisis since the end of the second world war.

Most of the Syrians stayed in the Middle East, however, at least initially. The neighbouring nations of Jordan and Lebanon were ideal sites of presumed temporary refuge among ‘Arab brothers’ with whom language, history, faith, and even family ties made resettling relatively easy. The Syrians moved in with family and friends, and perhaps many found work

²⁷ UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in 2016, ‘A tragedy of this scale demands solidarity beyond funding. Put simply, we need more countries to share the load by taking a greater share of refugees from what has become the biggest displacement crisis of a generation’. See ‘Syria conflict at 5 years: the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time demands a huge surge in solidarity’, United Nations Refugee Agency, accessed 15 March 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2016/3/56e6e3249/syria-conflict-5-years-biggest-refugee-displacement-crisis-time-demands.html>.

²⁸ Certain media outlets have focused descriptive and analytical attention on the church response to refugees, as in these examples:

Erasmus ‘Christian responses to the migrant crisis have been radical and traditional’, *The Economist*, 25 February 2018, <https://www.economist.com/erasmus/2018/02/25/christian-responses-to-the-migrant-crisis-have-been-radical-and-traditional>.

Matthew Soerens, ‘Will America Stand Again with the World’s Refugees?’ *The New York Times*, 26 January 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/opinion/will-america-stand-again-with-the-worlds-refugees.html>.

²⁹ Andreas Hackl points to the contemporary Middle Eastern refugee phenomenon as prompting migration that defies pre-existing expectations. Andreas Hackl, ‘Key Figure of Mobility: The Exile’, *Social Anthropology* 25, no. 1 (2017): 55–68.

with employers they knew from informal seasonal work patterns.³⁰ At that point, however, Lewis Turner writes that the Jordanian government shifted its strategy toward these refugees to apply lessons learned from several decades of experience with Iraqi refugees. In previous decades, well-integrated Iraqis had flowed freely across the border, bringing valuable cash assets, education, and job skills, and the Jordanian government had maintained legal procedures and even housing projects that enabled them to participate easily within Jordanian society. This phenomenon, which prioritized the potential contributions of Iraqi refugees, proved difficult to document, however, and Jordan, long dependent on foreign aid, collected relatively little international cash – or ‘refugee rent’ money – by admitting them. The Syrian case has already been quite different. Turner argues, ‘Part of the reason why Jordan built camps for Syrians is that it used encampment strategically to enable it to raise the profile of, and receive funds for, Syrian refugees on its territory, a policy that has had some success.’³¹ Refugee rentierism changed the discourse surrounding migration in Jordan. By gathering a large number of Syrians into a UNHCR-funded camp, the government created an easily accessible, photographically compelling refugee crisis with which to tempt foreign humanitarian aid. For that reason, when Jordanians and Iraqis alike criticized a numbers-based approach toward refugees in the context of the Parable of the Talents, they were not making an idle complaint, but rather they were critiquing a government economic strategy that was altering their context in noticeable ways.

The most tangible sign of this shift in the Jordanian context was the 2016 Jordan Compact. In line with research by Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, global leaders were determined to help the refugees by providing them with work and self-sufficiency, preferably in the Middle East.³² Led by the European Union, a deal was reached that Jordan, in exchange for a series of grants, loans, and trade concessions with Europe, would make 200,000 work permits available to Syrians. Additionally, jobs became available in Special Economic Zones where

³⁰ Impressive and detailed scholarship has already begun to explore the remarkable permeability of the Syrian borders with both Jordan and Lebanon. Some scholars have begun to argue that many of the Syrians now living in Jordan and Lebanon have been living – at least seasonally – there for decades, though in a fashion that went unnoticed by governments and others. This may partially explain some of the economic discussion that will follow. For a study in Jordan, see: Ann-Christin Wagner, ‘Frantic Waiting: NGO Anti-Politics and “Timepass” for Young Syrian refugees in Jordan’. *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* 9 (2017): 107-121.

For scholarship on Lebanon, see: Elizabeth Saleh, ‘The Master Cockroach: Scrap metal and Syrian labour in Beirut’s informal economy’, *Contemporary Levant* 1, no.2 (2016): 93-107. And John Chalcraft ‘Of Spectres and disciplined commodities: Syrian Migrant workers in Lebanon’ *Middle East Research and Information Project* 35, no. 236 (2005): 28-33.

³¹ Lewis Turner, ‘Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees: Security, Class and the Labour Market in Lebanon and Jordan’, *Mediterranean Politics* 20, no.3 (2015): 393.

³² This argument, which proved influential in the creation of the Jordan Compact and other related developments near that time, is developed in detail in the following work: Alexander Betts and Paul Collier. *Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System* (London: Penguin Books, 2018).

development could strengthen Jordan's economy without depriving Jordanian citizens of work as well. It seemed like an ideal solution for all sides, whether Western, Jordanian, or Syrian.

By June of 2017, however, only 54,000 Syrians had work permits. This number, a small fraction of the de facto Syrian workforce in Jordan, included Syrians who had received work permits before 2011. And Ann-Christin Wagner, following extensive fieldwork with Syrian refugees in northern Jordan and Amman, suggests that this apparent failure may not have been entirely unwelcome, or even unforeseen, to Jordanian officials.³³ Wagner traced the process of receiving a refugee work permit and declared it 'a bureaucratic mess' that most Syrians intent on survival had neither the time nor the skills to navigate. The Special Economic Zones were largely in textile work, which did little to help the rural farmers who had fled Syria by the thousands. The Syrians themselves had reason to find the agreement unhelpful, even inasmuch as it claimed to prioritize their welfare. The Jordan Compact targeted a population that was overwhelmingly rural in their habits, Wagner notes, and for whom education was limited to farming skills. A work permit would have tied them to a single employer for a year, leaving them unable to move toward different crops as the seasons changed. Some, Wagner found, were afraid that work permits would nullify their UNHCR asylum status and deprive them of other aid. It is likely that very few Syrians ever seriously attempted to apply for work permits.

For their part, Jordan's growing refugee camps for Syrians also had features that distinguished them from the early Palestinian camps. Syrians could not legally leave Camp Zaatari, or any of the smaller refugee camps, without a Jordanian sponsor, known as a 'bail-out', and they are otherwise unable to work in Jordan from the camps.³⁴ Turner even argues that, 'The refugee camp, with its humanitarian veneer, is a particularly draconian tool through which states attempt to regulate the size and class composition of their dominant labour markets in response to refugee influxes'.³⁵ By adding this new method to its response, Jordan potentially opens a new avenue for foreign aid while limiting the economic and social impact of refugees upon Jordan. By embracing the refugee camp as a tool for monetary gain, however, Jordan also accepted the underlying ideology of the humanitarian approach to refugees. This included the focus on refugees as needy numbers, rather than potential contributors, but it also included something else. Although the ideological battle between the Soviet Union and the liberal states had largely resolved, the 1951 legislation remained the backbone of a refugee's legal claim to immigrate. By

³³ Ann-Christin Wagner, 'Week 4: Refugee Economies and Mobile Labour', course lecture, University of Edinburgh, 11 October 2018.

³⁴ Turner, 'Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees', 392.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 299.

publicly claiming that the Jordanian economy and society were so unstable that they might be damaged by incoming Arab refugees, the Jordanian government inadvertently discouraged Jordanian confidence in their own context. The stark refusal to integrate Syrian refugees – by imprisoning them in a camp funded by outsiders – created the impression that life in Jordan was becoming untenable for everyone, even though Jordan was not actively engaged in the conflicts that displaced the Syrians. The host community noticed this shift. The carryover assumption surrounding refugee rentierism made emigration, rather than resettlement in a neighbouring country, look attractive to the point of becoming the default option for many.

In summary, Jordan – and much of the Middle East more broadly – had long recognized that migrants and refugees need to belong to a new society and contribute meaningfully towards it. Furthermore, as I describe in greater detail later in this work, Jordan had benefited extensively from occasions when migrants were empowered to contribute. The ‘Palestinization’ effect, as well as a new strategy of refugee rentierism, however, prompted a shift in this approach. The government authorized massive refugee camps in order to better advertise their large numbers of refugees. Rather than empowering them to participate in Jordanian society, this strategy made emigration appear to be the long-term solution to all of Jordan’s problems, for refugees and the host community alike.

Theological leaven to migration discourses

The contest between humanitarianism and securitization has not passed without comment into Christian theological discourse, however. Increasingly, Christian scholars have sought to engage with these discourses in theologically productive ways. Kristin Heyer, for example, asks theology to ‘leaven’ the rights-focused discourses. She suggests that theologies of migration that directly cross paths with more traditional fields of theology, such as eschatology or ecclesiology, can ‘help forge a theological ethic of migration that leavens rights-based considerations’.³⁶ She identifies the need for this leavening agent where international governance and Christian love of neighbour have failed to provide aid and dignity for those displaced.³⁷ In a similar appeal to the practical tactics of ecclesiology, Anna Rowlands attempts to pragmatically apply Catholic social teachings to British debates around admission and integration of refugees, seeking a more holistic strategy of integration and care.³⁸ David Hollenbach goes so far as to say that the political

³⁶ Kristin E. Heyer, ‘Reframing Displacement and Membership: Ethics of Migration’, *Theological Studies* (Baltimore) 73, no. 1 (2012): 201.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁸ Rowlands’ work is a rich source for political theology for the United Kingdom especially and Europe more broadly. Several of her works illuminate a Catholic perspective on refugees, including the following:

ethics of Western states have buckled under the questions raised by migration, and they should look to faith for a new solution. ‘Religious communities are perhaps uniquely capable of addressing the ethical claims of people on the move’, he writes.³⁹ He seeks to organize these claims on grounds that focus on the responsibilities of host societies, rather than the contributions of migrants, however, and he maintains the basic assumption that people may want to leave the Global South for the wealthier West. Christians in particular can help navigate questions of priority, writes Hollenbach, because a theology of ‘Christian cosmopolitanism’ requires them to count all humanity as a brother or sister, even as they prioritize admission to near neighbours, those with similar backgrounds, or those who flee lands destroyed by one’s own government.

Issues surrounding migration and hospitality received new attention among Western scholars after 2015, when large numbers of Syrian and other refugees moved into Europe on foot or on risky watercrafts. Nations in Europe and North America confronted both the 1951 Convention and their own laws with new urgency. Amid what became a raucous debate, Ulrich Schmiedel and Graeme Smith tried to instead question the discourses that had become dominant. Of what had become known as a ‘refugee crisis’, they wrote, ‘Whose crisis was - or indeed is - it?’⁴⁰ Whether the crisis belongs to the refugee in flight or the host community in turmoil indeed makes all the difference.

To summarize these debates, a number of questions may be asked: Is this refugee – or, on a broader scale, this refugee crisis – an aberration, an interruption to the established order, from which one hopes to return in haste to normal life? Or on the other hand, is it – or he or she – rather a friend to welcome, a neighbour to meet, or a sister or brother whose belonging – and needs – become part of who ‘we’ are? The precise response may – and should – vary, but each represents an answer to the fundamental question of whether the refugee has created a crisis or fled from one. Responding to a refugee in crisis – rather than as a crisis – presents a set

Anna Rowlands, Cheryl Handel and Kathleen Shields, ‘After Lesvos and Lampedusa: The European “Crisis” and Its Challenge to Catholic Social Thought’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 14, no. 1 (2017): 63-85.

Anna Rowlands, ‘On the Temptations of Sovereignty: The Task of Catholic Social Teaching and the Challenge of UK Asylum Seeking’, *Political Theology* 12, no. 6 (2011): 843-869.

Anna Rowlands, ‘The Dialectics of Democracy: Broad-Based Community Organizing, Catholic Social Teaching and Asylum-Seeking in a UK Context’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 10, no. 2 (2013): 341-352.

Anna Rowlands, ‘The State Made Flesh: Catholic Social Teaching and the Challenge of UK Asylum Seeking’, *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1044 (2012): 175-192.

³⁹ David Hollenbach, ‘Migration as a Challenge for Theological Ethics’, *Political Theology* 12 no. 6 (2011): 808.

⁴⁰ Ulrich Schmiedel and Graeme Smith, ‘Introduction: Charting a Crisis’, in *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis*, edited by Ulrich Schmiedel and Graeme Smith, 1-11. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018). 2.

of important challenges. Differences in approaching these challenges dictate the response, and these will be differentiated and discussed in this section. The overriding obstacle, however, is the same for all host communities, whether Muslim, Christian, or otherwise. Truly welcoming the refugee as one in need is necessarily transformative. The host community that joins the refugee on his or her journey cannot entirely return to the life it knew before the crisis. The following sections engage with literature that considers implications of this idea.

Considering hospitality in response to migration

Hospitality emerged as one possible alternative to the increasingly short-term, problem-solving responses to refugees that also characterized European migration debate from 2015. Christine Pohl writes that Western Christians must recover the neglected practice of hospitality. As an ancient Christian practice, notes Christine Pohl, hospitality was differentiated from the customs of ancient times in who it welcomed. First-century Romans and Jews all welcomed family and friends, but early Christians distinguished themselves by adding the poor and unpopular to their tables. ‘The practice of Christian hospitality’, Pohl writes, ‘is always located within the larger picture of Jesus’ sacrificial welcome to all who come to him’.⁴¹ In her work, the practical application of hospitality rested on the strength of Christian institutions, including church, community (such as schools, hospitals, or shelters), and especially family.⁴² For these reasons, Pohl identifies two major challenges to contemporary churches that seek to practice hospitality. First, modern Christians in many contexts live in a fragmented culture where families are small and spread widely. Second, hospitality risks becoming ‘overwhelmed by need’. Those whose limited resources meet unlimited suffering may lose their own ability – or even desire – to welcome. On a personal or church level, ‘aid fatigue’ or ‘burnout’ damages relationships and breeds resentment. On a state level, such resentment inspires nationalism or even hostility to refugees.⁴³

Pohl’s frank admission of these challenges to the practice of hospitality, however, are not altogether typical within the relevant literature. More common are rather far-reaching and idealistic speculations, such as Ross Langmead’s reflection that those who extend Christian hospitality may ‘become the guest, both because our guest becomes our host or because, more

⁴¹ Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

profoundly, the Jesus we serve through the poor and hungry becomes our host'.⁴⁴ He continues to describe hospitality as follows:

Hospitality is a strong concept which includes justice-seeking, political action, inclusion around our tables, intercultural friendship, pursuing a hospitable multicultural approach to church life, practical assistance, long-term commitment, learning from those who are different, sensitivity to the power dynamics of “welcome”, a willingness to “let go” as well as “embrace”, interfaith dialogue and discovering the intertwining of the guest and host roles which is embedded in Biblical and theological understandings of God’s activity amongst us.⁴⁵

While such an approach would be effective in theory, it is difficult even to imagine engaging with it on a practical basis. As Jacques Derrida notes, ‘One cannot speak of cultivating an ethic of hospitality. Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. . . ethics is hospitality’.⁴⁶ In other words, calls to hospitality such as Langmead offers may intimidate more than they inspire, even for a person or community already eager to offer welcome. One of the aims of my study is to explore the possibility of hospitality as an achievable reality in a specific context.

Hospitality within World Christianity

The World Christianity approach offers episodes of migration and hospitality in practice, several of which I note here. Their inclusion in this work serves to demonstrate the way that churches in a context of migration have demonstrated agency in responding to refugees, despite the surrounding discourses and strategies that seek to reduce the contributions of refugees. Most importantly, the following scholars offer alternatives to the perceived contest between securitization and humanitarianism that I introduced earlier.

First, Emma Wild-Wood traces the effects of migration on the growth and development of the Congolese Anglican Church. As Wild-Wood notes, ‘In a small church with expansionist ambition, migration induces greater heterogeneity within the institution and hastens ecclesiastical change because new life experiences, in dialogue with the old, provide material for altered

⁴⁴ Ross Langmead, ‘Refugees as Guests and Hosts: Towards a Theology of Mission Among Refugees and Asylum Seekers’, in *Religion, Migration and Identity: Methodological and theological explorations*, ed. Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy (Boston: Brill, 2016), 184.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 16-17.

identities'.⁴⁷ Thus, migration in the hands of twentieth-century Congolese Anglicans became more than a complex obstacle to the demands of church-building. Indeed, while many Congolese in this era of much upheaval saw migration as economically necessary but burdensome, great debate came from those who felt otherwise. Many Congolese who participated in a popular revival from 1960 onward searched their own experience of migration for a mark of divine purpose. These Revivalists ultimately 'redefined the value of relocation by expressing Christian life as one of migration for the Gospel rather than establishing an earthly home, whilst other [Congolese Anglican] members expected the church to offer unity, stability and homeliness in the context of their mobility in a disordered society'.⁴⁸ Wild-Wood concludes that migration enabled the Anglican church to both grow and expand in Congo, as the faith of these Christians altered in keeping with their experience of migration and their own understanding of that experience.

Wild-Wood's study offers essential nuance to the migration discourses I described earlier. Neither Wild-Wood – nor, I will note, this study – suggest that migration is always the best or worst option for anybody, but rather, Wild-Wood illustrates the creative possibilities that emerge from a context-specific approach to managing migration. As she notes, a certain amount of internal migration became an important tool for growth within a congregation that was open to it. Rather than viewing migrants and refugees as a necessarily damaged group, this congregation approached them as potential contributors to their hosts. This required a willingness on the part of the host community to reimagine their own future in light of the resources they already possessed. My research in Jordan examines in detail that same process of reimagining in a different context that faces similar questions about its response to migration.

Likewise in the British context, Susanna Snyder describes the revitalizing effect of new arrivals on shrinking British churches.⁴⁹ Many newcomers, she writes, brought energy and excitement to the churches that they joined after receiving aid, churches that were themselves struggling with declining membership in an increasingly secular society.⁵⁰ Describing this approach as constituting an 'ecology of faith', Snyder's work highlights the creative possibilities that emerge from viewing refugees as people with needs and potential to contribute, rather than as 'a crisis'. Like Wild-Wood's work, Snyder's study illustrates the way that host churches and

⁴⁷ Emma Wild-Wood, *Migration and Christian Identity in Congo (DRC)*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 208.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 176

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 199.

refugees alike can creatively explore ways to benefit from migration and the new relationships it produces.

I also explore the notion that churches can stand apart from the majority society by choosing to understand refugees in terms of contributions, rather than needs. Hiromi Chiba describes the role of American Protestant churches in resettling refugees from World War II, writing, ‘Fully ninety percent of post-war relief was provided by religious agencies’.⁵¹ Although the Methodist Church led this effort, only five percent of refugees helped were Methodist, meaning the churches helped refugees without reference to their faith backgrounds.⁵² The author identifies several political and theological factors of motivation at this time: the Christian commitment to help the needy, a shared commitment to helping the government oppose communism, and a fear that the then-growing federal government would shunt aside churches if they did not assert their role in society. In other words, when a broader society begins to value refugees only for their numbers, Christian churches are still able to establish a new relationship for refugees in which both parties’ contributions are valued. This interplay between the personal and political illustrates the transformative potential of hospitality upon an entire community.⁵³

From Kenya, a context experiencing a similar migration dynamic to Jordan, Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator’s Catholic ecclesiology of ‘the mission of the church in the time of HIV/AIDS, refugees and poverty’ also provides an emphatic illustration of the ways that Christians demonstrate agency to change the context in which they live. He writes, ‘Faith is a lived experience. Revelation happens in history’.⁵⁴ This study represents a similar engagement with church practice in a particular context. I aim to demonstrate the potential of Christians in a variety of contexts to utilize the creativity and resources they possess in dramatic ways, while rejecting the widespread notion that certain parts of the globe are incontrovertibly violent and hopeless.

⁵¹ Hiromi Chiba, ‘The Role of the Protestant Church in the US Refugee Resettlement Program during the Early Cold War Era: The Methodist Case’ in *Religion, Migration, and Identity: Methodological and Theological Explorations*, ed. Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy (Boston: Brill, 2016), 67.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵³ For a collection that critically considers the sometimes-awkward entanglement between a state’s strict immigration policy and attempts by churches and other civil actors to extend hospitality, in this case across northern Europe, see the following: Synnøve K. N. Bendixsen and Wyller, Trygve (eds.), *Contested Hospitalities in a Time of Migration: Religious and Secular Counterspaces in the Nordic Region*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2019).

⁵⁴ Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees, and Poverty* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005) 44.

In summary, scholars who investigate the church response to refugees with a view toward the specific resources of the church's context produce a rather different discourse from what I described previously. Rather than perceiving refugees as 'numbers' or a 'crisis', they shift toward embracing refugees – or migration more broadly – for their contributions or creative possibilities. In turn, the churches are themselves transformed by the encounter. In the next section, I describe how I similarly sought detailed engagement with the specific context of the Jordanian churches I studied in order to understand their own approach toward and transformation by refugees.

Methodological considerations

My methodology lies primarily within the social sciences and is roughly ethnographical. I draw on the research methods of the social sciences while attending to the interpretative theological lens found within World Christianity. In a study on modern ecclesiology, Nicholas Healey notes the ambivalent relationship between social science methodology and traditional theology.⁵⁵ Some theologians view it as a damaging or even dangerous imposition of secular methods to a spiritual endeavour. Others view the data produced by social science methods as compatible with or at least useful to theological interpretation. My study takes the latter view in an attempt to deal with qualitative data in a manner 'thoroughly theological yet oriented toward the concrete church'.⁵⁶ I drew inspiration and instruction from Nancy Tatom Ammerman's approach to studying church practice within a congregational setting.⁵⁷ I drew from her models both practically and theoretically, particularly in designing my case studies, which I describe in greater detail when I introduce Part Two of this study.

In keeping with this model, my research included extensive time in Jordan. I conducted two weeks of preliminary fieldwork in February 2018 with the help of an Innovation Initiative Grant from the University of Edinburgh. I conducted twelve unstructured interviews with church leaders and humanitarian workers – both Christian and Muslim – during this visit. I also conducted participant observation research in congregations for the Latin Catholic Church in Al-Fuheis, Latin Catholic Church in Marka, Arab Orthodox Church in Abdoun, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Amman and Al-Husn. My research also benefited from numerous informal conversations and observations, both inside these churches and outside. In

⁵⁵ Nicholas M. Healey, *Church, World, and the Christian Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁷ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, & William McKenney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998).

2019, I spent three weeks in February-March, when I continued to work with humanitarian organizations, but I also visited churches across Amman and interviewed a number of church leaders formally. From June-October 2019, I established myself within three congregations⁵⁸ with permission from local church leaders. Countless hours of participant observation, formal and informal conversations, and even – upon request – personal service to the congregations in the form of English classes or singing lessons followed. This engagement required ethical clearance, which I received from the University of Edinburgh.

One of the great challenges of this study, from a methodological perspective, lay in its aim of exploring a long-term refugee phenomenon. I conducted all of my research in 2018 and 2019, by which time the refugees – while still remaining in Jordan in significant numbers – had largely passed out of public discussion, at least in Amman. My early research produced many interviews that, at the time, confused or frustrated me, because my questions about hospitality and refugees produced worries about interfaith relations, plans to emigrate, or anecdotes about rejection from European Christians. Most of the churches I contacted held few or no active ministries to refugees at the time. Some told me to go to Camp Zaatari, as all the other interested foreigners seemed to be doing. I changed my approach and determined to work backward into the churches, so I conducted twelve interviews over a two-week period, not with Jordanian Christians, but with foreign humanitarian organizations that helped refugees professionally from a Christian background. Many of these had developed partnerships with local, Arabic-speaking churches, and these interviews, along with regional contacts from theological circles,⁵⁹ eventually led me to congregations who had more extensive experience with refugees. As research continued, I began to realize that hospitality to refugees was occurring far more frequently than I had noticed, because respect for the dignity of those assisted prevented their hosts from disclosing such efforts. This was also a challenge for me as a researcher. I countered it with participant observations of the congregations, as well as private interviews with church leaders who saw enough value in my academic endeavour to bend the rules of local propriety.

Translating ‘hospitality’

As mentioned previously, one major challenge to field study in Amman was the translation of my theological object of study – ‘hospitality’ – into Arabic. I initially employed the Arabic term *idb-*

⁵⁸ The selection process for these congregations is described in the Part Two Introduction of this work.

⁵⁹ I owe a debt of gratitude to Rev Dr Paul Haidostian, president of Haigazian University in Beirut, who generously shared his time and expertise in the formative stages of this study. He also introduced me to the Anglican community in Amman, who feature significantly in the material that follows.

*dbeyaafd*⁶⁰ or *lawbout idb-dbeyaafa* (the theology of hospitality).⁶¹ I noticed that Protestant and Catholic clergy, who had generally received training in Western or at least English-speaking institutions, responded enthusiastically to this term. Many offered a wonderfully quotable series of experiences with refugees on the ground, scriptural parallels, and thoughtful theological reflections. One recommended, however, that I use the term, *karamat idb-dbeyaafa*, (the virtue or generosity of hospitality)⁶² when making similar inquiries with laity, lest they assume I was asking about the traditional serving of cakes and drinks to visitors in Jordanian homes. To both these terms, however, I frequently found that Christians untrained in Western theology responded with either confusion or recipes.⁶³ Two tactics ultimately served my purposes: I explained my inquiry in a longer, more roundabout manner with phrases such as, ‘caring for refugees’⁶⁴ and ‘churches responding to migration’,⁶⁵ or else I trusted in participant observation, quietly remaining part of the community’s life with a willingness to listen and enquire further when relevant points arose naturally.

This linguistic reality forms the backdrop of the analysis that follows in this study, as the ambivalence of the concept in Arabic persuaded me to differentiate between ‘Arab hospitality’ – a well-known practice introduced in Chapter One of this study – and what I call ‘neighbourly hospitality’, which receives attention in Chapters Three, Four, and Seven. Arab hospitality, Andrew Shryock finds, is often couched in terms of fear for what might happen if delicate norms are not enforced. He writes, ‘The house, the guest, the host: all have limits that can be transgressed. Their sanctity is insured by the threat of violation’.⁶⁶ Many visitors to Jordan have experienced it both in proverb and in practice when a house-proud Jordanian host persuades them to eat another bite of *mansef* long after it is comfortable to do so; the additional helpings are more about the generosity of the host than the hunger of the guest. As a practice, Arab hospitality asserts one’s own identity, wealth, or position within the world. The practice of Arab

⁶⁰ In Arabic: *الضيافة*.

⁶¹ This might be translated as, ‘the theology of hospitality’, although, as I explain, it was not always recognized as such by the Arabic speakers with whom I engaged. In Arabic, it is written as: *لوهوت الضيافة*.

⁶² This might be translated as, ‘the virtue or generosity of hospitality’. In Arabic, it is written as: *كرامة الضيافة*.

⁶³ This observation is notable in and of itself, and it may interest scholars of World Christianity or comparative theology who are interested in the way that Western and Eastern theological traditions differ and engage. Joshua Ralston examines this issue and its place in wider scholarship, especially with regards to the contested nature and origins of *lawbout* (theology), in the following:
Joshua Ralston, ‘Political Theology in Arabic’, *Political Theology: The Journal of Christian Socialism* 19, no. 7 (2018): 549–552.

⁶⁴ I expressed this with the Arabic phrase, *r3aat il-laaji’in* رعاة اللاجئين.

⁶⁵ I expressed this with the Arabic phrase, *rud lil-hijra bil-kaniisa* رد للحجرة بالكنيسة.

⁶⁶ Andrew Shryock, ‘The New Jordanian Hospitality: House, Host, and Guest in the Culture of Public Display’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no.1 (2004): 37.

hospitality is predetermined and performative; the guest's needs are assumed rather than investigated.

By contrast, what I call 'neighbourly hospitality' is a spiritual practice that places the needs of another and the graciousness of God before oneself. In this practice, great care is taken to help in ways that meet the needs of the poor or stranger. Emanuel Schaeublin, for example, describes Palestinian women discretely opening fridges to assess the food supply of a friend and, if the kitchen appeared too empty, hiding cash under a chair cushion during a social call.⁶⁷ Unlike Arab hospitality, neighbourly hospitality is a spiritual practice that – I argue in later chapters of this study – has been preserved for unknown centuries in the practical and textual traditions of both Christianity and Islam. Most importantly, and as Chapter Four of this study clarifies, sources for Islamic practice⁶⁸ and Christian scripture⁶⁹ establish such inter-personal giving as resulting from God's mercy, rather than being a personal characteristic of generosity or group identity.

This latter aspect became clear to me during an interview with a Jordanian priest who had worked extensively for and on behalf of Iraqi refugees.⁷⁰ In the middle of the interview, he paused to direct my attention to a pool in the courtyard, from which two men were clearing the flotsam that had collected during a recent rainstorm. The two men were Iraqi refugees receiving assistance from the church, and they paused to wave when the priest called to them by name. The priest told me proudly that he had never asked them to clean the courtyard. Their spontaneous service was their way of caring for the church that had cared for them, but the priest honoured this action. The priest's explanation of this simple act of service did not include language of repayment, and certainly, their afternoon of work would not repay him or the church for months of effort and material support they had received. On the contrary, the priest defined their service in relational, rather than transactional, terms, as though both he, as the priest, and these Iraqi lay members were simply partakers of the same goodness of God. To sum up, while 'neighbourly' and 'Arab' hospitality may overlap in practice at times, and while both presented me with a certain amount of linguistic resistance while in Jordan, I argue that they may be distinguished by this spiritual understanding of the relationship between the giver, the receiver, and God.

⁶⁷ Emanuel Schaeublin, 'Islam in Face-to-Face Interaction: Direct Zakat Giving in Nablus (Palestine)', *Contemporary Levant*, 4 no. 2 (2019), 126.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ David Briones, 'Paul's Intentional "Thankless Thanks" in Philippians 4.10-20', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34, no.1 (2011): 56.

⁷⁰ Khalil Jaber, interview by author, Marka, Jordan, 13 February 2018, Arabic – translation by author.

Context for study

As a study within the field of World Christianity, I wanted to explore the activity of a Christian community in response to the challenges of migration. Middle Eastern Christianity has not always been the most fruitful site for investigation within World Christianity, as Deanna Ferree Womack has documented,⁷¹ but this has begun to change in recent years. Within World Christianity, Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy identify key gaps in scholarship surrounding migration that my project will address.⁷² These include bias for migration to North American contexts, ‘preference for the exotic’ in case studies, inattention to the role of religions in integration, emphasis on nationality and ethnicity rather than religious categories, and the lack of attention given to ‘the communities in the contexts of departure’ as weaknesses in this literature.⁷³

Migration has been an essential element of any discussion about Middle Eastern Christianity for much of the last century. Certainly, much Christian emigration to Western contexts was prompted, or at least enabled, by educational resources provided by foreign missions to the area.⁷⁴ The declining size of these Christian communities due to emigration to the West, religious discrimination, and plummeting birth-rate has been ably documented, particularly in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East*.⁷⁵ Media and more mainstream literature have popularized the notion that the birthplace of the faith could become a memorial to rather than a home for Christians.⁷⁶ One work in the ongoing proliferation of scholarship, for example, is dedicated to ‘Christians facing religious persecution in the Middle East’.⁷⁷ This

⁷¹ Deanna Ferree Womack has surveyed in detail the range of what can be safely called Middle Eastern Christianity Studies, including relevant works in other disciplines.

Deanna Ferree Womack, ‘Christian Communities in the Contemporary Middle East: An Introduction’, *Exchange* (Leiden, Netherlands) 49, no.3-4 (2020): 189–213.

⁷² Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, ‘Introduction’, in *Religion, Migration, and Identity: Methodological and Theological Explorations*, ed. Martha Frederiks & Dorottya Nagy (Boston: Brill, 2016).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁷⁴ Heather J. Sharkey, ‘Middle Eastern Christianity Between the Local and the Global’, *Ecumenical Trends* 48, no.6 (2019), 12.

⁷⁵ Andrea Pacini, ed., *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Other scholarship that describes the challenges of migration in Arab Christianity includes the following: Anthony O’Mahony, ed., *Eastern Christianity: Studies in Modern History, Religion and Politics* (London: Melisende, 2004).

Paul S. Rowe, John H.A. Dyck, & Jens Zimmermann, ed., *Christians and the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁷⁶ See examples in the following: Klaus Wivel, *The Last Supper: The Plight of Christians in Arab Lands*, trans. Mark Kline (New York: New Vessel Press, 2016).

Sinan Antoon, *The Baghdad Eucharist*, trans. Maia Tabet (New York: Hoopoe, 2017).

⁷⁷ Mohammed Girma & Christian Romocea, ed., *Christian Citizenship in the Middle East: Divided Allegiance or Dual Belonging?* (London; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017).

narrative of particularly *Christian* emigration forms the backdrop for my discussion of migration in the Middle East. While significant and worthy of further study, the phenomenon of Christian emigration from the Middle East should not overpower this project, which focuses rather on the Christians who remain in the Middle East and seek to build rather than relocate. The spectre of emigration, however, affects all scenes of Christian life in Jordan. Fear for the declining Christian community in the Middle East may consume church leadership. On an individual or family level, such fears may either catapult the hesitant into emigration or root the determined into staying for the sake of the faith.

Even as studies about Christianity in Egypt, Palestine, and Lebanon have proliferated, Jordanian Christianity has remained largely absent. I believe, however, that Jordan had something particularly unique and helpful to offer as a context. Jordan has become known for having a longstanding, relatively peaceful dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations. Since one of the hallmarks of the World Christianity approach⁷⁸ is an interest in the agency of Christians within their context, I was eager to understand what made that possible. In one sense, I was asking – of the contemporary world – the same question that Sidney H. Griffith has asked with such fruitful results.⁷⁹ What experience and resources could Jordanian Christians offer to Christians across the globe who seek models for engagement with Muslims? Given my hopes relative to scholarly discussion of the Middle East within World Christianity, Jordan offers a particularly dramatic setting for examining the host community/refugee dynamic.⁸⁰ Indeed, my study may add to the many who have sought to understand and learn from this notable tendency toward ‘Jordanian exceptionalism’.⁸¹

Christianity (in transit) in Jordan

The Middle East is the cradle of the Christian faith, and I found that the great diversity of world Christianity was well-represented even within the small nation of Jordan. Because this study

⁷⁸ This approach receives multi-disciplinary discussion from a range of World Christianity scholars. See: Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, eds., *World Christianity: Methodological Considerations*, Theology and Mission in World Christianity (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021).

⁷⁹ Sidney F. Griffith, *Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁸⁰ As of 2015 (this was the most recent official report available before I left for Jordan in 2018), Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees relative to its citizens, with 183 refugees to every 1,000 Lebanese. Jordan’s refugee population is second largest after Lebanon. See ‘Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015’, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed 20 June 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7>.

⁸¹ Scholarship has both examined this oft-repeated claim and offered relevant questions and critiques for its application. See: Mansoor Moaddel, *Jordanian Exceptionalism: A Comparative Analysis of State-Religion Relationships in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK; New York: Palgrave, 2002).

engages with Middle Eastern Christians both sociologically and theologically, some background information about this diverse demography helps to contextualize the analysis that follows. This section describes the major churches currently in Jordan and Syria with some brevity, as detailed information about the most relevant of these traditions is presented later in this study. I also introduce the major Christian traditions of Iraq, since most of the refugees described or quoted in this study are Iraqi Christians, with brief notes about why each church's cultural, linguistic, national, and theological origins⁸² became relevant to the Jordanian Christian response to refugees explored in this study.

Christians account for just over one percent of Jordan's population, which is mostly Sunni Muslim, but they identify strongly with the two-thousand-year-old history of Christianity in the area. Most Christians living in Amman⁸³ would describe themselves as Palestinians, having fled homes around Jerusalem or the Galilee after the wars of 1948 and 1967. Many of these deployed their educational and other resources to help drive Jordan's economic growth over the past century, and – largely barred from government service on the basis of their Palestinian heritage – they have thrived as professionals or in private enterprise. On the other hand, most Christians in rural Jordan have long roots in the area's Bedouin, tribal past, and many maintain strong ties to the lands where they live. Indeed, Mohanna Haddad – a Jordanian Christian scholar – has suggested that during the tumultuous twentieth century, the rapid modernization of Jordanian society prompted the Christians to transfer their old tribal affiliations to the auspices of different churches,⁸⁴ a hypothesis that would help to explain the rather fierce denominational sentiments of many Jordanian Christians to this day. Of these churches, the largest and oldest is the Greek Orthodox Church, also called the Arab or *Rum* (Roman) Orthodox Church by locals.⁸⁵ This church also has a strong presence in Syria and was thus represented among Syrian Christian refugees to Jordan.⁸⁶ The Catholic tradition is the next-largest, although their presence in Jordan

⁸² The theological trajectories of the Middle East's churches are presented in detail in the following: Alexander Treiger, 'Divisions of Middle Eastern Christianity' in *The Orthodox Christian World*, ed. by Augustine Casiday xxi-xxii (New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁸³ In Arabic, this is spelled عمان and could be transliterated to indicate the presence of the letter 'ayn at the beginning of the word. Since Amman is also a well-known, historic city and current national capital, however, I have opted to employ the English spelling more familiar to scholarship, in an effort to avoid confusion of terms.

⁸⁴ Mohanna Haddad, "'Detribalizing" and "Retribalizing": Churches' Double Roles Among Christian Arabs in Jordan – A Study in Anthropology of Religion', *The Muslim World* (Hartford) 82, no.1 (1992): 67-89.

⁸⁵ This church boasts an estimated 70,000 members in Jordan. 'Jordan', in *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, edited by Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, Third Edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 439.

⁸⁶ Because so many Christians – and Syrians more broadly – left Syria after war began in 2011, the demographic data for this area is particularly fraught. The *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, however, considers that Eastern Orthodox traditions represent sixty-seven percent of Syria's Christian population, while Catholic traditions would constitute thirty percent. 'Syria', in *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, edited by Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo. Third Edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 775.

is less than two centuries old. Along with the Orthodox, they operate a number of respected institutions for education, healthcare, and the relief of poverty.⁸⁷ Jordan's Anglican Church became established in 1860 and also operates several institutions for education and healthcare in the country, including – in partnership with the Lutheran church – the Schneller School of Agricultural and Manual Training.⁸⁸ Smaller Protestant traditions include the Assemblies of God, the Church of the Nazarene, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and several Baptist communities.

Although geographically near to Jordan, the Christians from modern-day Iraq developed rather different relationships to government power, ecclesiastical tradition, and the rest of Christianity more broadly. For much of their two-thousand-year-old history, Iraqi Christians were governed by various iterations of the Persian Empire, and they did not have the same connection with Constantinople and experience of Byzantine governance that helped to shape the early history of Jordanian, Syrian, and Palestinian Christianity. The oldest Christian church in Iraq is the Assyrian Church of the East.⁸⁹ Very few Western Christians are aware of this church or its long history, which has at times included evangelism and ecclesiastical influence across East Asia and into India and China. This ignorance is largely because the Church of the East broke ties with the then-mainstream church in Constantinople in the earliest Christian centuries. Uniquely, many Iraqi Christians still speak Aramaic, also called Syriac, as their mother tongue. These Aramaic speakers, or *Asbuuriin*, maintain that their language is a vital link to the language spoken by Jesus. This linguistic difference plays a practical role in the way that many Iraqi Christians engage with those of Jordan, as later chapters of this study explore.

While it is certainly the oldest, the Assyrian Church of the East is no longer the largest Christian tradition in Iraq. Indeed, the majority of the Iraqi refugees whom I encountered in Amman were members of the Syriac Orthodox or Chaldean Catholic Church. Although they once lived mostly in modern-day Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon, Syriac Orthodox Christians⁹⁰ fell victim to massacres described later in this study during the same period as the Armenian

⁸⁷ Catholics in Jordan are numbered at 29,260, but an estimated 27,000 of these are Greek Catholic. 'Jordan', in *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, 439-440.

⁸⁸ The Anglican Church is the third-largest Christian denomination in Jordan with 3,800 members. 'Jordan', in *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, 439.

⁸⁹ Some theologically trained Western Christians might know this tradition as the 'Nestorian' church, but recent scholarly and ecclesiastical engagement with Assyrian Christians has persuaded scholars that such a label is both inaccurate and polemical. See: Sebastian Brock, 'The "Nestorian" Church: A Lamentable Misnomer', in J.F. Coakley and K. Parry (eds) *The Church of the East: Life and Thought*. Special Edition of *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78, no. 3: 23-35.

⁹⁰ During my time in Jordan, most Syriac Christians described themselves in Arabic as *Suuriin* or simply *Orthodox*, but to avoid confusion, this study echoes the scholarly usage of the term 'Syriac Orthodox Church'.

Genocide, and they may now be found across the Middle East more broadly.⁹¹ As a theologically non-Chalcedonian tradition, the Syriac Orthodox Church still maintains formal communion with the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt – the Middle East’s largest Christian tradition – and the Armenian Apostolic Church, each of which may be found in a single congregation in Jordan due to recent migration. Many Syriac Christians also speak Aramaic at home, and most of those I met in Amman seemed comfortable associating with other Catholic or Orthodox Christians, although their theological divide from these traditions technically began in the fifth century.

The largest church in present-day Iraq is the Chaldean Catholic Church,⁹² a fact that helps to contextualize the enthusiastic Catholic advocacy for Iraqi refugees that I describe later in this study. They share an allegiance to the Vatican with both the Roman Catholic – called ‘Latin’ in Jordan – and Greek Catholic – usually called ‘*Melkite*’ or ‘*Rum Katholik*’ in Arabic – churches in Jordan. With that said, their history is slightly different because of association with other Iraqi churches,⁹³ rather than the ecclesiastical structures emanating from Jerusalem, and they have a separate rite and liturgical tradition relative to the other Catholic churches.

⁹¹ One work that explores the successful re-establishment by refugees of a Syriac Orthodox Church in Bethlehem, and also describes in greater detail the ongoing legacy of the massacres, or *Sayfo*, is the following: Mark D. Calder, *Bethlehem’s Syriac Christians: Self, Nation and Church in Dialogue and Practice* (Piscataway, NJ, USA: Gorgias Press LLC, 2017).

⁹² The Chaldean Catholic Church accounts for an estimated seventy percent of Christians in Iraq itself, and it was also well-represented among the Iraqi Christians I met in Jordan. ‘Iraq’, in *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, edited by Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo. Third Edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 404.

⁹³ The development and recent history of the Chaldean Catholic Church, Vatican engagement in Iraq, and much of Iraqi Christian history more broadly may be found in the following work: Fernando Cardinal Filoni, *The Church in Iraq*, translated by Edward Condon (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017).

1. 'Our Common Home': Historical Underpinnings for Christian-Muslim Relations in Jordan

Jordanian Christians do not attract much attention. Even in the 660-page volume *The Rowman and Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East*, Jordan is squished into one, twelve-page chapter with Palestine and Israel, while Saudi Arabia and Iran's Christians receive twelve and eight pages, respectively.⁹⁴ Even as the study of Middle Eastern Christianity has grown – Deanna Ferree Womack writes that it 'has advanced tremendously in English language scholarship since the 1990s, with nuanced research treating the Christians of the region not as passive victims of geopolitical events or as persecuted minorities, but as actors in their own right'⁹⁵ – Jordan remains largely exempt from the relative renaissance of scholarship invested in the contemporary and historical realities of Middle Eastern Christianity.⁹⁶ This exclusion is at least partly attributive to the country's demographics: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a majority Sunni Muslim society, and Christians represent less than two percent of the nation's population.⁹⁷ More importantly, the country has distinguished itself among Middle Eastern nations by avoiding major conflicts for over four decades. Indeed, in the volume of the *Edinburgh Companion of Global Christianity* devoted to the region, the authors noted that few scholars of contemporary or historical Christianity wanted to devote much time to researching this country, because 'the condition of Christians in contemporary Jordan has frequently been described as, "Jordan, Kingdom of happy Christians"'.⁹⁸

This 'nothing to see here, move along' attitude is not shared by the country's ruling elite, a Muslim royal family. Despite this scholarly disinterest, interfaith relations are a favourite topic for Jordanians themselves. The former Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal, the architect of Jordanian religious affairs for much of the second half of the twentieth century, defined his

⁹⁴ Mitri Raheb & Mark A. Lamport, eds., *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East* (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland, 2021).

⁹⁵ Deanna Ferree Womack, 'Christian Communities in the Contemporary Middle East: An Introduction' *Exchange* (Leiden, Netherlands) 49, no.3-4 (2020): 198.

⁹⁶ Scholarship has identified some of the reasons why Middle Eastern Christianity as a whole once attracted less scholarly attention than Christians elsewhere. See: Laura Robson. 'Recent Perspectives on Christianity in the Modern Arab World', *History Compass* 9, no. 4 (2011): 312-25. At the same time, several scholarly institutions have increasingly sought to expand scholarship in this area to the point that some are calling Middle Eastern Christian Studies 'a new sub-field'. See: Fiona McCallum, 'Christians in the Middle East: A New Subfield?', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010), 486.

⁹⁷ In 2020, the *World Christian Encyclopaedia* found that just 1.3% of the population was Christian, a drop from 5.8% in 1900. See: 'Jordan', in *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, 439.

⁹⁸ Paulo Maggiolini and Iyad Twal, 'Jordan' in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Mariz Tadros, and Todd M. Johnson. *Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 152.

country's character in these terms. 'I believe firmly that since the creation of the state of Jordan and the Emirates before that by my great-grandfather, there has always been an emphasis on inclusion', he said. 'I call it the Jordanian ethic. It is who we are'.⁹⁹ It is important to highlight that this Arab prince identified his lineage and membership within the centuries-old Arab royalty who claim the founding prophet of Islam as an ancestor. This family has played a leadership role on both the local governing of the Arab peninsula and administration of the holiest sites of the Islamic world. It is arguably on those grounds that the prince and his family derive legitimacy to rule Jordan today. In introducing his family and the places they have governed, however, the prince does not choose to advertise the area's Islamic heritage, nor its natural beauty, art, or historical significance; rather, he emphasizes the country's proclivity for religious inclusion, and particularly its social dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations.

What is, perhaps, even more intriguing is that Jordanian Christians describe the area in similar terms. Theophilos II, the patriarch and leader of Jordan's largest and oldest Christian church,¹⁰⁰ praised the country's sense of religious inclusion, crediting Jordan's king for the achievement. 'He has made the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan a living paradigm of co-existence and mutual respect. . . This is our common home, and we shall continue to live here together'.¹⁰¹ He was not alone. Referring to the region's unsavoury reputation for conflict and religious extremism, Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land described Jordan as offering an alternative to the 'extremism', the 'occupation', and the 'displacement and persecution' that threatened Christians and others throughout the rest of the region.¹⁰²

Within scholarship, similar arguments for Jordanian coexistence may be found. Brian Katulis noted that while Jordan's native Christian population is relatively small, the kingdom has become a common destination for Christians fleeing conflicts within the region:

Jordan has become one of the few safe havens for Christians fleeing conflict and repression in other parts of the region. Though it faces the same questions on equal

⁹⁹ Charles M. Sennott, *The Body and the Blood: The Holy Land's Christians at the Turn of a New Millennium: A Reporter's Journey*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 252.

¹⁰⁰ In 2020, the *World Christian Encyclopaedia* reported that 0.8% of the Jordanian population belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church, which is more than twice the size of the next largest denomination – the Catholic Church – at 0.3%. See: 'Jordan', in Johnson and Zurlo, *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, 438-440.

¹⁰¹ The Patriarchate of Jerusalem. H.B. Address to the Conference 'The Current Situation of Christians in the Middle East.' 2013. <http://jpnewsgatenet/en/2013/09/04/2948>, 4-5.

¹⁰² Munib Younan. 'Speech by Bishop Dr Munib Younan Middle East Council of Churches General Assembly', 6 September 2016. <http://www.elcjh.org/2016/09/14/middle-east-council-of-churches-reconvenes/>, 4.

citizenship that plague the region as a whole, the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan has set a tone of tolerance and inclusivity toward the country's Christians.¹⁰³

Even elsewhere in the region, it seems, religious minorities have agreed with the prince's assessment that Jordan offers a 'safe haven'. Even though 'questions' remain, the government's 'tone of tolerance and inclusivity' has evidently offered sufficient reassurance to some Christians living in other, less stable countries in the Middle East.

Precisely what is this 'Jordanian ethic' that it is both advocated by Jordanian politicians and accepted by Christian leaders and refugees around the Middle East? I argue that all these comments reference a living dynamic of interfaith engagement and dialogue. This dynamic is defined by series of historical movements or traditions that are contextually specific to Jordan. My argument reflects Hugh Goddard's comments for the historic development of Christian-Muslim relations:

Christian-Muslim relations over the centuries have developed on a kind of layer by layer basis: What happened in one community in one generation produced a reaction in the other community, which in turn contributed to the development of formulations and attitudes in the first community in later generations. In Christian-Muslim relations, memories are long and thus the Crusades, for example, still exercise a powerful influence, many centuries later, in some parts of both the Christian and Muslim worlds.¹⁰⁴

Thus, in a given context, the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations is not defined solely by the demographics, doctrines, and interpersonal engagements of the present time. Rather, all of those observable characteristics are themselves the product of a much longer, shared history between Christian and Muslim communities. Of course, this history and its continuing influence on modern interfaith relations may or not be understood or even recognized outside of those belonging to the particular context.

What is also important to remember is that a single event within a shared history may produce a mix of effects that are neither entirely combusive nor exclusively irenic. The example cited by Goddard is a case in point. The Crusades are perceived in some contexts as an act of

¹⁰³ Brian Katulis, 'The Impact of the Shia-Sunni Political Struggle and Future Strategies for Christians and Other Vulnerable Communities in the Middle East' in *Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries: Arab Christians in the Levant* ed. Kail C. Ellis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 201.

¹⁰⁴ Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Edinburgh, Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 3.

aggression by European Christians against Arab Muslims, and remembering this event represents an ongoing barrier to interfaith coexistence.¹⁰⁵ In a study of how Jordanian textbooks present the Crusades, however, Michael Winter found claims that the nation's Christian community resisted the attack of Christian Crusaders alongside Arab Muslims.¹⁰⁶ In Jordan, then, memories of the Crusades are less about 'a fight between cross and crescent',¹⁰⁷ and more about the triumph of a cohesive Arab civilization against the threat of non-Arab invaders.

While the elements that constitute a modern interfaith dynamic – or 'layers', as Goddard describes them – would be difficult for the casual visitor to discern, analysis of the past and present together can make them apparent. The presence of such pre-existing traditions in a modern nation-state such as Jordan should not surprise. As Heather J. Sharkey notes, in the vacuum of governance left by the Ottoman Empire 'emerged in its place many countries, ostensibly nation-states instead of empires, which devised policies toward religious communities that recalled the heritage or betrayed the vestiges of Ottoman rule'.¹⁰⁸ This chapter identifies the three most significant layers affecting interfaith relations in Jordan as Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arabism. While these three are closely interrelated historically and on the ground, for the purposes of rhetorical clarity, I address each within a separate section of this chapter. In fact, as Goddard suggests, each of these emerged from distinct historical eras, although only the third – Pan-Arabism – was formally organized and identified as a political movement in the modern sense of the word. In any case, Arab hospitality refers to longstanding tribal traditions commonly associated with the Bedouin people of the area; local cosmopolitanism is the emergence of a social practice from the legal norms and migration patterns of the Ottoman Empire; and Pan-Arabism began as a political ideology in nineteenth-century Beirut, from whence it spread across the region and was ultimately manifested in the policies of Arab nationalism. While this chapter addresses each of these chronologically in the order in which they emerged, I suggest that all remain active in Jordanian politics and society today. In the chapter that follows, I first identify the historical origins of each tradition, then

¹⁰⁵ This type of 'Crusader' rhetoric has employed repeatedly by top leaders in Turkey in reference to violent clashes between Christians and Muslims in Europe and New Zealand. 'New Zealand Attack Stirs Rhetoric against "Crusades" in Turkey'. *BBC Monitoring European* (London), 18 March 2019.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Winter, 'The Arab Self-image as Reflected in Jordanian Textbooks', in *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World*, ed. Asher Susser and Aryeh Shmuelevitz (London: Haus Pub, 1995).

¹⁰⁷ 'New Zealand Attack', *BBC*.

¹⁰⁸ Heather J. Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2017), 289.

address its broad significance to the interfaith dynamic of Jordan, and conclude by identifying the limits each imposes on the dynamic of interfaith relations.

1. Arab hospitality

The first layer I address is historically the oldest, a tradition of Arab hospitality that remains part of Jordan's family and social customs to this day. It is difficult to say when or how this tradition began, but it seems likely that these customs are the innovation of the Arab tribes before they embraced Islam, or perhaps an even earlier people who once populated the region.¹⁰⁹ Regardless of their date of origin, what I call Arab hospitality establishes an ethic of honour, respect for past traditions and treaties, and a sharp delineation of what is due to friends and enemies. In this section, I demonstrate that these customs have contributed to Christian-Muslim coexistence historically and in present-day Jordan. I then examine these practices critically to identify how they can simultaneously limit Christian opportunities to raise specific concerns about interfaith relations in the public sphere.

To understand the ways that Arab hospitality has facilitated interfaith coexistence, it is important to recognize the religious diversity that has been part of this region long before the political formation of modern nations such as Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. The lands surrounding the Jordan River have been home to members of the three Abrahamic faiths since their emergence. The religious diversity – and the tensions that often accompanied it – gave the area a rich heritage still remembered by the inhabitants today, and these are still regarded as significant within modern Jordan. For various reasons, however, in the centuries leading up to the establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the area was largely forgotten by both the Ottoman government and Orthodox Christian authorities. Few, if any, religious authorities of either Islam or Christianity held seats on the East Bank of the River Jordan, and vibrant heritage gave way to a 'popular religiosity' resting more on tribal loyalties than directives from either faith's scripture or doctrinal authorities.¹¹⁰ Local government was tribal, culture was traditional, and religious identity was as much a reflection of familial belonging as it was an individual practice.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Given the evidence of peace periods in the lunar calendar of pre-Islamic Arabia, it could be argued that these customs are pre-Islamic, and part of longer traditions related to the region.

¹¹⁰ Magliolini and Twal, 'Jordan', 153.

¹¹¹ The swiftness of recent changes to Jordan's politics and society are difficult to overstate. For example, Madaba, a village with Byzantine roots now known as Jordan's ancient Christian village, was re-built by three Christian tribes in 1879 for the first time since the ninth century. Madaba is now one of Jordan's larger cities. See Sennott, *The Body and the Blood*, 236-239.

In these pre-modern times, the Christians organized themselves politically along the same Bedouin tribal system of their Muslim neighbours, with whom they had generally strong relations. Unlike their fellow Christians in Egypt, Iraq, and parts of Syria, as well as the Armenians, the Christians who lived along both sides of the Jordan River had no separate liturgical language.¹¹² Arabic was the language of both their churches and their daily lives, making a tangible sign of affinity with other Arabs, and some tribes notably boasted membership of both Christians and Muslims. As one observer noted:

The Maayeh family members – both Muslim and Christian – continue to think of one another as family, attending the same funerals and weddings, mourning and celebrating together through the generations. The tale of the Maayeh family illustrates the pre-eminence of tribal affiliation in Jordan – and in much of the Middle East – over religious affiliation.¹¹³

In this way, Christian communities predate the founding of Hashemite Jordan as ‘an essential and original component of the country’s socio-political landscape’,¹¹⁴ while the Jordanian state became active only in 1921. For the reasons stated above, prior to the arrival of the Hashemites, interfaith relations were informed almost exclusively by local, Arab and Bedouin customs, with minimal interest or interference from Christian or Muslim authorities. The area’s economic and social habits were more nomadic even than those around nearby Jerusalem or Damascus, and local laws and customs were less restrained by the bureaucratic complexity that characterized most of the Ottoman Empire. This made the area relatively receptive to both the resettlement of refugees – a topic treated in detail in this chapter’s next section – and growing missionary engagement from both Catholic and Protestant Europeans.

This lived experience of coexistence was so strong that it yielded its own cultural and religious practices. Some visitors to Jordan in the twentieth century reported stories about Muslims having their children baptized, for example, or Christians entering polygamous marriages. The older generation of Jordanians remembers ‘the good old days in Jordan’s rural areas and small towns’, where Christians and Muslims grew up together or cared for the elderly or children without regard for faith differences.¹¹⁵ While not an essential characteristic of interfaith harmony, these reports suggest that Christians and Muslims lived more closely to each

¹¹² Peter Gubser, *Jordan: Crossroads of Middle East Events* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 19.

¹¹³ Sennott, *The Body and the Blood*, 244.

¹¹⁴ Maggiolini and Twal, ‘Jordan’, 152.

¹¹⁵ Rula H. Samain, *Fortress of Peace: Jordan’s Interfaith Drive and Model of Coexistence* (Caritas Jordan: Amman, Jordan, 2017) 104.

other than to the distant leaders of their respective faiths. Gubser notes from his time in Jordan, ‘The people continually express their mutual tolerance for one another and are quite proud of their good relations as compared to those of the rest of the Middle East’.¹¹⁶ In this way, Jordan’s tribal history, while partly a product of the area’s neglect by religious and government authorities, created an environment in which faith differences were not seen as a barrier to coexistence.

While circumstances created a context that could permit coexistence, the dramatic changes to Jordan over the last century had the potential to eradicate their importance completely. Instead, an understanding of this history, shared by Muslims and Christians alike, contributes to harmonious interfaith relations precisely because it centres identity primarily in the tribe or family, rather than a particular sect. Jordanian Christians identify themselves as Arab Christians in solidarity with Muslims of the region.¹¹⁷ Jordanians at all levels of society have continued to embrace the ideal of Arab hospitality, which still defines how Jordanians at the local and government level describe Jordan to guests and on the international stage.¹¹⁸

Implications for Christian-Muslim Relations

The ongoing practice of Arab hospitality hinges on the memories that Jordanians choose to keep alive. One particularly dramatic example of Arab hospitality that is regularly cited¹¹⁹ to this day emerged from the tragedy of the Armenian massacres in the former Ottoman Empire. To this day, Armenian and Hashemite records alike attest to the care that surviving Armenian Christians received from the Hashemites and those they governed. The Hashemite king – whose title was the *Sharif* – instructed the Arab tribes to ‘provide the Jacobean Armenians with all the assistance they needed and to help and protect them as they protect themselves, their assets, and their children’.¹²⁰ This episode demonstrates that Muslim rulers and tribesmen refused to take advantage of these Christians in distress, although the Christians were not family members or fellow Arabs and were, in fact, suffering from attacks by Turkish Muslims. Even more interestingly, this instruction defines the full extent of an Arab hospitality that can extend beyond religious or other boundaries. The Hashemites did not call up a collection of unwanted clothes and food, to be handed out at waystations. Rather, their order called for providing ‘all the

¹¹⁶ Gubser, *Jordan*, p. 21.

¹¹⁷ Maggiolini and Twal, ‘Jordan’, 156.

¹¹⁸ See the full expression of Arab hospitality in the following speech given on a diplomatic visit to the United Kingdom: Hassan bin Talal, ‘Jordan’s Quest for Peace in the Middle East’. Annual Memorial Lecture at David Davies Memorial Institute of International Studies, 1984, 2.

¹¹⁹ The incident was casually mentioned, for example, in this interview by a Hashemite prince:

El-Hassan Bin Talal, ‘Jordanian Christians Are Fully Integrated’ *Middle East Quarterly* 8, no.1 (2001): 82-87.

¹²⁰ Samain, *Fortress of Peace*, 25.

assistance [the Armenians] needed'. Finally, and even more significantly, the tribes were asked to 'protect [the Armenian Christians] as they protect themselves, their assets, and their children'.¹²¹ This form of Arab hospitality was not a token gift, nor temporary shelter followed by a civil farewell. Instead, something beyond ordinary generosity was required. Arab hospitality could require the tribes to provide their guests with both material assistance and protection *to the degree that they wanted for themselves*. While Arab hospitality can be applied to outsiders, as in this case, extending hospitality functionally transforms them into insiders. As guests, their obligation upon the hosts may equal that of a child for a parent.

In Jordan, the Armenians joined a community of Arabic-speaking Christians who had been largely forgotten even by their church leaders in Jerusalem and Istanbul, and these local Christians were beginning to reconnect to regional and worldwide Christian networks through the then-recent arrival of Western missionaries, schools, and denominations. These Arab Christians, writes Kamal Salibi, saw in the Hashemites 'an Arab dynasty representing the best in the political traditions of Islam'.¹²² Many were ready to join in the Great Arab Revolt and 'Free Syria for Arab rule', and the Circassians and Christians together became what Russell E. Lucas calls the 'third pillar' of support and identity for Hashemite Jordan.¹²³ By and large, they too were willing to consider an alliance with an Arab family descended from Muhammad, and Prince Abdullah – whether because he wished to impress his new British allies with his embrace of Christian minorities, or because of his adherence to a more traditional Islam committed to pluralism – extended Arab Muslim hospitality to Arab Christians.

In more recent times, Arab hospitality continues to create specific expectations about religious holy sites for Jordanians on the ground. Kimberly Katz notes that Christian freedom of worship and access to holy sites has been a particular focus in Jordan, where the government in particular has seen an opportunity to revitalize an ancient tradition of royal patronage over Christians in the Holy Land.¹²⁴ One relatively new example of this is the newly excavated Jordan River Baptismal Site, which a government department officially promoted as 'a major Pilgrimage Station, serving pilgrims from all over the world, all denominations and all faiths'.¹²⁵ The complex is large and ever-growing in terms of both archaeological development and the building

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 85.

¹²³ Russell E. Lucas, *Institutions and the Politics of Survival in Jordan: Dominant Responses to External Challenge, 1988-2001* (Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 2005), 21.

¹²⁴ Kimberly Katz, *Jordanian Jerusalem: Holy Places and National Spaces* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

¹²⁵ 'Our Purpose', Baptism Site Commission, accessed May 2017, <http://www.baptismsite.com/our-purpose>.

of churches and shrines from various Christian traditions, to which local Christians make regular pilgrimages. This site – and especially the fact that Christians are allowed and encouraged to build new churches – signifies an irenic Christian-Muslim dynamic relative to others in the region.¹²⁶

Arab hospitality has also translated into voting practices and Jordan's government apparatus. In 1986, Linda Layne studied Bedouin voting habits in rural Jordan, and she found Christian and Muslim Jordanians voting in blocs according to old tribal loyalties, rather than dividing along sectarian lines. At the same time, and similar to the tribal customs of former days, Bedouin Jordanians regularly formed temporary political alliances based on expediency, rather than religious differences.¹²⁷ Remarkably, even the Muslim Brotherhood has periodically run Christian candidates during its many decades in Jordanian politics. This practice, coming from a broadly popular but Islamically oriented political party, suggests that Jordanians remain willing to cross religious lines for the sake of material gain, much as they did in the days of pre-modern tribal politics.¹²⁸

Christian political participation has been strong throughout Jordan's history, even compared to Arab states where Christians are proportionally more numerous. In comparing Christian political participation in Jordan to several of its neighbours in the Middle East, Fiona McCallum found that Christians are constitutionally guaranteed a disproportionately large representation in parliament. Similarly, Christians customarily receive a relatively large number of seats in the national cabinet and among Jordanian diplomats. On the one hand, McCallum notes, such constitutional guarantees and appointments suggest that the government does not believe that Christians would otherwise be elected by the Muslim majority, which is not a sanguine assessment of the population. On the other hand, these actions provide evidence of the government's proactive willingness to ensure Christian participation in the government.¹²⁹ This

¹²⁶ Church building is a significant bellwether for Christian-Muslim relations in the region, and Jordan is comparatively unique for making this possible. In Saudi Arabia, for example, no churches are built, and Christian worship is not legally permitted anywhere in the country. While Egypt is also home to a large and ancient Christian community, the building and even repair of churches has become a flashpoint for Christian-Muslim tension in recent decades. Mariz Tadros, 'Vicissitudes in the Entente Between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the State in Egypt (1952–2007)', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no.2 (2009): 269–287.

¹²⁷ Linda Layne, *The Production and Reproduction of Tribal Identity in Jordan* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1986), 148.

¹²⁸ Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 83.

¹²⁹ Fiona McCallum, 'Christian Political Participation in the Arab World', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 23:1 (2012), 13.

protective attitude by the Hashemite government might be seen as a modern version of their leadership in providing hospitality to Armenian Christians a century earlier.

Limits to Christian participation

Even Arab hospitality has its limits, however. Traditionally, Bedouin hospitality offered guests food and shelter for three days, but after that, guests would declare their intentions or be expected to depart. Equally importantly, guests owed their hosts respect and protection, even after they had continued to journey onward. Andrew Shryock insists that while the area's heritage of hospitality is religiously neutral – the rightful inheritance of Christians and Muslims alike – its darker side is no less important, although more frequently ignored in modern Jordan:

Yet in my own ethnographic experience, these two languages are used simultaneously and fluently among Balga Bedouin, who speak with unflinching pride of ancestors who robbed peasants, stole from and beheaded Ottoman tax collectors, and plundered the camps and herds of neighbouring tribes, insisting all the while that they were, and are, gracious hosts who honour their guests, protect wayfarers and refugees, and pile meat high on their platters. Generally, they see no real inconsistency in these soft and hard versions of their identity.¹³⁰

Under the auspices of Arab hospitality, Christians face limits to their religious practice and civic participation. The patronage of Hashemite Muslims might have benefitted the Armenian survivors of massacre, for example, but such a system of patronage is not always favourable to Christian involvement in politics. Katz writes that during Jordanian rule over Jerusalem, intra-Christian affairs suffered from 'the practice of Hashemite involvement in religious affairs to secure legitimacy'.¹³¹ Moreover, Arab hospitality can itself become an obstacle to making positive changes when problems arise. Because Arab hospitality is embedded within norms of honour and respect, 'guests' can feel tremendous pressure to avoid complaining about their treatment, especially to outsiders. One example is the issue of Muslims attempting conversion to Christianity, a socially and legally forbidden practice in the region, and inequitable enforcement of inheritance laws in interfaith marriages. Mohanna Haddad reports that in cases where a Christian woman married a Muslim man, 'As a numerical minority group, Christians, in such cases, prefer to repress their emotions and anger and contain the problem', knowing that

¹³⁰ Andrew Shryock, 'Keeping to Oneself: Hospitality and the Magical Hoard in the Balga of Jordan', *History and anthropology* 30, no.5 (2019): 554.

¹³¹ Katz, *Jordanian Jerusalem*, 96.

any actions undertaken towards their daughter – a newly converted ‘Muslim woman’ – could be ‘considered as an assault against Islam and Muslims and may result in community conflict’.¹³² When asked about this contentious issue, a former lawmaker responded, ‘I am confident that Christians in Jordan are so wise and so keen on neutralizing such issues to prevent their adverse effects on the peaceful relations with Muslims’.¹³³ Since Jordan has defined itself so proudly as a place where Christian-Muslim relations are strong, any Christian comments to the contrary could threaten the opportunities offered by Arab hospitality.

In short, Arab hospitality is an ancient practice of the region that delineates the behaviour between hosts and guests. On the one hand, because this practice explicitly refers to relations with outsiders, it created opportunities for Christian-Muslim coexistence among pre-Jordanian Bedouins, and modern Jordanian politics continues to reflect these warm relations to this day. On the other hand, Arab hospitality can also confine Christians into the subsidiary role of quiet ‘guests’ within Jordanian society.

2. Local cosmopolitanism

The second layer to emerge historically within Christian-Muslim relations is local cosmopolitanism. Local cosmopolitanism is a concept developed by Dawn Chatty, a scholar of migration and refugee Studies, who observed in her research a pragmatic strategy for dealing with frequent Levantine migrations before and since the establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Chatty writes that the Ottoman Empire left ‘one valuable heritage’ to the Levant: ‘the integration of ethnic or national communities as important groups in the running of the Empire. . . and the willingness to allow such communities, though often widely dispersed, to be non-assimilated and culturally self-governed’.¹³⁴ The pluralistic approach of empire enabled governments and societies in the Arab world to accept new communities without stripping away their unique cultural characteristics. Despite public calls for cultural unity, Chatty writes that Jordanians at the local and government level have ‘tolerated, if not actively endorsed, the rise and establishment of these minority cultures’.¹³⁵ While it is difficult to differentiate local cosmopolitanism from Arab hospitality in practice, I argue that it is a socio-legal practice that offers unique contributions to the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in modern Jordan. It

¹³² Mohanna Haddad, ‘Christian Identity in the Jordanian Arab Culture: A Case Study of Two Communities in Northern Jordan’ *Journal of Minority Affairs* 20, no. 1 (2000): 144.

¹³³ Samain, *Fortress of Peace*, 134.

¹³⁴ Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 37.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 293-294.

refers particularly to the way that incoming migrants to Jordan are treated by the host community, making it useful to the discussion of modern Syrian and Iraqi refugees later in this study. This section will explain the origins of local cosmopolitanism as a concept by briefly presenting an overview of three cases from Chatty's work. I describe these cases to identify four features of local cosmopolitanism to show how this tradition contributes to the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations today. Finally, I identify two ways in which local cosmopolitanism can limit the activities of migrant communities in Jordan.

Chatty derived the concept of 'local cosmopolitanism' from fieldwork across the Levant, noting, 'The Middle East strikes me as unique in that it seems to provide a framework whereby different peoples can successfully find a place for themselves without either being assimilated or excluded. It is an approach to 'multi-culturalism'.¹³⁶ Chatty examined the historical and current displacements and resettlements of the Circassians, Armenians, Kurds, and Palestinians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By interviewing some of the oldest members of these communities still living, she worked backward to construct a living history of both displacement and resettlement in the region. At the same time, interviews with younger Kurds, Palestinians, and so on, illustrated that these communities had successfully re-established themselves in Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, without forgetting their earlier homes and customs. What follows is a summary of Chatty's case studies, accompanied by my own analysis of the features that emerge from each study.

Circassian migration

In the late nineteenth century, the Muslim inhabitants of the Caucasus were displaced as the collateral damage of conflict between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. As a result, the Ottoman administration arranged to send many of the displaced refugees to the Levant. The Ottoman Empire was keen to make (taxable) use of farm and grazing land in what is now Syria, Israel-Palestine, and Jordan, and the uprooted Circassians were given free land and resources to form new lives and communities there. The Circassian and Chechen peoples became known as *muhajirs* – or migrants – in their new homes in the Levant, where they developed a reputation for inter-group loyalty and effectiveness in battle. Ottoman officials often settled them strategically to create buffer zones between warring locals around the Jordan River. Moreover, the Ottoman Refugee Commission – established for the purpose of helping these refugees resettle – tried to place newcomers in rural lands similar to their previous homes and offered tax-free periods of a

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

decade or more and the provision of seeds and other materials. Through these measures, Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky suggests, the Circassians became the first settlers of Jordan's modern capital, Amman:

Amman expanded from a town of 3,000 to 5,000 residents on the eve of World War I to an urban sprawl of over 4 million people by 2015. Over the past century, Amman grew thanks to an influx of new, larger waves of refugees and immigrants: Armenians after 1915, Palestinians in 1948 and 1967, Iraqis since 2003, and Syrians since 2011.¹³⁷

Hamed-Troyansky suggests that Ottoman policies were instrumental to this successful resettlement, as they guaranteed them rights to new land, legal help through local *sharia* courts, and even a state-funded *Hijaz* railway that made agriculture financially viable in remote Amman.¹³⁸

As essential as this government support was to the Circassians' initial establishment in the Levant, it did not create dependency. While the Ottoman Empire dissolved shortly after the dawn of the twentieth century, these refugees – now usually known as Circassians – remained, despite the ambivalence and occasional hostility of neighbouring Bedouin tribes. Furthermore, these groups had become sufficiently attached to the area to play a significant role in the political changes that would follow the Ottoman collapse. At that point, Sulayman Musa would report, 'Sa'id al-Mufti, a leader of the Circassian community, recorded, "After the French occupation of Syria, Transjordan lived in chaos. It was not long before we sent to King Husayn bin Ali a telegram demanding in it that he send one of his sons to the country to deliver it from the chaos".¹³⁹ In this anecdote, the Circassians whom the Ottomans had strategically re-settled as the region's warrior peacekeepers offered new loyalty and military skills to a different leader, the Hashemite family from Arabia. In accepting their offer, the newly arrived Emir Abdullah received the support of a militarily strong, non-Arab group with migration in its recent past. Indeed, the Circassian communities who farmed and fought for their place along the Jordan River ultimately became some of the first and steadiest allies of the Hashemite monarchy of Jordan.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky, 'Circassian Refugees and the Making of Amman, 1878-1914', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no.4 (2017): 616.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 616.

¹³⁹ Sulayman Musa, *Awraq min Daftar al-Ayyam Dhikrayat al-Ra'il al-Awal [Papers from a Daily Journal]* (Amman: al-Mamlakah al-Urduniyah al-Hashimiyah, with support from Amanat Amman al-Kubra, 2000), 77.

¹⁴⁰ As a non-Arab, ethnic minority, the Circassians receive a generous guarantee of representation in Parliament, which shows that the Hashemites wish to guarantee their political influence even if their Arab

Armenian migration

In the years surrounding the first world war, the Christians who had once played significant roles in Ottoman communities and governments suffered what became known as the Armenian genocide.¹⁴¹ Thousands of Armenians were massacred in their homes or driven into snow-packed mountains and dry deserts in deadly forced marches. Upon arrival in what is now Syria, Lebanon, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, and even Egypt, the Armenians faced a different situation from that of the Circassians. Armenian survivors were overwhelmingly children, and thus they faced a near-certain demise without help. These were saved by the relentless assistance of both existing Armenian churches throughout the region and by the massive efforts, both financial and personal, of American Protestant missions and the United States-based Near Eastern Relief Agency. Likewise, many of the Arab cities and Bedouin tribes offered welcome or help to the Armenians, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Arab neighbours extended hospitality by permitting and sometimes encouraging the refugees in their resettlement around the churches of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. Armenian children enrolled in Jordan's Christian schools, and parents made a point of insisting that their children learn Arabic. Churches and other institutions were established for the education, welfare, and nurture of ongoing generations.

Palestinian migration

The year 1948 was significant not only because Hashemite Jordan officially achieved independence from British Mandate status, but also because the new nation-state's landmass and population more than doubled.¹⁴² Events west of the nation's new borders rendered thousands of Palestinians homeless. Palestinian refugees fled the establishment of the Israeli nation for the neighbouring Arab states, where their welcome was mixed. To this day, Jordan remains the only Arab state to grant citizenship to Palestinians, who have at times been embraced, exploited, or ignored throughout the region, depending on the prevailing politics.

neighbours might (or might now) desire otherwise. In the Jordanian Folklore Museum and the Jordanian Museum of Popular Traditions at the Roman Citadel in Amman, for example, the native ceremonial dress of the Circassian tribes is represented alongside that of Palestinians and Bedouins. This display argues visually that all these peoples are part of Jordan by virtue of their historical heritage and longevity.

¹⁴¹ Scholarship that provides an overview of the ongoing controversy surrounding use of the term 'Armenian Genocide' includes the following:

Charles E. Farhadian, 'Armenian Christians' in *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East*, ed. Mitri Raheb & Mark A. Lamport (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland, 2021), 276-286.

Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 243-300.

¹⁴² Some reports suggest the population of the West Bank – now Jordanian territory – doubled, while Amman's population grew from 50,000 to 120,000 between 1948 and 1950. See Beverley Milton-Edwards and Peter Hinchcliffe, *Jordan: A Hashemite Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 35.

Even Jordan's relatively warm welcome came with conditions and costs. Many Palestinians not only lacked ties to the Hashemites and their allies, but they also saw a Jordanian nationalism that ruled Jerusalem as a threat to their own aspirations for a Palestinian state. Even those who were somewhat more resigned to their displacement still struggled with attendant conditions of poverty and homelessness, and their economic expectations and needs were likely met only partially through the help of international humanitarianism and charitable associations, generous neighbours, and the still-new Hashemite state infrastructure. Their own concerns joined with those of slightly older Jordanian stock to yield political discontent. They asked whether the precarious new state of Hashemite Jordan¹⁴³ was truly serving the needs of the Jordanian people, much less the cause of Pan-Arab nationalism that was growing in popularity at the time¹⁴⁴. In 1957, what had been a popularly elected opposition government was ultimately repressed by the Arab Legion and other Hashemite state action. Betty Anderson writes, however, that the Hashemite government remained while similar regimes throughout the region tumbled precisely because they provided enough services and a convincing national narrative to satisfy the people.¹⁴⁵ The Palestinians remained part of Jordan, but Jordan remained a Hashemite kingdom.

The difficulties faced by Palestinians in Jordan may seem an exception to Chatty's theory of local cosmopolitanism.¹⁴⁶ Luisa Gandolfo writes, 'While Christians in general encounter minimal discrimination in Jordan, it is as Palestinians that individuals confront obstacles. Thus, in instances of inequity, it is less faith-based or more often motivated by nationalist identities'.¹⁴⁷ While religion is seen by many as the ultimate source of conflict in the Middle East, for some Christians living in Jordan, it is the intertwined but sometimes fraught history of Palestine and Jordan that limits their opportunities. I have included Chatty's analysis of Palestinian, Armenian, and Circassian resettlement processes, however, to demonstrate both the promise and limits to local cosmopolitanism, which I next analyse in detail.

Local cosmopolitanism: features and effects

¹⁴³ Then-King Abdullah was assassinated by a Palestinian nationalist in Jerusalem in 1951. He was followed by his son, Talal, who for health reasons quickly abdicated in favour of his own young son, Hussein, in 1952.

¹⁴⁴ Pan-Arabism receives a more detailed examination later in this chapter.

¹⁴⁵ Betty S. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2005), 194.

¹⁴⁶ Scholarship on the relationship between Palestinians and Jordanians is extensive, but Joseph Massad presents some of the ongoing concerns about the role of Palestinians in broader Jordanian society across several decades. See: Joseph A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁷ Luisa Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan: The Politics of Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 214-217.

Understanding local cosmopolitanism in terms of its key features makes its contribution to Christian-Muslim relations clearer. The first of these is a minimum of support to the migrants from the government. The Circassian case demonstrates this particularly well. The establishment of an Ottoman Refugee Commission to facilitate the Circassian migration, the provision of relevant resources of land and supplies, and an extended tax-exempt period, all enabled the Circassians to create durable communities throughout the Middle East. In terms of their long-term settlement, the ability to appeal to the Ottomans for arbitration and defence of land rights through the *Sharia* courts, as well as tangible, state-funded resources such as the *Hijaz* railway, enabled the Circassians to establish and sustain their communities in new lands, as well as develop the institutions that support Circassian cultural differentiation.

Second, the Ottoman Empire established a legal code of partial separation and local autonomy for the various religious and ethnic communities within it. Called the ‘millet system’ and based loosely on the Islamic concept of the *dhimmi* peoples under Islamic rule – Christians and Jews – this system offered individual communities the chance to manage their own affairs with minimal interference, provided their religious leader answered to imperial demands for taxes and official obedience. At the same time, the millet system gave non-Muslims a second-class political status, meaning that Christians and Jews were subject to various forms of discrimination and oppression of their professional ambitions, religious observance, and communal survival at various times. This judicial separation still exists today in Jordan, where many matters, particularly those related to marriage and children, are settled in either Christian or Islamic courts. This aspect of the Christian-Muslim relations continues to find institutional expression within the traditions of local cosmopolitanism, what Paulo Maggiolini and Iyad Twal describe as ‘a sort of neo-millet approach’ that ‘secured the church’s support for the [Hashemite] regime and made it possible to integrate community activities within the Hashemite political field’.¹⁴⁸ The arrangement has reinforced Hashemite legitimacy within local Islamic tradition: as descendants of the prophet Muhammad, these rulers continued the treaties and unwritten expectations that protect loyal, non-Muslim minorities. At the same time, the Hashemites received another ally against secular opposition to their rule, a cause in which individual Christians have frequently involved themselves in the past.¹⁴⁹

The third feature of local cosmopolitanism concerns the internal provision of services from churches and other charitable associations. The Armenian migration offers the strongest

¹⁴⁸ Maggiolini and Twal, ‘Jordan’, 157.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

example of this feature. The most important factor in the Armenians' ultimate resettlement was the support that survivors received. Chatty notes that 'particularly well-established' Armenian communities in Egypt, for example, rose to the occasion of their compatriots' distress, opening their institutions and amplifying the support offered by foreigners with local ties.¹⁵⁰ Such institutions provided assistance to those in need, largely through the Armenian Apostolic Church, which became 'the focus of communal life both for incoming refugees as well as the established residents'.¹⁵¹ In Syria and Lebanon, even for survivors who had no family to welcome them, the assistance of churches, church schools, and social clubs funded by local efforts and contributions from abroad provided for 'an internal system of housing provision, food distribution, welfare, and education and job creation' in which 'just being Armenian was enough to get a start'.¹⁵²

The fourth feature of local cosmopolitanism is an expectation on all sides that the incoming migrants can make meaningful contributions to the new society. The Circassians, for example, became a de facto peacekeeping force for the Ottoman administration in a difficult area. They settled what became Jordan's capital city and built a viable agriculture sector. The Palestinian and Armenian Christians also contributed to the economic vitality of the growing nation of Jordan, partly because their education and foreign connections – a product of the charitable associations mentioned earlier – made them successful in private industry and trade. This notion of reciprocal benefits for the migrants and host society likely helps to smooth over tensions in the resettlement process. In summary, the key features of local cosmopolitanism are government toleration, laws and rulings that preserve a level of autonomy within the resettled communities, assistance from in-group associations, and the expectation that migrants can contribute to their new society.

Limiting effects of local cosmopolitanism

As remarkable as many of the effects of local cosmopolitanism within Jordanian and broader Middle Eastern history are, this practice also imposes limits on the activities of migrant and minority communities. The most obvious is a demand for submissive obedience, which, if unmet, can be grounds for the removal of the all-important government support mentioned earlier. Again, the Circassians were a particularly positive example. Chatty describes a certain pragmatism in Circassian politics after World War I: 'Once the war had been lost, most

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 175.

Circassian soldiers put their Ottoman uniforms aside and threw their weight behind the new Arab central governments'.¹⁵³ Their loyalty to the Ottomans made them useful peacekeepers among the less-placid Bedouin tribes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. After the Ottoman Empire fell, they offered their obedience to the Hashemite monarchy, which rewarded them with ongoing political representation of their community and their interests.

By contrast, the Palestinians who fled their homes for Jordan established their own services and community within the refugee camps of Jordan and also sought to rally Jordanian support for the Palestinian cause. This activity – led by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) – was crushed by the Jordanian government in a conflict that, between 1970 and 1971, nearly devolved into civil war. These events – known as Black September – culminated in the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan, and Palestinians within Jordan still experience long-term, de facto disadvantages to their employment opportunities and political participation. Palestinian refugees who arrived after 1967, for example, have generally not received Jordanian citizenship. The Palestinian case offers a counterexample to local cosmopolitanism, or rather, it illustrates the extent to which migrant communities must offer loyal obedience in exchange for peaceful resettlement.

As I hinted earlier, minority communities are also expected to subjugate the interests of their community to those of the majority within an understanding of local cosmopolitanism. The Armenian experience illustrates this weakness of local cosmopolitanism in practice. Many Armenian Christians who settled in Jordan and Jordanian-administered Jerusalem sought to maintain their ties with the Armenian Christians who had been scattered around the world, ties that sometimes included political interests in left-wing causes.¹⁵⁴ During the 1950s, while the Hashemite monarchy was struggling to assert its rule against left-wing threats, the Armenian community became embroiled in a particularly contentious election of a new Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. Most Armenian laity, as well as their American and British allies abroad, supported the election of a particular candidate who had strong ties with the global Armenian community. His opponent, by contrast, had connections within the Jordanian bureaucracy, even though he stood accused of embezzling church funds and bribing local officials. The Armenian community was devastated when the more popular candidate was arrested and forcibly deported, and the morally unscrupulous candidate was installed at the insistence of the Jordanian government. In reviewing the episode, Sanjian suggests that Jordanian officials feared the opponent, a United

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵⁴ Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 24.

States citizen, might upset the status quo by introducing reforms to the long-fossilized Jerusalem community in keeping with the rest of the Armenian Orthodox Church, 'lest it arouse similar demands and agitation among the other Christian communities'.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, '[The Jordanian candidate] had thus used his advantages as a Jordanian citizen well acquainted with the Jordanian political and administrative system and of having influential friends very close to [the king]'.¹⁵⁶ This incident illuminates the disadvantages of the 'neo-millet' system in Jordan; even the non-Muslim millet groups of the Ottoman era never ranked first among the interests of the empire.¹⁵⁷

The reality, however, is that local cosmopolitanism represents a particular way for Jordanians from different backgrounds to recognize diverse backgrounds while living together without conflict. While this list of features and examples can be a useful way to understand the movement toward local cosmopolitanism, it is ultimately no more than that. I have systemized, so to speak, this layer of the Christian-Muslim dynamic to demonstrate its contributions more clearly.

3. Pan-Arabism

Thus far in this chapter, I have argued that Arab hospitality and local cosmopolitanism remain essential to the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan. None of this is to suggest, however, that older layers are exclusive explanations of Jordan's interfaith dynamic. In this section, I introduce the development of a new, secular political phenomenon that, designed by intellectually and politically active Christians and Muslims, was intended to supplement or even replace these traditions across the Middle East. The third layer to join the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations was an idea that, in contrast to the previous two, was intentionally designed to unify both groups to achieve social and political goals. I call this concept, 'Pan-Arabism', but I employ it in this study as an umbrella term for the relevant aspects of both the cultural and linguistic movement associated with the *Nabda*, or Arab Renaissance, as well as later, *Nabda*-inspired movements toward Arab nationalism in the mid-twentieth century. In that sense, this study understands the relevant aim of Pan-Arabism as calling for national formation and citizenship based on the idea of a historical and linguistic Arab civilization. Particularly

¹⁵⁵ Ara Sanjian, 'The Armenian Church and Community of Jerusalem', in ed. Anthony O'Mahony *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land: Studies in History, Religion, and Politics* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 83.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Heather Sharkey offers a vivid historical account of such policies in practice, using the minutiae of the Ottoman era to consider the lived practices of interreligious life under the millet system. See: Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*.

championed by Arabic-speaking Christians, the ideal inspired the establishment of religiously inclusive national and transnational institutions in Jordan and around the region, finding peak success during the renewal movements associated with the *Nabda*. The lacklustre success of many policies made in the name of Arab nationalism, however, ultimately made Pan-Arabism a poor contender against political alternatives founded in the region's Islamic identity, which has appealed to Muslims in Jordan and regionwide with increasing success since 1967. This section introduces the origins and goals of Pan-Arabism as a political ideology, with a particular emphasis on its appeal for Arab Christians across the Middle East. In theory, Pan-Arab projects would not limit Christian participation in any way, but I will conclude instead by noting its gradual decline in recent decades.

Pan-Arabism originated in the nineteenth century as an ideological commitment to the Arabic language and its native speakers. Observing the growing influence of the ethnic nation-state system in Europe, many highly educated Arabic-speakers – then subjects of the Ottoman Empire – began to advocate for increased attention and respect to their heritage and history, and ultimately, for local government by fellow Arabs. Pan-Arabism particularly attracted Arab Christians in what is now Lebanon and Syria, many of whom participated in the ideological and policy-making aspects of its development. Like their Muslim neighbours, they advocated for local autonomy and regional unity, hoping for a return of their region's former prestige over and against centuries of Ottoman imperial rule and European dominance. Many Arab Christians also had a more specific aim, however. They hoped that the formation of government based on the Arab, rather than Islamic, identity might offer them a chance to shape the region's future with equal participation alongside Arab Muslims. This promise was expressed by the Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh of Jordan, who suggested that Christians could reinvigorate Arab society:

In order to forge a progressive and homogenous nation religion must be taken out of politics . . . It is not merely a question of tolerating non-Muslims. . . The principle of tolerance has always been recognized, and there is no reason to assume or to fear that it will not be even more meticulously observed in the future. What is involved is whether or not the non-Muslims are to participate as full citizens and without any disabilities on account of their creeds, in the conduct of national life.¹⁵⁸

In other words, Pan-Arabism has been especially appealing to Arab Christians who seek equal participation in Muslim-majority societies. Pan-Arabism not only strengthened their status

¹⁵⁸ Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, *The Ideas of Arab Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 91.

relative to Middle Eastern Muslims, but it also changed the way that they related to non-Arab Christians, an issue that receives detailed analysis in Chapters Three and Four of this study. For the first time in centuries, and unlike local cosmopolitanism, Pan-Arabism offered Middle Eastern Christians a new way of presenting themselves to the Western churches that sought to influence them and their ancient traditions. After centuries of watching their churches dwindle in size and stature while Western churches spread across Europe and the world, Arab Christians saw in Pan-Arabism a means to again proclaim their value within Christianity. The frustration felt by many – and potentially resolved by the renewal of the Middle East under Pan-Arabism – was expressed by As'ad Khayyat, an Orthodox Christian educated in nineteenth-century Western mission schools:

God has not left himself without witnesses in Asia among the descendants of the primitive ChristiansThe existence of these Oriental Christians is a stupendous wonder, exposed as they have been for thousands of years to every kind of death arising from political storms, tyranny, persecution, and ignoranceCertainly, Eastern Christians will listen to no one who tells them they must all perish with their fathers before them, unless they adopt some new system from the West.¹⁵⁹

The work of Michel 'Aflaq, an Orthodox Christian from Syria, encapsulates the effects of Arab nationalism on Christian participation. He helped to found – and then lead – the Ba'th Party, which gained power in Syria and later Iraq by transforming Pan-Arabism into a more concrete movement for Pan-Arab nationalism and state-administered social welfare.¹⁶⁰ By subjugating their religion to the power of a Pan-Arab state, 'Aflaq wrote, Arab Christians across the region would gain the opportunity to engage as equals in a new state cohabited by Muslims. The promise of this idea persuaded many Christians and Muslims alike to join together against the Ottoman and colonial powers to establish new political, educational, and military institutions across the region. It had a profound effect on the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle East, and especially in the still-newly established state of Jordan.

Implications for Christian-Muslim relations

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan arose from many of the same forces that brought Pan-Arabism into politics. The Hashemite family, which had long governed the Arab tribes and

¹⁵⁹ Robert M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An Interpretation* Princeton Studies on the Near East. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 80-81.

¹⁶⁰ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 309.

Islamic holy sites of what is now Saudi Arabia, helped to lead the early-twentieth-century Great Arab Revolt against Ottoman rule in the Levant. From there, on-the-ground diplomacy and cautious support from colonial Britain secured the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan independence in 1946. Jordan's first king Abdullah I (1946-1951) had hoped to create a Pan-Arab state that would govern the entire Levant, however, and his successors enshrined features of Pan-Arabism within the narrative of modern Jordan. In 1961, then-King Hussein (1952-1999) reflected on his country's struggle with the Arab Israeli conflict, regional instability, and Jordan's chronic lack of economic functionality, suggesting that Jordan owed its continuing survival to the 'clarity' of his grandfather's original vision of Pan-Arab rule:

Jordan wishes to play only one role, that of a model state . . . We propose to devote . . . our full time and energy to the creation of a way of life that we hope in time all Arabs will achieve.¹⁶¹

These Pan-Arab ideals and the Arab Renaissance that established the movement were not wholly new, of course. They built upon, and drew from, the customs and ideals found within Arab hospitality and local cosmopolitanism. What made Pan-Arabism significant was its articulation of a political project for a changing Middle East, including the newly established state of Jordan. Prince Hassan Bin Talal, one of the architects of Pan-Arabism under Hussein, stated that Jordanian pluralism has its roots in a particular Hashemite approach that originated in the dawn of Islam, but was renewed with Pan-Arabism: 'Jordanian Christians (and Jordanian Muslims for that matter) are part of a society with a long tradition of mutual respect. ...This respect has been renewed and extended thanks to *An-Nabda* . . . which is the basis of Hashemite political thinking'.¹⁶² Talal noted that Arab Christians distinguished themselves throughout the region's history, including the fourteen centuries under Islamic rule. Christians served in administrative and diplomatic positions, he noted, 'virtually creating the modern Arab press'.¹⁶³ Talal insisted that Arab Christians cannot be strangers in an Arab Muslim society, but rather they require the type of robust participation that Pan-Arab thinkers envisioned. Underlying these comments is the assumption that Pan-Arabism obligates Jordanians to celebrate the historical accomplishments of Arab Christians, even when these achievements occurred alongside Arab Muslims or under Islamic rule. This is because the ideal is based on the inherent superiority of a centuries-old Arab civilization that belongs, at least in part, to all Arabic speakers. In this

¹⁶¹ quoted in Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 205.

¹⁶² Bin Talal, 'Jordanian Christians Are Fully Integrated', 83.

¹⁶³ El-Hassan Bin Talal, *Christianity in the Arab world*. (Amman: Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, 1995), 96.

understanding, not only is Christian history identified and documented, but also the ongoing contributions of Christians deserve support and recognition, whether cultural, political, or even religious.

Various Jordanian institutions testify to this movement, including the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, and, more recently, a conference initiated in Amman on the Christian response to the Arab Spring in 2013. Just as importantly, Jordan has officially and unofficially sponsored various initiatives toward interfaith dialogue.¹⁶⁴ Each of the initiatives that follow can be understood as tangible expressions of the desire for Christians to participate robustly in an Arab, Muslim-majority society. Key documents include the *A Common Word* document, published in 2007, when Muslim scholars led by Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad of Jordan called for dialogue based on the shared commandment for Christians and Muslims to love God and neighbour. The tagline for World Interfaith Harmony Week mirrored that of *A Common Word* in its call for 'love of God and love of the neighbour'.¹⁶⁵

The document most often discussed in Jordan, however, is the *Amman Message*, published in 2004. Jordanians frequently cite the Amman Message as part of the original scholarly foundation for ongoing interfaith initiatives, events and institutions still supported by Jordan's royal family. Some notable examples of these include Jordan's ongoing management of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought; the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Centre; the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ; the Amman-based the 500 Most Influential Muslims; Jordan's Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, which oversees Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem; and World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Ongoing breakdown in regional Pan-Arabism

Earlier in this chapter, I wrote that Arab hospitality and local cosmopolitanism constitute significant movements toward Christian-Muslim coexistence within Jordan, and to some extent across the region. I also noted, however, that each of these movements also imposed specific and sometimes significant limits to Christian participation in Muslim-majority societies. In this section, I have demonstrated that Pan-Arabism offered tremendous promise for almost

¹⁶⁴ These include the *Amman Message*, the Jordan River Baptismal Site, publication of the *A Common Word* invitation to dialogue, the *Open Letter to Al-Baghdadi*, and World Interfaith Harmony Week at the United Nations.

¹⁶⁵ Ghazi Bin Muhammad, 'H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad delivers H.M. King Abdullah II's World Interfaith Harmony Week proposal at UN', *World Interfaith Harmony Week*, 23 September 2010 <http://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/newspost/h-r-h-prince-ghazi-bin-muhammad-delivers-kings-world-interfaith-harmony-week-proposal-at-un>.

unlimited Christian participation in Muslim-majority contexts within the Middle East. Many Christian leaders hoped Pan-Arabism might eventually overcome the limits to their social, cultural, and political participation imposed by Arab hospitality and local cosmopolitanism. It is worth noting that Pan-Arabism also presented certain distinct limits, mainly to the participation of non-Arabs, including Armenians, in society and politics. In this section, however, I will depart from the pattern set in the previous two sections and refrain from discussing these limits in detail. Although they have significance, at this point in history, they have become increasingly irrelevant because Pan-Arabism has been gradually losing influence within the modern discourse of the region. The remainder of this chapter is instead devoted to describing the effects of this change on Christian-Muslim relations.

In the decades following the establishment of the Levantine nations independent of colonial power, Pan-Arabism increasingly became embodied in the political movements of Arab nationalism. Championed by President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Arab nationalism helped to usher in a series of nationalist reforms across Egypt and Syria in particular, and it caused tremendous excitement for the cause of Palestinians against the state of Israel, and for all Arabs against their fears of Western imposition. Politically, Pan-Arabism prompted the attempted establishment of the United Arab Republic in Egypt and Syria (1958-1961), the Arab Federation in Jordan and Iraq (1958), the Federation of Arab Republics (1972-1977) that included Libya, and the Arab League (1945-Present). The pro-Arab fervour found concrete manifestation in nationalist healthcare and education policies, and particularly in national militaries. The excitement culminated in a military alliance among Israel's Arab neighbours, who engaged Israel militarily in 1967, a conflict that Israelis would call 'the six-day war' and the Arabs would call 'the *Naksa*' or tragedy.

While the war in 1967 ended in a crushing military defeat for all the Arab nations involved, it was particularly disastrous for Jordan. Jordan lost all the land west of the Jordan River – including access to Jerusalem – and gained hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who would soon agitate for internal self-government so forcefully that Jordan was nearly pushed into civil war. While the military defeat brought a significant loss of territory, including in Syria and Egypt, the greater damage was to regional morale. Arab nationalism – a specific articulation of Pan-Arabism – had promised the Arabs a return to the power they once wielded across the region, but instead, their combined military might was crushed by a single nation in less than a week.

Echoing most scholars, Shadi Hamid marks 1967 as the de facto end of Arab nationalism. He views 1967 as ‘a year that ushered in a slow but decisive transformation’. What were the results of this transformation? Hamid asserts:

Such a stark defeat brought about a collective round of soul-searching. In the mass disillusion that followed, Arabs across the region concluded that the socialist experiment had failed . . . An emerging narrative – which would become the Islamist narrative – was that the Arab world had strayed from the teachings of Islam and that it needed to return.¹⁶⁶

In response to this search for a solution, new movements rising to power across the region identified themselves with Islam, rather than Pan-Arabism.

Moreover, Hamid writes that governments responded to the loss of Pan-Arabism with a growing authoritarianism. The new emphasis on Islamic rule and state power reduced participation not only for Christians, but of citizens generally. Jordan was not exempt. While in 1992, Jordan registered the Arab world’s best-ever rating in the Freedom House Index, intense crackdowns by the monarchy in 1993, and again in 2007, reduced these gains in democratic participation.¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood, having achieved influence in the Ministry of Education, sought to undermine Christian schools, require Islamic education for children, or force Christians to take exams during their religious holidays. The group continued to make gains across the region, including in Jordan.¹⁶⁸ In the 1980s, a spokesman for the group declared their aim for the Hashemite kingdom: ‘Our basic aim is to make the second article of the constitution, which says Islam is the state religion, true in fact as well as on paper’.¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, the Jordanian government has forbidden all other political parties to operate officially in the country, meaning Christians and Muslims alike have few options beside the Brotherhood if they wish to participate in politics. To summarize, while Pan-Arabism could potentially invigorate the public participation of all Arabs – whether Christian or Muslim – its decline across the region leaves few alternatives to authoritarian nationalism outside of the rising Islamist parties.

¹⁶⁶ Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 63.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁶⁸ As a result, policies that indirectly or explicitly limited Christian participation appeared across the region, including in Jordan. In 1979, for example, the Jordanian parliament prohibited most liquor sales and created an exemption from twenty-five percent of income tax for Muslims who paid an Islamic tithing, or *zakat*. (*Ibid.*, 64).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

Conclusion

Because Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arab ideals continue to operate within Jordan, Christian contributions are recognized as valuable within the past, present, and future trajectory of Jordan, and their place within Jordan is understood and defended by the government and Muslim society alike. In the daily life and local politics of Jordan, these three traditions remain closely interrelated. Even the scholarly literature within which I locate these three elements, the history and understanding of all three traditions overlap heavily. For the purpose of clarity, in this chapter I have demonstrated the significance of each element historically using secondary literature, then commented on the relevance of each to Christian-Muslim relations in the modern state of Jordan. Taken together, Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arab sentiment become the building blocks for the productive interfaith relationship described in this chapter, empowering Christians in Jordan to actively participate in an Arab, Muslim-majority society.

As I have hinted throughout this chapter, these three traditions underpin not only the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations, but also the status of refugees and migration more broadly. Resting on the notion of an ancient Arab identity, Pan-Arabism is also, somewhat obviously, connected closely with the traditions of Arab hospitality. Isotalo writes that this connection gave the entire, Pan-Arab Middle East a ‘spiritual geography’ that informs the way that host communities tolerate and even embrace refugees.¹⁷⁰ Chatty – the scholar who articulates local cosmopolitanism – concludes that these ‘notions of hospitality and generosity are so important in Arab culture as to make it nearly impossible for the state to adopt “the pettiest form of bureaucratic indifference to human needs and suffering”’ that, in her view, characterizes global humanitarian responses that originated in post-war Europe.¹⁷¹ After all, Manger notes, the call toward pilgrimage has historically made Muslims, Christians, and Jews mobile throughout the region, a migration situation that, for most of the region’s history, was accommodated by political leadership.¹⁷² It is only as Pan-Arabism has declined around the region, according to Anita Fabos and Riina Isotalo, that, ‘Mobile Muslims [as well as Jews, Christians, and Yazidis] are increasingly prevented from traversing traditional travel routes and pathways to safety and security, not only by fearful Western policymakers but also by their own

¹⁷⁰ Isotalo, ‘Fear Palestinization’, 68.

¹⁷¹ Dawn Chatty, ‘Iraqi Refugees in the Arab Muslim World: Ottoman Legacies and Orientalist Presumptions’, in *Managing Muslim Mobilities: Between Spiritual Geographies and the Global Security Regime*, edited by Anita H. Fabos and Riina Isotalo, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014) 35.

¹⁷² Manger, ‘Foreword’, xii.

Muslim leaders'.¹⁷³ Indeed, even without allusion to these deep-seated traditions and expectations surrounding refugees – which Jordanian Christians, this study shows, are acutely preoccupied by – Wagner suggested that the ultimate solution to the so-called 'refugee crisis' would be to re-open the national borders of the Levant, a solution that – in her view – would not only enable disenfranchised refugees to solidify their existence in the region without global humanitarian support, but it would also stabilize the quivering economies of the entire Middle East.¹⁷⁴ What I note is that, while her analysis originated in a migration studies perspective, her proposed solution would have fit easily into a Pan-Arab political debate a century earlier. In other words – and this becomes important to this study later on – the region's longstanding traditions have already served to stabilize Christian-Muslim relations and refugee welfare alike. In theory, they could do so again.

In this chapter, however, I have also delineated the limits to Christian participation in Jordanian society. Arab hospitality and local cosmopolitanism both offer robust, historically grounded customs and practices that ensure Christians a place in Jordan, but with specific limits to their political engagement. Pan-Arabism, and its more explicitly political manifestation of Arab nationalism, aimed to mitigate those limits by renegotiating the terms of citizenship along Arab, rather than exclusively Islamic, lines. As this chapter has also demonstrated, however, Pan-Arabism has been losing traction to explicitly Islamic forms of social and political membership for several decades. This loss of a key building block for Christian-Muslim coexistence and Christian participation threatens the future of Christianity in Jordan and in the Middle East more broadly.

Scholarship has documented the dangerous effects of this haphazard dynamic on Christians in Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, and Syria. Egyptian politics have received the most thorough documentation; scholars note that rapid and sometimes violent power transitions, lack of accountability in local and national policing, and church-state collusion between the Coptic Orthodox Church and various state regimes have frequently made Egyptian Christians the victims of local coercion, diminished freedom to build and even use churches, and proliferated acts of religiously motivated violence.¹⁷⁵ Iraq and Palestine, where other internal problems with

¹⁷³ Anita Fabos and Riina Isotalo, 'Introduction: Managing Muslim Mobilities – Conceptual Framework', in *Managing Muslim Mobilities: Between Spiritual Geographies and the Global Security Regime*, edited by Anita H. Fabos and Riina Isotalo, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014) 5.

¹⁷⁴ Ann-Christin Wagner, 'Week 4: Refugee Economies and Mobile Labour', course lecture, University of Edinburgh, 11 October 2018.

¹⁷⁵ Scholarship that examines the Christian-Muslim dynamic, particularly in Egypt but also across the region, includes the following:

sectarian warfare and good governance are well-known, are increasingly losing their Christian populations to emigration.¹⁷⁶ Church leaders in both countries also warn that the ancient features of interfaith diversity could vanish due to lack of Christians. In Syria, Christians have also become political pawns in much larger, incredibly violent, politics, a problem that has itself alarmed Christians across the region and receives further discussion in Chapter Two of this study.

With the influence of Pan-Arabism diminishing, Christian communities and refugees across the Middle East must increasingly rely on internal negotiations with their governments and co-nationals and the political expediency of their continued wellbeing, as McCallum has written.¹⁷⁷ Consequently, the Christian relationship with the majority state has become increasingly vulnerable to both the normal tumult of national politics and the crisis of stability that particularly plagues the region. While Jordanian Christians remain comparatively well-off, as Jordanian politics have maintained unusual stability, they are not immune to the specific or structural concerns that plague their co-religionists across the region. As such, Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arab sentiment are layers of the Christian-Muslim dynamic that affect the entire region of the Middle East, and particularly the Levant. In fact, all three have origins that pre-date the establishment of the Jordanian nation-state. For this reason, political movements or conflicts in Egypt, Syria, or Iraq, can affect the dynamics of Jordan as well.

Angie Heo, *The Political Lives of Saints: Christian-Muslim Mediation in Egypt* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018).

Peter Makari, *Conflict & Cooperation: Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

Henrik Lindberg Hansen, *Christian-Muslim relations in Egypt: Politics, Society, and Interfaith Encounters* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

Mansoor Moaddel. *Jordanian Exceptionalism: A Comparative Analysis of State-Religion Relationships in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2002).

¹⁷⁶ Scholarship has been fairly robust on the subject of Christian emigration from Israel/Palestine in particular. One detailed discussion is found in the volume: Pacini, ed., *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East*.

¹⁷⁷ McCallum, 'Christian political participation'.

2. 'If I am threatened, I am threatened': Christian-Muslim Relations in a Time of Refugees

Introducing oneself as a researcher with interests in Christian-Muslim relations prompts interesting conversations. I met Hani¹⁷⁸ at a networking event attended by wealthy Christian and Muslim Jordanians, plus a few foreign visitors. Hearing from a mutual acquaintance about my 'research in Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan', Hani introduced himself and exchanged phone numbers with my husband, asking him to call and set up an appointment to discuss this issue. He invited us to his office – he was a medical professional – and his receptionist ushered us into his private office during Hani's lunch break.

Hani left us no time to wonder about his motivation for inviting us to meet with him. He told us that he became worried when he heard that American Christians were studying this topic, and he proceeded with a forty-five-minute monologue about the dangers of Islam.¹⁷⁹ His concerns were not unique; questions about women's rights in the Qur'an, the status of non-Muslim minorities in the Islamic tradition, and the sexual proclivities of the prophet Muhammad have featured in critiques of Islam since the seventh century.¹⁸⁰ The setting of this conversation surprised me; however, and it seems to me that it signals a shift in the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan. Hani was a well-connected and successful professional in Jordan. He claimed to have many Muslim friends whom he held in high esteem. His concern, he suggested, was not that all Muslims were themselves evil, but rather that Islam itself was a bad influence from which they were powerless to escape. He spoke with some emotion, arguing that he believed ISIS practiced Islam correctly. He even recounted conversations with Muslim patients and friends who, he said, were unaware of the dangers Islam presented until he informed them of the particularities of their own scripture. Hani identified himself as an Orthodox Christian, and he also demonstrated extensive familiarity with the Bible. A copy of the Bible in Arabic had been sitting on his desk among other books when we arrived, and throughout his comments, he referred deftly to particular passages to offer a contrast with his description of Islam.

¹⁷⁸ 'Hani' is a pseudonym used to protect this individual's identity.

¹⁷⁹ Hani, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 2 March 2019, English.

¹⁸⁰ Such tropes are examined in scholarly detail in the following:

Mohammad Hassan Khalil, *Jihad, Radicalism and the New Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Joshua Ralston, 'Islam and Christianity,' in *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East*, ed. Mitri Raheb and Mark. A. Lamport (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 152-162.

Mona Siddiqui (ed.), *The Routledge Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

What was striking about this exchange was that Hani, as a wealthy, highly educated, Orthodox Christian, represented precisely the demographic that should have gained the most from Pan-Arabism. Despite not only his extensive professional and personal contact with Arab Muslims whom he claimed to respect, and even his evident familiarity with and pride in his Arab heritage – as demonstrated by his decision to remain in the Orthodox Church despite robust Christian competition in Jordan, and his referral to an Arabic Bible – he went out of his way to entertain a couple of American strangers with dire warnings about the dangers of Islam, taking time from his lunch break while a Muslim receptionist sat a few feet away. His intellectual ancestors two generations earlier promoted Pan-Arabism, calling on Arabic-speaking Christians to build unity with Muslims and express appreciation for their shared Islamic Arab heritage, yet Hani was trotting out the most alarming of potential Islamic proclivities for foreign Christians he barely knew.

As I argued in Chapter One, Jordanians claim a robust dynamic for Christian-Muslim coexistence, consisting of Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arabism. Scholars attribute the relative lack of scholarly interest in Jordanian Christianity to ‘the fact that the Jordanian Christian communities enjoy a calm and stable existence in the small Hashemite kingdom, at least compared with such unstable countries as Syria, Iraq and Lebanon’.¹⁸¹ For decades, Jordan has been a safe place for Christians in the Middle East, a country governed by the gentler practices of Arab tradition and hospitality, where old friendships kept modern conflicts from overrunning a pervasive sense of religious stability. The tensions outside Jordan, however, are increasingly becoming part of modern Jordanian society as these older memories are replaced by a new disrespect for the duties of both host and guest. As Anthony O’Mahony argues, ‘The “oasis” of Jordan seems fragile, due to ongoing tensions in society and government, along with a growing Islamist movement and larger numbers of Sunni Muslims displaced in the border areas with Syria’.¹⁸² This chapter examines such concerns on the ground, and in that sense, it offers a parallel – using evidence obtained through fieldwork – to the dynamic for Jordanian Christian-Muslim relations that I identified in Chapter One. Employing the framework for Christian-Muslim relations established in Chapter One, I argue that the refugee phenomenon has fractured the apparent stability of Christian-Muslim relations on the ground. Using fieldwork results gleaned from interviews, conversations, and observations, this chapter demonstrates that

¹⁸¹ Magliolini and Twal, ‘Jordan’, 152.

¹⁸² Anthony O’Mahony, ‘Christianity in the Wider Levant Region: Modern History and Contemporary Contexts’, in *Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries: Arab Christians in the Levant*, ed. Kail C. Ellis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 68.

current events have revealed a dangerous vulnerability and damage to the social order that underpins 'Jordanian exceptionalism'. Since large numbers of Syrian and Iraqi refugees began entering Jordan in 2011, several events have counteracted the harmonious influence of these traditions. These three events are the rise of ISIS in Mosul, Jordan's political response to refugees within its borders, and the growing exodus of refugees from the region.

I address the implications of each of these events separately in this chapter: Section One demonstrates that the rise of ISIS in Mosul has undermined Christian confidence in Arab hospitality across the region; Section Two argues that the practice of local cosmopolitanism has weakened as the Jordanian government has led the response to Syrian, Iraqi, and Sudanese refugees in ways that undermine their ability to resettle in Jordan; finally, in Section Three, the exodus of refugees from the region showcases a dramatic loss of popular confidence in a Pan-Arab civilization. Just as Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arabism ensured a level of interfaith coexistence, within circumscribed limits, these three new events associated with the ongoing refugee phenomenon threaten the overall dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan. This sense of instability has itself continued to threaten the confidence of the Jordanian Christian host community, meaning that the remainder of this study will document church approaches to interfaith relations as an intrinsic part of their response to refugees.

1. Extreme elements in neighbouring societies

I noted in Chapter One that the three building blocks of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan – Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arabism – are not unique to the nation of Jordan; rather, their influence reflects interconnected social, economic, and religious networks across the region. Many of the borders that divide the nations of the Levant in particular have been drawn quite recently; Jordan's border with Israel, for example, changed as recently as 1967. Egypt's borders have changed even more recently, while other borders remain disputed. For many Jordanians, therefore, the relationships that connect them to family members or institutions in other countries are just as strong as those that tie them to their fellow Jordanians. The key argument of this section is that conflicts in Syria and Iraq have undermined the dynamic of Arab hospitality – and therefore Christian-Muslim relations – in Jordan. This is not a matter of violent conflict 'spilling over' into Jordan, but rather of Jordanians recognizing that Christians and Muslims in Iraq and Syria who once practiced the region-wide tradition of Arab hospitality abandoned it under duress and thus weakened its influence overall.

ISIS and forced displacement in Iraq and Syria

The most serious of recent threats to Christian-Muslim coexistence on the ground was the direct attack by ISIS in 2014, which caused Jordanian Christians to begin worrying more openly about Arab hospitality. Iraqis – particularly Christians – began fleeing to Jordan in large numbers following the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Mosul (ISIS). Because the Arabic-speaking Christians¹⁸³ who are native to the Middle East have longstanding treaties and traditions that protect them from overreach by the Muslim-majority societies, Christians across the region were shocked when the Iraqi Christians who had resided for millennia in Mosul were expelled on the basis of their Christian faith. Mariz Tadros calls the killing of Christians and Yazidis ‘the first genocide in the twenty-first century’, noting, ‘This juncture also marks 100 years since the genocide of the Armenian, Assyrian, Syriac, and Chaldean Christians’.¹⁸⁴ Such reminders only strengthen the unsettling impression that this unpleasant history of violence and expulsion was becoming a new norm for the region.

While these incidents occurred in Iraq, they have alarmed the Jordanian Christians who now live and worship alongside Iraqi refugees. The importance of this dynamic became clear to me after a conversation at St Paul’s Anglican Church in Ashrafieh, where I was co-teaching a free English class for members of the congregation. A number of Iraqi refugees, who had arrived in Amman since 2014 and were trying to emigrate, attended, as did a mix of Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians, and Egyptians who all called Jordan their permanent home. My husband and I taught on a volunteer basis in the church hall, dividing the class into two groups by English-skill level. At one point, a young father from Mosul began to reminisce fondly about the natural beauty of Iraq and his life there before the wars. My husband listened and, trying to prompt discussion in English from other class members, commented that he had enjoyed similar experiences in Jordan. ‘Let me tell you something’, the Iraqi man said in a conspiratorial and knowing tone. ‘Jordan looks great, but there’s a lot going on under the surface’. He did not lower his voice, even as the woman next to him glared. ‘It seems safe, but what happened there could

¹⁸³ For some Middle Eastern Christians, especially in the region of north Iraq known as the Ninevah Plain, Arabic is a second language. As I mention later in this thesis, some of the Iraqi Christians who fled to Jordan proudly claim Aramaic as their mother tongue and an important sign of their ancient Christian identity, and some Iraqi Christians resisted Pan-Arabism. In condemning their expulsion, however, *An Open Letter to Al-Baghdadi* claims them as ‘Arab Christians’ who deserved protection from the indignities of *jizya* and expulsion due to their longstanding participation in the norms of Arab hospitality.

¹⁸⁴ Mariz Tadros, ‘Christianity in North Africa and West Asia’, in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Mariz Tadros, and Todd M. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 15.

easily happen here'. The other class participants looked visibly uncomfortable, even angry, at these words, but no one attempted a counterargument.¹⁸⁵

What, then, was 'going on under the surface' in Jordan? The Jordanian reaction to this conversation demonstrates one of the practical implications of the Christian-Muslim dynamic I described in Chapter One. The stability of Jordanian Christian-Muslim relations rests on the traditions of Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Arab nationalism. These traditions predate the establishment of Jordan, and as such, they are rooted in the area's pre-existing customs. While the longstanding nature of these traditions strengthens them in some ways – both between Christians and Muslims in Jordan, and among Christians from Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt – it also makes Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan vulnerable to relevant events throughout the region. If one of these traditions begins to break down in a neighbouring country, then that same tradition may be correspondingly weakened in Jordan. In other words, the Iraqi assertion about dangerous things 'going on under the surface in Jordan' pointed toward a real similarity between Iraqis and Jordanians that predates the border between them.

Christian leaders corroborated this issue as an ongoing problem within Jordanian Christian-Muslim relations. Wafa Goussous, the Jordanian representative for the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Amman, described the way that events outside Jordan affected the Christians within its borders.¹⁸⁶ 'Christians here were scared because of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. There is an ISIS way of thinking, even with this peace you see [in Jordan] between Christians and Muslims'. I should add that many Christians did not state this directly, and when asked, many changed the subject to complaints about the economy, or sometimes grimly humorous references to 'Plan B'. I learned from Goussous that these complaints about the economy, especially worries that Christians were being overlooked for jobs in favour of Muslims, provided a politically safe – and ostensibly faith-neutral – means of expressing fears about Christian-Muslim relations. 'They call it Plan B', she said. 'Christians obtain a second passport, so if something happens here like in Syria, they can maybe at least run away'. These comments describe a strong connection between a conflict in neighbouring Syria and the anxieties of Christians in Jordan. This solidarity among the region's Christians, I argue, reflects shared history with the same traditions I described in Chapter One. One key implication of this dynamic is a

¹⁸⁵ English class at St Paul's Anglican Church, conversation with James Thieke and reported to author, Amman, Jordan, 3 September 2019, English.

¹⁸⁶ Wafa Goussous, interview by author, Office of the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Amman, Jordan, 8 February 2018, English/Arabic – translation by author.

particular connection with the fate of other Christians around the region. Indeed, Lucien Van Liere argues that the ISIS events and their digital dissemination across the globe have shifted the self-understandings of Christians and Muslims alike in combative and violent ways. Van Liere writes, ‘A “global Christianity” is discursively constructed on the one hand as a violent effort against the Islamic *umma* while on the other hand as a world-wide network of solidarity’.¹⁸⁷ Although it had probably existed before 2015, this network of solidarity gained strength in Jordan when Iraqi Christians joined their churches as refugees, and it greatly increased the anxieties of Jordan’s Christian inhabitants.

What enabled events in Syria and Iraq to alarm the Jordanian Christians? First, both Syrian and Iraqi Christians had fled to Jordan in relatively large numbers, where they lived and worshipped alongside Jordanian Christians in a visible manner. While the nature of their relationship with Jordanians is the subject of later chapters in this thesis, the important point here is that Christian displacement within the region became a visible fact of daily life in Jordanian churches.¹⁸⁸ Second, the Iraqis themselves frequently shared the details of their expulsion with Jordanians. One common point was the idea that ISIS had been able to identify and persecute the Christian families easily with the help of Muslim Iraqi informants. Whether this belief was true or not, I never heard Jordanians question it. The Muslims of Mosul, the Christians believed, had led a foreign, hostile force to their homes, and thus sold their Christian identity to ISIS. Third, some Iraqi Christians in Jordan described egregious and painfully personal violations of the norms of Christian-Muslim relations that once dominated interreligious life in Mosul. One family told me that, although they fled initially to the Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq, they had tried to return to Mosul after ISIS was defeated. The father of the family had returned to his prestigious position at work, and he soon hoped to rebuild their house and bring the whole family home again. Despite decades of challenges in Iraq, he abandoned this plan only after he received a message from a Muslim colleague at work, informing him that a local Shia militia planned to kill him and marry his daughters by force to Muslims if he did not step down from his prestigious position at work or convert to Islam.

¹⁸⁷ Lucien van Liere, ‘Conquering Rome: Constructing a Global Christianity in the Face of Terror, A Case Study into the Representation of the Beheading of 21 Migrant Workers in January 2015’ in *World Christianity: Methodological Considerations*, ed. Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 205.

¹⁸⁸ Despite claims to the contrary, an estimated 17,000 Syrian Christians and 35,000 Armenians have been among the estimated 1.5 million Syrians who fled their homes for Jordan since 2011. Through the combined efforts of Caritas Jordan and numerous Jordanian churches, some of which opened their buildings to house the refugees on a long-term basis, these Christian refugees received rent for housing, school fees, medical care, and food vouchers. Nearly all viewed Jordan as a ‘transit nation’, however. The Syrians generally received visas to move to Germany, Australia, Canada, or the United States, while many Armenians left the Middle East for Armenia. Maggliolini and Twal, ‘Jordan’, 159.

Having been threatened by a colleague and neighbour on the basis of his Christian faith, he quickly prepared to take his family to Jordan, where they filed applications for asylum to Norway, Canada, the United States, and Australia. They were determined to leave the region whose norms of Arab hospitality had been violated by their Iraqi Muslim neighbours.¹⁸⁹

This last point is the most significant to understanding the anxieties of Jordanian Christians. This second type of expulsion was more personal, and it represented an egregious violation of the relationships that had sustained this Christian family in Muslim-majority Iraq. A colleague from work – an Iraqi Muslim he knew well – had threatened him on the basis of his Christian faith. He had acted, he said, on the word of a local, Iraqi militant group. Rather than defending the honour of a neighbour against outside threats, this colleague had violated the customs of Arab hospitality. Furthermore, by singling out Christians for persecution, this militant group had disregarded the local cosmopolitanism that would have permitted members of another faith, or even ethnicity, to live, work, and worship alongside them without harassment. Finally, the ideals of Pan-Arabism intentionally cleared a space for Arabic-speaking Christians to live, work, and even participate politically in an Arab, Muslim-majority state. Such blatant, faith-based persecution was not supposed to happen in a state based on the political ideals of Arab nationalism. As Alon Ben-Meir argues, ‘Whereas Christians were viewed and treated as a protected community under the Ottomans, the rise of Salafist and Wahhabist Islam has put this community in the cross hairs, with ISIS threatening taxation, conversion to Islam, or death for the few Christians left in the territory it controls’.¹⁹⁰ Knowing how similar their situations had once been, the Jordanian Christians feared these events almost as much as their Iraqi counter-parts. For all these reasons, when Iraqi Christians told their Jordanian co-religionists about their alarming expulsion, the Jordanians worried that their own Muslim neighbours might, in similar circumstances, find reasons to disregard the traditions that secured their presence in Jordan.

While Jordanians are dismayed by the recent government oppression and instability in the region, and while they do not welcome forced displacement in their lives or that of their neighbours, they accept these as simply part of life, as I noted from Chatty’s research in Chapter One. Migrations have happened many times before, even in living memory, and they have been

¹⁸⁹ Unnamed Iraqi, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 13 August 2019, English/Arabic – translation by author.

¹⁹⁰ Alon Ben-Meir, ‘The Persecution of Minorities in the Middle East’, in *Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries: Arab Christians in the Levant*, ed. Kail C. Ellis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 158.

overcome through reliance on Arab tradition. While the wars in Syria and Iraq and the invasion of a largely foreign force – ISIS – was undesirable, it did not violate the expectations of Jordanians who had, within recent family history, probably experienced war and forced displacement in their own lives. What had happened in Mosul, however, represented a different and far more dangerous phenomenon than yet another political upheaval. While Jordanian Christians were worried by the rise of ISIS in the region, they were much more concerned by the way that Mosul's Iraqi Muslims reacted. By failing to protect their Christian neighbours from foreign invaders, and in some cases actively abetting ISIS, they violated the ancient norms of Christian-Muslim coexistence that had protected Middle Eastern Christians for centuries. Arab hospitality, and its associated loyalty to friends and kin, was violated in favour of a foreign invading force promoting an Islamist ideology, and the Christians in Jordan who rely on these same traditions became alarmed by the idea that this pattern might repeat itself in their own homes.

In conclusion, the weakening of Arab hospitality in the form of betrayal and forced displacement in Syria and Iraq has raised troubling questions in the minds of many Christians in Jordan. The Jordanian Christians are much more frightened by the way that Muslims in Iraq and Syria betrayed their Christian neighbours to foreign militants than they are about the unfortunate phenomenon of civil war in these countries. Without hearing loud condemnations of ISIS from Jordanian Muslims, Christians continue to fear that the events of Syria and Iraq threaten them in Jordan, and they consider 'Plan B' as their best defence.

2. An unwelcome paradigm for migration to Jordan

As I argued in Chapter One, the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations within Jordan depends on several distinct, but interrelated, building blocks. After Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism emerged as the second of these building blocks. I described it using a list of key features: government support for migration, a legal code that establishes separate institutions for different groups, assistance for migrants from charitable associations, and respect for the contributions of migrants. While these do not define this informal, socio-political practice in its totality, these features clarify analysis of a social force that might otherwise resist written definition. Therefore, in this section I employ these four features as a framework with which to investigate aspects of local cosmopolitanism on the ground. Using fieldwork and ongoing scholarly reviews of Jordan's response to refugees, I argue that local cosmopolitanism is steadily declining in the nation as a whole.

Local cosmopolitanism in recent historical practice

One of the most visible features of local cosmopolitanism is the expectation that migrants contribute meaningfully to society, a feature that, I demonstrate, has been Jordan's de facto strategy for urban planning. The importance of this feature becomes clear in the words of an Orthodox Christian who – as the owner of a building company on Amman – described the continuous arrival of new migrants as good for business.¹⁹¹ He suggested that each new 'migration wave' had and would continue to dictate the time and manner that Amman expanded. The Syrians were currently requiring new a new building spree, he noted, joking darkly about looking ahead to the next conflict for the advancement of the business.

These comments need not be seen as flippant; he and his family were themselves part of an earlier 'migration wave' to Jordan. Originally from Bethlehem, his wife sadly told me stories of her grandparents' suffering during their own displacement to Jordan decades earlier. Now, this man said he was glad that they had safely settled in Jordan, rather than remaining in the West Bank. This family believed that they had contributed positively to Jordanian society, and they anticipated that current and future newcomers would do the same.

Their attitude was not unique. One taxi driver, a Palestinian Muslim, made a flourishing gesture toward the Amman cityscape as we entered from the unsettled desert. 'You see this?' he gestured grandly at the buildings and streets rising out of the desert dusk. 'We built this city'. He said that when his father had arrived in Amman with thousands of other Palestinian refugees, it was just a tiny village. The Palestinians had built it into a great city, he explained, which was why he and the other Palestinians received Jordanian citizenship. His sense of the contributions that Palestinians had made to Jordan were clearly very important to his sense of belonging. While he still considered himself a Palestinian, he did not consider himself a foreigner in the city that, in his view, had been built by Palestinian refugees.¹⁹²

This sense that incoming migrants could earn their place in a new society by contributing meaningfully to it is a quintessential feature of local cosmopolitanism, and it is not limited to city-proud taxi drivers or the building business. The municipality of Amman officially celebrates the contributions of newcomers with a small, public museum. Situated in downtown Amman, within view of the millennia-old citadel with its multi-civilizational set of ruins, the Amman

¹⁹¹ Unnamed Orthodox Jordanian, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 4 March 2018, English.

¹⁹² Unnamed Muslim Jordanian, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 2 September 2019, Arabic – translation by author.

Museum enshrines local cosmopolitanism as a virtue of the city, noting, ‘Amman was conceived as a place that offered the new arrivals a golden opportunity for settlement, work, and progress. Amman acted as a refuge for several newcomers who flocked to Amman because of economic or political reasons’.¹⁹³ Diverse newcomers to early Amman included Circassians and others from the Caucasus, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese, Turks, and Armenians, for ‘early migrants to the City (the pioneers) considered Amman a land of opportunities, the first arrivals took refuge in caves and in the various ruins of the City’. It is only briefly that the museum prioritizes the ancient city’s Arab character. After being ‘occupied’ by the Assyrians, Greeks, and Mongols, the museum contends, the city of Amman was ‘liberated’ by Muslim forces, thus ‘restoring the Arabic/Aramaic name’ of Amman. In concluding remarks on the history and character of Jordan’s capital, the exhibition comments, ‘The multi-layered beginning that helped Amman to transform into a City also granted it a special character where the City emerged as a beacon of tolerance and peaceful co-existence between groups of different religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds’. An essential part of this narrative for Amman, the exhibition went on, was that different neighbourhoods assumed the distinctive character of their respective inhabitants: an Armenian section here, a group of wealthy Syrian merchants there, or a Turkish enclave settled nearby, with each family or group speaking their own language while contributing to the city as a whole and their diverse neighbours.

Local cosmopolitanism since 2012

Since 2012, I argue, responses to migration crisis have undermined the practice of local cosmopolitanism in Jordan. The establishment of a new style of refugee camps, most famously Camp Zaatar in northern Jordan, is the most visible example. In Camp Zaatar and several similar camps established for Syrian refugees, arriving migrants are escorted by armed members of the Jordanian Army to the camp, from which they are prevented from leaving without an authorized Jordanian sponsor. The high fences that surround these camps quite visibly seek to prevent the Syrians from participating in Jordan’s economic life and society, although, research by Ann-Christin Wagner¹⁹⁴ has demonstrated, Syrians would otherwise expect to do so.

At the same time, Camp Zaatar was not the first refugee camp established in Jordan. Following the 1948 displacement of thousands of Palestinians, the United Nations and other

¹⁹³ Amman Museum, (Museum exhibition, Museum of the Amman Municipality, Amman, Jordan). Visited September 2019.

¹⁹⁴ Ann-Christin Wagner, ‘Week 4: Refugee Economies and Mobile Labour’, course lecture, University of Edinburgh, 11 October 2018.

international organizations oversaw the establishment of large camps to facilitate aid distribution. Many, though by no means all, Palestinian refugees still live in these camps, sending their children and grandchildren to schools funded not by Jordan, but by the United Nations. These camps, the largest of which are located in East Amman and Jerash, are now difficult to distinguish from the surrounding city. By contrast, Camp Zaatari was built and funded by foreign aid. These camps are nothing like the informal settlements and caves in early Amman whose eventual achievements are celebrated in the Amman Museum. Camp Zaatari and other settlements like it limit, rather than facilitate, integration of the refugees in Jordan.

This does not mean that Syrians outside of Camp Zaatari have stopped working in the informal sector – local aid workers told me in 2018 that they rarely meet a Syrian who is not working at least one job¹⁹⁵ – but their employment is usually illegal. If caught, they are occasionally – though rarely – returned to Syria by force. This threat, Wagner argues, is enough to keep thousands of Syrians working for long hours, for low pay, and without complaint. In this way, the economic fears of Jordanian government and citizens alike drive the country's response to Syrian arrivals just as those Syrian arrivals, in the arguments of some economists, drive the country's economy. Newly arrived Iraqis are also barred from most forms of legal work because of their ambivalent status, an issue that receives detailed attention in Chapter Three of this thesis.

These practices effectively prevent Syrians and Iraqis from contributing meaningfully to the Jordanian host society on a large scale. They send a clear message that these Arab refugees are unwanted, temporary visitors rather than the newest arrivals to a society that once celebrated the contributions of migrants through local cosmopolitanism. Denied the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their hosts, Syrian and Iraqi refugees cannot resettle in and enrich Jordan further. Their presence and ongoing maintenance in the country becomes a problem to be solved, rather than an opportunity to 'buil[d] the cit[ies]' of the new host society.

In short, events in Jordan since 2012 call many of Chatty's arguments for local cosmopolitanism into question. Is the Middle East still a place where hospitality improves the reputation of the host as well as the circumstances of the guest, where 'the setting up of international humanitarian internment camps becomes problematic, if not repugnant?'¹⁹⁶ Did the closing of Jordan's borders in 2016¹⁹⁷ mark the end of centuries of mobile diversity, the coming

¹⁹⁵ Dilworth Parkinson, interview by author, Irbid, Jordan, 8 February 2018, English.

¹⁹⁶ Dawn Chatty, *Syria: The Making and Unmaking of a Refugee State* (London: Hurst & Co, 2017), 208.

¹⁹⁷ The closing of Jordan's borders in 2016 is controversial not only because it would represent a significant political statement, but also because different sources debate when and whether it happened. Some claim that a partial closing began in 2014, while a United States Embassy source insists that refugees were still

of a new era for the forcibly displaced? Chatty insists, ‘Without any international rights-based legislation to rely on, Syrians have found safety and asylum across the near frontiers of their state,’ yet she acknowledges, ‘For how long is another matter’.¹⁹⁸

The question was being debated in the streets of Amman. When I asked the proud Palestinian taxi driver whether the Syrians could expect to receive citizenship, as his forebears had, he paused, then said slowly that this would not happen for the Syrians. The Palestinians and others who had built Amman and transformed Jordanian society had come while Jordan was growing, and help was needed, he explained. Now, however, there were already too many people in Jordan, and the Syrians must eventually go home. The question of whether Jordanians welcome the Syrians depends on whether Jordanians believe their contributions are necessary. In other words, the Syrians’ welcome depends on the continuation of local cosmopolitanism in Jordan.

Of course, one straightforward response to this issue would be to explore whether the Syrians have indeed contributed to the economic and social well-being of Jordan since 2012. Numerous studies have already attempted this, but their findings are ambivalent. On the one hand, a study by the American University of Beirut found no effect on overall unemployment.¹⁹⁹ Since longstanding migrant labour patterns from Egypt have declined,²⁰⁰ Syrians could be working in mainly the jobs of fellow foreigners, rather than Jordanians. On the other hand, Doris Carrion argues that harm to the poorest Jordanians is real.²⁰¹ Increasing rent prices – caused by incoming Syrians who wish to settle in Jordanian cities – benefit business owners, but it strains the budgets of poor Jordanians. The education and healthcare systems, as well as the all-important water reserves, are also under strain. Above all, Carrion suggests, the visibility of Syrians living in Amman contributes to a sense that Jordan is under siege from without.

welcomed at the border in 2018. What seems most likely is that border crossings have become gradually more difficult since 2014, but that they will never be entirely prevented.

¹⁹⁸ Chatty, *Syria*, 11.

¹⁹⁹ Researchers suggested that other factors acting prior to 2011 had already caused the inflation and general economic instability that Jordanians widely blame on Syrians. While admitting that their study showed only overall unemployment, without accounting for changes rooted in the agricultural sector or the informal workforce more broadly, these scholars insisted that economic impacts were smaller than is widely believed. Ali Fakh and May Ibrahim, ‘The Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Labor Market in Neighboring Countries: Empirical Evidence from Jordan’, *Defence and Peace Economics*, 27:1 (2016), 64-86.

²⁰⁰ Turner, ‘Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees’, 396.

²⁰¹ Carrion also argues that the widespread belief that Syrians are stealing Jordanian jobs is more perception than reality. Doris Carrion, ‘Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths’ *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 21 September 2015.

Some research, however, suggests that Syrian migrants have already spent decades filling unappreciated but significant roles in Jordan's economy. From fieldwork in Jordan's agricultural sector, Ann-Christin Wagner concluded that Syrian migrant labour has long been essential to the viability of the tomato market, traditionally Jordan's most celebrated crop and one of its only exports.²⁰² Wagner found that many Syrians had been working unseen in Jordan's tomato fields for years, and the war – and subsequent border closures – had not increased their participation in the Jordanian economy, but rather it had simply made it more difficult for them to take periodic trips home to Syria.

Although strains on resource-poor Jordan are indeed a serious matter, the Amman Museum demonstrates the different way that those of earlier eras framed such scarcities, indeed, by seeing them as an opportunity for newcomers to form Jordanian society. A display in the Amman Museum noted, 'The Hashimite (*sic*) State . . . did not enjoy an abundance in economic means and had to rely on a group of actors and agents in forming the basis for a unique urban fabric in the City'. The Circassian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Kurdish, and Armenian refugees and merchants were credited with establishing the city's first schools, water towers, government buildings, and hospitals, such as the CMS Schools for Girls and the Italian Hospital in Ashrafieh (1927), a landmark that still sits within view of the Amman Museum. It is worth noting, however, that the final exhibit changes tone slightly. When they reach the reign of King Abdullah II, the captions cease celebrating the achievements of migrants in establishing schools, hospitals, and a sense of lived coexistence. Instead, the exhibits highlight the importance of attracting tourism, foreign investment, and information technology industries.

These exhibits – the work of the Amman municipality – demonstrate a shift in the official discourse surrounding immigration to Jordan. While earlier exhibits pay tribute to the contributions of migrants, more recent discourses question the migrants' use of scarce resources instead. Of course, not every Jordanian appreciated all migrants before, nor does every Jordanian resent their presence now, but this shift in official discourse has already prompted changes such as the building of Camp Zaatari and the barring of most refugees from legal work. Such political and legal changes suggest that because the work of building Jordan is complete, any new refugees are an unnecessary or dangerous inconvenience. While challenges relating to language, resources, or poverty are significant and deserve discussion in any migration context, to undervalue the contributions of migrants and thus reject local cosmopolitanism is a societal choice, not an

²⁰² Ann-Christin Wagner, 'Week 4: Refugee Economies and Mobile Labour', course lecture, University of Edinburgh, 11 October 2018.

economic necessity. This choice was not a foregone conclusion, especially in a country with such a rich history of migration.

In its most extreme form, however, the decision to devalue migrant contributions can justify treating refugees as property rather than persons. The extreme reaches of this new approach may be understood through a little-known but notorious incident in December 2015. At that time, a number of Sudanese refugees were living in and around Amman, having fled conflict in Sudan. Many were awaiting third-country resettlement from UNHCR, and they anxiously awaited news of a hasty trip out of Jordan, as the refugee commission frequently notifies refugees of an impending plane flight with days or hours of notice. As such, when many Sudanese began receiving notifications from the refugee commission to report immediately to the airport, they acted quickly. At the airport, however, Jordanian police arrested them and placed them on airplanes bound for Sudan, receiving in return a bounty per head.²⁰³ Father Michael Linden, the head of the Jesuit Centre in Amman, told me that the Jordanian police appeared to have hijacked the UN communication system to collect the Sudanese, and that this action had been intentionally timed to correspond to the Christmas holidays, when most US Embassy and aid personnel would be busy or outside the country. For his part, Linden discovered the activity from a Sudanese refugee working at the Jesuit Centre. As the Jesuits were heavily involved with providing aid to the Sudanese community, Linden and his Sudanese companion quickly took a large van from the centre and drove through areas where Sudanese were living, inviting all the Sudanese they could find into the van and taking them to the Jesuit Centre to hide until the episode ended.²⁰⁴

This incident runs against the practice of local cosmopolitanism, not to mention international norms established by the 1951 United Nations Refugee Commission. The deportation of Sudanese refugees in exchange for money only makes sense in light of the decline in local cosmopolitanism, especially since 2011. The Sudanese cannot claim the same neighbourly kinship with Jordanians as Syrians or Palestinians, but in their day, neither did the Circassians or Kurds; the Armenians were not even Muslim. At the same time, deportation of

²⁰³ This incident is not widely known – or at least, widely discussed – in Jordan, but the Human Rights Watch has corroborated the general phenomenon, claiming that 800 Sudanese men, women, and children were deported to Sudan in December 2015. Human Rights Watch, ‘Jordan: Deporting Sudanese Asylum Seekers’, December 16, 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/16/jordan-deporting-sudanese-asylum-seekers>

²⁰⁴ Michael Linden, interview by author, Jesuit Centre, Amman, Jordan, 4 March 2019, English.

Arab Syrians for minor crimes such as working without a permit has also occurred, as Wagner found,²⁰⁵ even without the Syrian government offering a hefty bounty for them.

Even for those not suffering deportation, other Arabic-speaking refugees believe that both the government policy towards them and their unofficial reception by Jordanian society departs from historical precedent. Samuel, an Iraqi Christian, candidly described his reception in Jordan as ‘terrible’.²⁰⁶ A father of three and an engineer from Baghdad, Samuel was frustrated with the Jordanian policy that forbade Iraqis from working; he saw it as a plot between the Jordanian and Iraqi governments, who ‘want us to go back and be killed’. The Jordanians, he stated, lacked the generosity that had characterized Iraqi society ‘in the old days, under Saddam’. He noted that in those days, Jordanians – and all Arabs – could attend Iraqi universities without paying, and he claimed that a visitor could have arrived at the airport, received a ride home and a meal, all without paying.

Samuel’s comments reveal a disconnect between his expectations of local cosmopolitanism and Arab hospitality versus the reality on the ground. Two important details, however, are needed to understand his concerns and their implications for local cosmopolitanism. First, unlike most of the newly arrived Iraqi Christians in Jordan, Samuel came from Baghdad. He had not fled the destruction of Mosul by ISIS in 2014, nor arrived in Amman with nothing but the clothes on his back to shelter in the outdoor courtyard of the church, as had many of his fellow Iraqis who attended this church. Samuel and his family had left their homes in Baghdad voluntarily in 2018 because they feared a general breakdown of law and order and Christian-Muslim relations. Second, Samuel and his family were receiving extensive assistance from the Latin Church in Marka. Part-time employment, education for the children, and general guidance with establishing a life in Jordan were all provided by the church. Such assistance represents a significant part of the churches’ response to refugees, and it receives detailed discussion later in this thesis. When asked directly about this assistance, however, Samuel acknowledged it without softening his complaint. ‘Oh yes, the church is wonderful, of course’, he said. ‘But Jordan...’.

The source of this tension is a difference between Samuel’s expectations, based on the region’s history, and Jordan’s current approach to refugees. Samuel complains that two key

²⁰⁵ Ann-Christin Wagner, ‘Week 4: Refugee Economies and Mobile Labour’, course lecture, University of Edinburgh, 11 October 2018.

²⁰⁶ Samuel, conversation with author, 17 July 2019, Amman, Jordan, Arabic – translation by author. This individual has received a pseudonym for his protection.

features of local cosmopolitanism – government support and a legal code that offers autonomy to migrant groups – are absent from Jordan’s current reception of Iraqi refugees. In mentioning Saddam Hussein’s regime, he attributes the loss of local cosmopolitanism in Iraq to war and political strife. He expresses disgust with Jordan because he sees it as lacking this valid excuse for social change.

Samuel’s comments summarise the weakening of local cosmopolitanism within Jordanian society. Local cosmopolitanism is a multi-faceted practice that includes government support, in-group resources, and benign tolerance from the host society at large. While this largely informal practice is not directed solely at navigating religious difference, it strengthens Christian-Muslim relations by enabling outsiders from different backgrounds and faiths to resettle peacefully, without losing their distinct characteristics. The Jordanian government’s decision to bar Iraqi refugees from participating in the Jordanian job market may seem like a pragmatic economic decision that influences only the newly arrived refugees. In a context such as Jordan, however, where the society has been shaped historically by the practice of local cosmopolitanism, the decision to leave refugees to the mercy of in-country religious associations and foreign aid groups has wider implications for the other disparate groups who have made their homes in Jordan. Samuel and his fellow Iraqis recognize this as a subtle indicator of exclusion.

3. The growing exodus of refugees from the Middle East

The establishment of new-style refugee camps amid the corresponding decline of local cosmopolitanism is only one sign of a paradigmatic shift in the region’s migration culture. The conflict in Syria since 2011 and Iraq since 2014 launched a new interest, so to speak, in emigration out of the region. When Syrian refugees, in unprecedented numbers, spent their savings on human smugglers to risk their lives on dinghies in the Mediterranean Sea, this changed the discussion around migration. While the resulting debates in Europe and North America are well-documented and, indeed, are analysed in the introductory chapter of this study, a corresponding debate has also arisen in the Middle East. Even those who remain in the region for now – whether refugee or Jordanian – increasingly wonder whether life in the Middle East has become untenable. The Arabs who risked their lives to leave the Middle East, rather than wait or resettle in Jordan,²⁰⁷ raised doubts about the promise of Arab civilization epitomized by

²⁰⁷ At the end of 2019, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees counted 744,795 refugees living in Jordan, of whom ninety-seven percent came from Syria or Iraq. That organization also reported that 30,000 refugees returned to Syria from Jordan during that year. It is important to note that these numbers include only individuals who have officially registered with the United Nations organization, and many Iraqis in particular have declined to register. Source: UNHCR, ‘UNHCR continues to support refugees in Jordan

the Pan-Arab movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁰⁸ Other tenets of Arab nationalism – including the hope of equal Christian participation in politics and society – are likewise weakened. While emigration did not begin in 2014 or even 2011, it is clear that events since then have helped to transform emigration into the default solution to problems in the Arab world. For many Jordanians, but especially Christians, emigration has become an unavoidable conclusion. This section demonstrates the ways that Arab Christians have shifted from championing a return to Pan-Arab civilization they could share with Muslims, to emigration toward what they see as a Christian-dominated civilization. I first demonstrate the weakening of Pan-Arabism in the official discourse of Middle Eastern Christianity, then argue that the conversation has turned toward emigration on the ground in Jordanian churches.

Christian leaders move away from Pan-Arabism

I first return briefly to the tradition of Pan-Arabism that I introduced in Chapter One. Pan-Arabism, Arab nationalism, an Arab renaissance, or a *Nabda* – all of these terms are closely associated both in their historical origins and, for the purposes of this study, their aims. The failures of Pan-Arabism affected all the region’s inhabitants, of course, and emigration has become increasingly pertinent to Middle Eastern societies generally. McCallum, however, argues:

Christians in the Middle East have been particularly affected by the failure of Arab nationalism to provide long-lasting equality and full citizenship, as well as its inability to provide more material benefits. Not only have Christians had to cope with this bitter disappointment, but they have also watched with mounting concern as a political ideology based on the belief system and values of another religion has become the main opposition to current regimes.²⁰⁹

In response to these events,²¹⁰ both church leaders and other Christians have increasingly turned to a new form of dialogue with the Muslims who share the region. This dialogue takes the

throughout 2019’ 31 December 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/jo/12449-unhcr-continues-to-support-refugees-in-jordan-throughout-2019.html#:~:text=As%202019%20comes%20to%20close%2C%20the%20number%20of,refugees%20from%20a%20total%20of%2052%20other%20nationalities.>

²⁰⁸ Between 2015 and 2019, a total of 180,468 refugees from Syria left the region permanently through formal, United Nations-resettlement plans alone. Source: UNHCR Global Refugee Report 2019, https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/gr2019/pdf/GR2019_English_Full_lowres.pdf#_ga=2.205184016.1037905555.1619126807-534195321.1619126807,142.

²⁰⁹ Fiona McCallum, *Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East: The Political Role of the Patriarch* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 20.

²¹⁰ A number of watershed events have dramatically illustrated the breakdown in Christian-Muslim relations, and indeed, in the overall stability of societies across the region. These events include the weakening of Arab

form of public documents that seek to prompt discussion, or the foundation of forums and institutions that create settings for civil engagement or seek to unite Christians and Muslims around civic action. Examples include Kairos Palestine, the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Centre, and the Adyan Foundation in Beirut. Joshua Ralston argues that these engagements depart from previous 'layers' of dialogue in earlier Christian-Muslim history, inasmuch as Christian documents might include lengthy and sophisticated treatises on the nature of God, or interreligious debates that might utilize both tradition's holy texts and the Greek classical tradition in a single conversation. Ralston notes that these newer engagements do not critique Islam itself, nor its worldview and scripture, but rather they question the prevailing politics of many Islamic societies and argue for religious freedom: 'Finding space for Islam within the theological horizons of Christianity is often coupled with an argument for social and political inclusion'.²¹¹ This section briefly discusses several of these documents whose comments are in many ways representative.

Academic leaders at the Christian Academic Forum for Citizenship in the Arab World issued a statement from Bethlehem in 2014. With what they called a 'public theology', titled 'From the Nile to the Euphrates: The Call of Faith and Citizenship', this non-church forum reemphasized the central place of Christianity in the Middle East and described these leaders' concerns and hopes for the future.²¹² For the purposes of this chapter, I reflect on only two of their arguments. First, the statement 'From the Nile to the Euphrates' argued that there is no 'magic recipe' to fix the whole region, which may be seen as a double-edged insistence that neither Pan-Arabism nor Islamism can resolve all the conflicts and bring peace and stability to the Middle East.²¹³ I agree with that assessment; this chapter has argued that harmonious Christian-Muslim relations require at least three, intersecting traditions. These leaders consciously reject a religion-specific tradition that, as Hamid argued earlier, many Muslims across the region turned toward when they believed that secular principles had betrayed them. They continued, 'We do not presume that Christianity is the answer, just as we do not consider Islam to be the answer'.²¹⁴ In this explicit rejection of the Islamic governance advocated by growing

nationalism after the 1967 war, as already mentioned, but also the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the sectarian civil war in Lebanon, and the rise of powerful dictatorships that helped precipitate the 2011 Arab Spring.

²¹¹ Ralston, 'Islam and Christianity', 160.

²¹² Christian Academic Forum for Citizenship in the Arab World. 'From the Nile to the Euphrates: The Call of Faith and Citizenship', 2015, Available at: http://www.diyar.ps/uploads/file/Agreement_beirut%20conference_EN_online_final.pdf (Accessed 12 December 2016).

²¹³ Christian Academic Forum, 'Nile to Euphrates', 19

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS, this Christian statement calls for the region to renegotiate political participation within a non-sectarian framework. Whether their hope is for something like Pan-Arabism, or for a completely different ideology, they do not specify, but it proves my main point that these Christian leaders seek to repair or replace the foundational building block that has been broken.

This twenty-first-century response from Middle Eastern Christian leaders echoes the Pan-Arabism of the preceding century. They seem to speak to a relatively cohesive Middle Eastern Christian identity that is situated within a relatively similar regional context, and their writings promote an alternative to the narrow corners of nationalistic bargaining to which have become increasingly confined. Their writings lack the robust political and philosophical engagement of *Nabda* literature, and as Ralston notes, they depart from the kind of theologically intensive engagement with Islamic thought that characterized earlier generations of Middle Eastern Christian intellectuals.²¹⁵ It is theology in only the broadest sense, in that it seeks to renegotiate church-state relations in a manner palatable to Christian belief and practice. This is a kind of defanged Pan-Arabism, an approach that seeks simply to open the doors of Arab Muslim-majority nations wide enough for Christianity to survive.

Questions about Christian survival in the Middle East must also address the large-scale emigration of individual Christians from the region. Upon its founding in 1974, the Middle Eastern Council of Churches declared its ambition to support the ‘presence’ of Christianity in the region, in part by insisting to the world and to Christians and Muslims alike in the region that living Christians – and not only centuries-old holy sites and relics – are an essential element of Middle Eastern societies. Indeed, an Orthodox leader involved in the earliest iteration of the Middle Eastern Council of Churches criticized ongoing Christian emigration as ‘a suicidal form of genocide’.²¹⁶ Likewise, as early as 2009, the Catholic Council of Bishops identified a growing trend toward disproportionate emigration by Christians. With so many leaving the region for North America, Europe, or Australia, they warned, churches were losing and would continue to lose their ability to engage with Muslims or even minister to the basic needs of local Christians. Left unchecked, they warned, this trend could instigate a self-propelling demographic spiral that would permanently stifle the churches’ presence and function in the region.

²¹⁵ Ralston, ‘Islam and Christianity’, 152-162.

²¹⁶ Cited in Jean Corbon, ‘The Churches of the Middle East: Their Origins and Identity, from their Roots in the Past to their Openness to the Present,’ in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East*, ed. Andrea Pacini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 106.

Likewise, in a statement released in 2009, the Synod of Catholic Bishops identified five key challenges facing the churches of the Middle East: political conflict, lack of religious freedom, the rise of Islamist movements, emigration, and pastoral concerns for non-Arab Christian domestic workers.²¹⁷ Quoting a previous Pastoral letter, they added with concern:

The rise of political Islam, from the 1970's onwards . . . includes different religious currents which seek to impose an Islamic way of life on Arab, Turkish and Iranian societies and on all those who live in them, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. For them, the cause of all ills is the neglect of Islam. The solution is therefore a return to original Islam. Hence the slogan: "Islam is the answer" . . . In pursuit of this goal, some do not hesitate to resort to violence.²¹⁸

Notably, they also argue that emigration has recently worsened due to political instability and war, and because of the loss of the Ottoman millet system that had 'guaranteed a certain protection to Christians within their communities, though not always preventing conflict which was both tribal and religious in nature'.²¹⁹ While the bishops' statement discourages Christian emigration in favour of courageous involvement in both Middle Eastern churches and broader societies, it is significant that the bishops believe the loss of local cosmopolitanism – which may be understood in part as a product of the millet system – and the replacement of Pan-Arabism by Islamism – are some of the main causes of the recent dramatic increase in emigration. In contrast to the increasing prevalence of emigration, these churches call for a vibrant Christian presence in the region. This call is not unlike the Pan-Arab call for enthusiastic Christian participation, albeit from a theological rather than political perspective. Overall, both initiatives suggest a broad sense of 'Middle Eastern Christian' concerns across national and denominational boundaries, but they appear to be hampered in their ability to engage robustly with the specific problems that threaten this Christian presence. I suggest that these leaders are probing for a new tradition like Pan-Arabism, something that could support public participation for Christians across the region while offering constructive energy to diverse communities across the Middle East. The continually unfruitful search for such alternatives, however, leaves individual

²¹⁷ Synod of Bishops: Special Assembly for the Middle East, 'The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness', Vatican City, 2009, accessed 1 August 2020, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20091208_lineamenta-mo_en.html, A-87.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, B-24.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, B-25.

communities to negotiate these realities within their own, limited networks, as Part Two of this study explores.

Emigration as the alternative for Jordanian Christians

The implications of their departure were made clear by a group of Anglican leaders who professed themselves eager to welcome and assist the newcomers to settle in Jordan. Among other things, they hoped to persuade the refugees to strengthen the Christian presence by remaining in the region. Rev. George Al-Kopti's congregation had boasted several dozen Syrian families²²⁰, to whom the church provided material, logistical, and pastoral assistance on both a formal and informal basis. The last Syrian in his congregation, however, had emigrated in February 2019, although he did all he could to persuade them to remain in the Middle East. 'It is not as much as some people are doing, but it is what we can do', Rev. Faeq Haddad explained. 'But one thing we will not do is to help anyone leave the Middle East'.²²¹ They could never assist anyone to emigrate, they explained, because that would betray the greatness of Middle Eastern Christianity and the faith they carried forward in the lands of ancient scripture.

These leaders expressed faith in the importance of a Christian heritage grounded in the Middle East – both within worldwide Christianity and their personal witness in Christ – both privately and in public Christian settings. What they did not express, however, was confidence that as Arab Christians, they could participate alongside Muslims in the renewal of a grand Pan-Arab civilization. Instead, they spoke candidly of fear that regional problems could someday threaten Christians in Jordan. Such statements certainly represent a commitment to their faith and to Christian fellowship, but they are a far cry from the enthusiastic slogans recited just a few generations earlier by Christian Arab nationalists.²²²

²²⁰ George Al-Kopti, interview by author, St Paul's Anglican Church, Amman, Jordan, 5 March 2019, English.

²²¹ Anglican breakfast meeting, focus group with author, Redeemer Church, Amman, Jordan, 27 February 2019, Arabic – translation by author.

²²² Such slogans and statements uttered during the height of Pan-Arab fervour include: 'Muslim Arabs, this despotic state is not a Muslim state. Arab Christians and Jews, unite with your Muslim brothers' (quoted in Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 285). The Christian Pan-Arabist Michel 'Aflāq wrote: 'Christian Arabs will become aware, when nationalism fully awakes in them, that Islam is a national culture which they must assimilate until they understand and love it. Then they will be devoted to Islam as to the dearest aspect of their Arabism. If this aspiration has still to be achieved, the new generation of Christian Arabs is called to achieve it with audacity and disinterest, sacrificing pride and egotism. For there is no honour equal to that of belonging to it'. Quoted in: Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (London: Mowbray, 1992), 161.

Even Wafa Goussous, the representative for the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Jordan, described similar pressure to choose sides.²²³ When the military power of ISIS was at its height, she told me, a foreign embassy offered her an additional passport as a gift because of her position. When she refused, many who heard laughed this away as foolishness. She insisted, however, that leaving Jordan would never be an option for her as a Jordanian Christian. ‘If I am threatened, I am threatened’, she insisted. At the same time, she received numerous calls for help from both Iraqi Christian refugees who were waiting anxiously for visas and from Jordanian Christians growing increasingly desperate. Such desperation made them vulnerable to the temptation of emigration and the resulting loss of their Arab heritage and Christian faith, she believed.²²⁴ ‘We do not want that. This is the land where Jesus was baptized, where Christ taught and healed people’, she said. Like the Anglican leaders, she insisted that staying in Jordan was possible primarily as a matter of Christian faith, but she expressed little hope in a Pan-Arab future of the Middle East.

It is important to note the terms on which emigration is seen, even for those who have chosen to reject it. As Goussous said, ‘If I am threatened, I am threatened’. Likewise, the Anglican leaders defined their assistance to refugees as a ‘selfish’ desire to ensure that someone might return the favour when they are forced to flee Jordan. What is alarming about these comments, relative to this scholarly assessment of interfaith relations in Jordan, is that none of these leaders are rejecting emigration on the grounds that it is unnecessary. They do not deny the claims of their co-religionists that the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations continues to weaken, even in Jordan, and that Christian life in the Middle East is becoming more difficult. Rather, they are choosing to remain in a situation that threatens their existence as Christians with a particular understanding of Christian witness. Al-Kopti, for example, during Bible Study sessions with his congregation, repeatedly reminded them that the Arabic word for ‘to witness’ stems from the same root as the word for ‘martyr’.

After 2014, refugees from Iraq began to take the Syrians’ place, although most Iraqis went to Catholic congregations.²²⁵ As of 2019, many Iraqi Christians had already emigrated,

²²³ Goussous, interview.

²²⁴ Goussous said forcefully: ‘The international Christian community must start waking up and helping, or they will not have a Church of the Holy Nativity, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre will become a museum or a mosque maybe. But that cannot happen because this is the Holy Land. We are angry, and we look sadly at all the Arab Christians who are leaving, and if they leave, they will forget that they are Arab, and their children will become like Western Christians who do not know or commit to their faith’. Goussous, interview.

²²⁵ Interestingly, although the Jordanian Christian community is generally aware of Iraqi Christian refugees living near and often inside their churches since 2014, most foreign aid representatives are not. In interviews with numerous foreign aid agencies, many professed ignorance that any Christian refugees from Syria or Iraq

mostly to Australia, and the rest professed a single-minded determination to leave the region forever:

What seems strange, but also understandable, is that none of these Iraqi Christians are considering the option of returning to Iraq in the near future, even if their country becomes more stable. They say that they have been betrayed by their Muslim neighbours, who stole their homes after their departure.²²⁶

As Haddad noted, ‘This is the agony. You develop a relationship with someone and then they disappear – Australia, US, Canada. This is one of the big problems – emigration. It is part of the pain we feel as pastors’.²²⁷ Church leaders such as the Anglicans attempt to discourage this emigration, both by emphasizing the importance of Christian history in their particular geography and by providing as much support to the refugees as they could. Rev Al-Kopti told me, ‘Our goal is everlasting life. . . I tell them when they are thinking about leaving, ‘If you feel oppressed by Islam here, who’s to say that there you won’t feel oppressed by atheism? Or even by work? They work very long hours there, and there may not be time to go to church.’”²²⁸ Once again, although the priest sought to reframe the refugees’ concerns about Christian-Muslim relations in the region, he pointed them towards the self-sacrificial merits of Christian faith. Even then, however, he did not offer them hope for a better life within the Middle East.

Other Christians in Jordan, however, say that the Middle East no longer presents a future for Christianity, and they simply encourage the refugees to leave. One such leader, who had demonstrated years of consistent effort to assist Iraqi refugees with both pastoral and material assistance, regularly reminded them to learn English and otherwise prepare for life in Australia.²²⁹ He shared with me a dim assessment of Jordanian Muslims across all levels of society, and concluded, ‘We Christians in the Middle East, we are third-class citizens, not even second class. . . . It is the same for us in all the Arab countries’. On the one hand, he explained, this problem was the reason that his congregation focused aid efforts on the Iraqi Christians. While the

had ever entered Jordan, much less lived there still. One researcher specializing in refugee resettlement who worked in the US Embassy of Jordan was astonished to learn of both the Jordanian church aid programs and the frequency with which Christian refugees received permission to emigrate to Australia, as she had not (in late 2019) been aware that any Western countries were permitting refugees from the region to resettle. Unnamed USAID researcher, interview with author, Amman, Jordan, 25 July 2019.

²²⁶ Maggiolini and Twal, ‘Jordan’, 159.

²²⁷ Anglican breakfast meeting, focus group.

²²⁸ George Al-Kopti, interview by author, St Paul’s Anglican Church, Amman, Jordan, 21 July 2019, English.

²²⁹ Unnamed Jordanian, interview with author, Amman, Jordan, 28 July 2019, English. Because of the controversial nature of his claims, this individual’s name and identifying details have been intentionally obscured to protect him.

Syrians, Jordanians, and others in need received help from a host of government, local, and international organizations, the Iraqis needed the churches' support. 'It is discrimination because they are Christian', he told me bluntly. At the same time, he argued, Jordanian Christians suffered in their own country as well. Although Jordanian Christians often scored near the top on the national university entrance exam, most were refused entry to the top universities by Muslims who recognized their Christian names. Such comments are devoid of hope for Christians in the Middle East and reject the entire Pan-Arab project. This Christian has no confidence in the greatness of an Arab civilization and, instead, sees nothing for Christians in the Middle East except a continuation of their 'third-class' status. While his leadership has helped to provide extensive assistance to many Iraqi refugees, he encourages them to leave a region whose greatness is not in the future, as the ideology of Pan-Arabism proclaimed, but in the past.

In essence, the discourse around emigration has become a two-sided debate that permits no neutral bystanders. For Jordanian Christians, the seemingly obvious decision to continue their lives in the land of their nativity requires them to take a stand in their community's most contentious debate. Even the Christian leaders who discourage emigration use the language of Christian endurance and martyrdom rather than hope for the renewal of a Pan-Arab civilization that welcomes their participation. The tension surrounding this issue was felt by one wealthy Orthodox Christian – a lay leader – who was involved in numerous social projects across several churches. She told me in dismay that during a recent family meeting, her children had decided to emigrate. Despite her own reticence about leaving Jordan, she felt powerless to oppose the idea.²³⁰ This woman felt secure in her economic, religious, and social life in Jordan and valued her connection with fellow Arabs across the region, but the feeling of insecurity among all Jordanian Christians had intensified such that she could not avoid the contentious question of emigration. The result of this entire discussion has been to normalize the concept of emigration, such that even Christians who are content with life in the Middle East feel pressure to justify remaining. Simply continuing life in one's place of birth and ancestry has become a contentious issue, these comments suggest.

What is most remarkable about this new emigration debate is not the number of Christians leaving. As I illustrated earlier in this section, the disproportionate emigration of Christians has been a subject of concern throughout the Middle East for decades. Rather, the entire debate seems founded on the premise that only two options exist: emigration or eventual displacement, perhaps accompanied by violent martyrdom. Whether they wish to emigrate or

²³⁰ Anglican breakfast meeting, focus group.

not, Christians in Jordan feel increasingly obligated to choose between two undesirable options, both of which consign the Middle Eastern Christian community to ultimate disappearance. As I demonstrated in Chapter One, confidence in Pan-Arabism has been shrinking for decades, following the Arab military defeat in 1967 and the rise in Islamic movements across the region. Since 2012, however, the exodus of refugees has intensified the existing problems such that the Christians in Jordan feel compelled to take sides in a vicious emigration debate that – whatever they choose – offers no hope for a Christian future in the region. The intensity of this debate is destabilizing the Jordanian Christian community and exacerbating the existing challenge of responding to the needs of refugees while participating productively within an Arab, majority-Muslim society.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the relationship between Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan and the conflicts and refugee crisis in the surrounding region. In Chapter One, I demonstrated that the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations is the product of overlapping layers of context-specific history. Because actions in one era provoke reactions in the next, Christian-Muslim engagement in Jordan is as much a result of what has gone before as it is a matter of present economic or political expediency. Likewise, in places where migration has been extensive and longstanding, the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations also relies on events in neighbouring communities connected by geography, language, or even shared history. This is particularly true of a place such as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, a newly established nation whose inhabitants and even government identify themselves primarily by their historic belonging to other places, such as recently arrived Palestinian refugees or the survivors of the Armenian genocide.

In this chapter, I further illustrated this layer-by-layer dynamic by highlighting three major events since 2012: the rise of ISIS in Mosul, Jordan's ambivalent welcome to refugees, and the exodus of refugees from the region. I demonstrated that although these events do not relate directly to interfaith engagement or to broader Jordanian society, they affect the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations by weakening the influence of its important building blocks. By highlighting the willingness of neighbouring Muslims to see local Christians openly persecuted, the rise of ISIS cast doubts on the millennia-old practice of Arab hospitality in the region. When Jordanians emphasized the costs of admitting refugees, rather than their potential to contribute meaningfully to a fellow Arab society, they undermined the practice of local cosmopolitanism as a practical response to pluralism. At the same time, the decision by so many Arab refugees to flee the region highlighted a dramatic rejection of Pan-Arabism and promise of future greatness for

the Middle East. In this indirect, but still powerful, manner, the refugee crisis has increased the anxieties of Christians about their future in Jordan.

Drawing from fieldwork in Amman, this chapter rests on a reading of intercommunal history on a layer-by-layer basis. Sections One and Two illustrated the important role that singular events can play in weakening or altering the dynamic of interfaith relations. While this effect need not be irreversible, strengthening this dynamic would require the strong implementation of new traditions. Section Three addressed the changing dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in a slightly different manner. I offered an argument that the ongoing exodus of refugees from the region has exacerbated the existing weaknesses of Pan-Arabism. This is a change in degree, not in type, because Christians – and Muslims – had been emigrating in large numbers for much of the last century, and especially since the 1970s. The changes I observed in Amman are significant, however, because they demonstrate the relationship between Pan-Arabism, Christian-Muslim relations, and the widespread expectation of emigration. As increasing numbers of refugees lose confidence in the future of the region represented by Pan-Arabism, they depart in such large numbers as to further undermine confidence in the region's future. When Christians leave an already small community, those who remain lack the numbers, resources, and confidence in Pan-Arab equality to continue participating alongside Muslims in the majority society. Simply put, the more people leave, the more people leave.

It should be obvious at this point that Jordanians are facing a reckoning on multiple fronts. Arab hospitality as a governing strategy for diverse religious communities is being called into question. Local cosmopolitanism is rapidly losing the power to tolerate and build new institutions among diverse communities, and both Christian and Muslim refugees alike would rather risk all their assets in a dangerous migration abroad than trust the once-promised Pan-Arab greatness to come to Jordan. The preceding chapters of this thesis have addressed the implications of these changes for the country's dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations.

3. 'They're all Orthodox': Establishing the Parameters of Intra-Christian Relations

'You know they're all Orthodox?' she said with disdain.²³¹ The sudden coldness emanating from Mariam, normally a gentle woman, surprised me. Mariam was an Arab Orthodox Christian whose family – originally Palestinian – had successfully resettled in Jordan. She lived on the fashionable side of Amman and attended one of the country's largest and most ornate churches. Many times a grandmother, she devoted most of her energy to family, friends, and church. She was aware of my research and eager to teach me the traditions of Orthodoxy, but she remained otherwise uninterested in my work. When she discovered that I had plans to attend an Anglican church service, however, her face hardened. She paused for a moment, seeming to ponder how best to discourage this outrageous scheme. She settled for a dismissive characterization of Anglican Christians in Jordan, 'You know, they're all Orthodox, don't you?'

As far as she indicated, Mariam's hostility was not the result of some personal affront from Jordan's Anglican community, nor can the Anglican/Orthodox relationship be described as one of unusual hostility.²³² Indeed, speaking generally, the Orthodox have rather fewer objections to the Anglicans than, for example, the Catholics, about whom Mariam had occasionally expressed grudging admiration. No, Mariam's outrage expressed a broader grievance with deep roots in the Middle East's intra-Christian milieu. The origins of that grievance amid other, intra-Christian difficulties are the subject of this chapter. The Christian diversity produced by this long history creates real emotions among Jordanian Christians such as Mariam, and it shapes the resources and approaches employed by the churches in their response to refugees.

While the Christian faith encourages a type of unity among its adherents – a concept this study describes as 'catholicity' – loyalty to differing nations, laws, or institutions can disrupt such unity of faith. For modern Christians, real ecclesial differences between the Eastern and Western traditions, between Protestants and Catholics, alongside centuries of other doctrinal disagreement, complicate the issue even further. This issue is particularly salient to the Christians

²³¹ Mariam, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 26 February 2019, English/Arabic – translation by author. 'Mariam' is a pseudonym.

²³² Bryn Geffert offers a historical overview of recent developments in church relations and dialogue among the Anglican and Orthodox traditions. Of particular relevance, he notes particular efforts during the early- and mid-twentieth century to reconcile the two churches through ecumenical reunion:

Bryn Geffert, *Eastern Orthodox and Anglicans Diplomacy, Theology, and the Politics of Interwar Ecumenism* (Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

Several Orthodox perspectives are considered in the following:

Ivana Noble, 'Three Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism: Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Lossky', *Communio Viatorum* 57, no.2 (2015): 113–140.

of the Middle East, who, unlike Christians in Europe and North America, have long been a minority faith community existing alongside a Muslim majority. Issa Diab calls this tension ‘living on the intersection of two allegiances’.²³³ Because Middle Eastern Christians have lived for so long in societies shaped by the Islamic faith tradition, which carries its own particular set of commitments, they must navigate these tensions differently than those in historically Christian contexts. As noted earlier, George Sabra has argued that Middle Eastern Christian relations with each other and with Muslims have increasingly turned on the actions of a foreign – usually Western – other. European and North American powers – which are assumed, whether rightly or wrongly, to be Christian – have shaped local politics through repeated interventions, and Sabra observes that Middle Eastern Christians have been forced to respond to these interventions in ways that shape their own outlook and relations with Muslims. Increasingly, he writes, a given community of Middle Eastern Christians becomes functionally defined by alliances with either the Muslims they live among or the Christian powers with whom they share a faith, be it Byzantine, Latin, or later Western European.²³⁴ In turn, local churches engage, or refuse to engage, with one another based on their need to strengthen relations with either local Muslims or foreign Christians. These two different outlooks, or as Diab put it, the ‘living on the intersection of two allegiances’, can weaken other relationships in turn. Rhetorically speaking, Arab Muslims might look at their veil-less and cross-wearing neighbours and ask, ‘Are these Christians really with us?’, while American Christians debate whether these same people are ‘really Christian’. Peter Phan, for example, disparages Middle Eastern Christianity as a new and foreign ‘Arab/Islamicized Christianity, with its own theological literature in Arabic, forms of monastic life, and spirituality’.²³⁵

This understanding of dual allegiances can, in turn, shape the way that Middle Eastern churches respond to migration and refugees because these tensions define the boundaries of a distinctive, contextually specific Christian experience in the Middle East. The focus of this study, of course, is on the experience of Christians native to the modern state of Jordan. I suggest, however, that this experience cannot be understood without reference to their historical and ongoing engagement with and expectations of transnational Christian communities and networks. To show how this relationship continues to shape the Jordanian churches’ response to

²³³ Issa Diab, ‘A Place to Call Home: Middle Eastern Christian Experience of Living on the Intersection of Two Allegiances’, in *Christian Citizenship in the Middle East: Divided Allegiance or Dual Belonging?* ed. Mohammed Girma and Cristian Romocea (London; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017), 83-102.

²³⁴ Sabra, ‘Two Ways of Being a Christian’, 44.

²³⁵ Peter C. Phan, ‘Christianity as an Institutional Migrant: History, Theology, and Ethical Perspectives’, in *Christianities in Migration*, ed. Elaine Padilla and Peter Phan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), 18.

refugees – the focus of Chapters Four to Seven of this study – in this chapter I present a highly selective history of engagements between Jordanian and other Middle Eastern Christians with those outside the region.

Such historical resources have emerged with reference to a series of intra-Christian encounters and may be understood as the three traditions of catholicity, sacred geography, and neighbourly hospitality. Catholicity, as mentioned above, describes a fraught expectation of Christian unity. Sacred geography refers to the holy sites lying in and near Jordan. The church families referenced in this study, and indeed, most church families generally, place the modern nations of Jordan, Palestine, and Israel within one ecclesiastical unit. Thus, Jordanian Christians from most denominations – notably, many Palestinian-Jordanian Christian families – associate with regional, ecclesiastical leadership based in Jerusalem. This necessarily connects them with the concerns of Jerusalem and its associated holy sites. In addition to this ecclesiastical connection, I suggest that Jordanians from all religious communities identify with Jerusalem in a manner even more significant than neighbouring Arabs in Iraq or Syria. As recently as 1967, parts of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other holy sites significant to Christianity and Islam alike were based within Jordanian territory, and the Jordanian government continues to administer many of these holy sites in the name of all Arabs and, Katz has written, to derive important elements of its own political legitimacy from the same.²³⁶ Thirdly, neighbourly hospitality is an original concept that emerged from my observations and conversations with Jordanian Christians. As such, it receives an introduction in this chapter, for once identified, its presence becomes apparent in secondary literature, but more detailed analysis follows in later chapters.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify each of these traditions within the region's historical memory, delineate the expectations they produced on the part of Middle Eastern Christians, and demonstrate their relevance to Jordanian churches' self-understanding and response to refugees. I argue that the centuries-old intra-Christian relationship is shaped by the way that Middle Eastern Christians actively recall and creatively re-utilize their memories of the past. This affects not only the way that Jordanian Christians engage with refugees – that is the subject of Chapter Four of this study – but also helps define what it means to be a Middle Eastern Christian in the twenty-first century.

With that said, the historical episodes discussed in this chapter do not constitute 'historical background' in the usual sense; rather, I seek to engage the past in a way that sheds

²³⁶ Katz, *Jordanian Jerusalem*.

light on the events of 2018 and 2019. I do not present these episodes as a historian exploring the way that historical actors understood the past in their day. I am not even interested in helping modern readers reckon with their contested histories. Each of the three traditions discussed deserve far more detailed attention than this study offers. Indeed, these three traditions and the historical episodes that solidified them within the intra-Christian dynamic of the Middle East have often been fraught with controversy and even violence. Scholarship has yet to coalesce around a single understanding of many topics treated within this chapter, and debate within academic, ecclesiastical, and political circles remains contentious. Other able scholars and leaders, one can hope, will continue to shed light on these controversies in useful ways, but in this study, I aim solely to illuminate the function of each in establishing the ongoing dynamic of intra-Christian relations in Jordan and its effect on the recent refugee phenomenon. Discerning readers who find themselves troubled by the terms I have chosen, after much consideration, to describe certain events and places will, I hope, recognize the way that such distress further proves the point that I am trying to argue; namely, the relationship among Middle Eastern and Western Christians comprises a fraught and sometimes self-contradictory set of commitments that renders conflict frequent and misunderstanding unavoidable.

1. Catholicity

Catholicity has long featured in the work of theologians; it is considered a mark and sign of the Christian church. The agreement largely ends there, however. As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, disagreements about how the transcendent unity of Christianity should appear in practice have plagued Christians of every era. It is an essential yet indefinable element of Christian identity, especially in the region of Christianity's birthplace.

I argue that within the Jordanian church response to refugees, the tradition of catholicity breeds misunderstanding because the Middle Eastern Christians who previously benefitted from preferential treatment from Western church networks, governments, and even businesses expected this pattern to continue among more recent global humanitarian operations for refugees. While this latter point receives more detailed analysis and illustration through fieldwork later in Chapter Four, this section presents historical engagements among Middle Eastern churches and with transnational Christian networks related to catholicity. It is important to note that the historical episodes presented in this section have been selectively chosen to help elucidate the type of intra-Christian partnership that contemporary Christians in Jordan told me – during interviews and conversations in Amman – that they sought from Western Christians. Their wistful desire for intra-Christian harmony is best understood as a remembered history of

the area, and modern-day Protestant Jordanians in particular can sometimes neglect the reality that the last century's missionaries operated under many of the same transnational constraints and ambivalent motivations as today's evangelical and aid agencies. To claim that the ideal of catholicity has operated without conflict throughout the last two centuries – much less the long and often violent intra-Christian history of the Middle East – would be to ignore the reality of 'sheep-stealing',²³⁷ as well as real vicissitudes in the political and religious proclivities of Western churches and ostensibly Christian governments alike.²³⁸ 'Sheep-stealing' has meant, for example, that Western churches departed entirely from catholic expectation to appoint new church leaders in overlapping jurisdiction to those of pre-existing Eastern churches.²³⁹ Nonetheless, despite the rather selective nature of catholicity's remembered history, I argue that a remembered history of engagement does exist, and that it ultimately created ongoing expectations for intra-Christian relations in the region.

Historical engagements

Although catholicity carries a widely acknowledged mandate toward Christian unity, it has been practiced amid contention and disagreement. As the region of Christian nativity, this has been particularly obvious in the Middle East. Until quite recently, the region was alone in bearing the weight of the many schisms of Christian history. The region has also, again rather uniquely, been the site of many centuries of Christian-Muslim encounter. Both these circumstances have helped

²³⁷ 'Sheep-stealing' refers to the practice of Catholic and Protestant missionaries who built their own churches in the region by 'stealing' from the already-Christian flock of the pre-existing Orthodox churches. This practice is sometimes polemically labelled as 'sheep-stealing' by the Orthodox Church in the Middle East. For one scholarly discussion of the history of Catholic and Protestant church missions in Jordan, including the longstanding tensions that have followed, see: Haddad, "'Detribalizing" and "retribalizing"', 67-89.

²³⁸ A brief but more balanced account of both irenic and tense episodes within this period of intra-Christian history in the Middle East may be found in the following: Heather J. Sharkey, 'Middle Eastern and North African Christianity: Persisting in the Lands of Islam', in *Introducing World Christianity*, edited by Charles Farhadian, 8-20. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

²³⁹ This issue is explored within scholarly analysis not only of intra-Christian history, but also more contemporary missiological and ecumenical engagements. This work examines efforts by the Middle Eastern Council of Churches to address this issue through attempts to distinguish between 'proselytism' and the evangelistic mission of the church more broadly:

David A. Kerr, 'Mission and Proselytism: A Middle East Perspective'. *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 20, no. 1 (1996): 12-22.

An account written by an Arab theologian is the following:

George Sabra, 'Proselytism, Evangelisation and Ecumenism', *Theological Review: Near East School of Theology* 9, no. 2 (1988): 23-36.

A broader discussion that ties the 'sheep-stealing' accusation in a different context to the broader themes of World Christianity might be seen in the following:

Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'The Lutheran Aggression Controversy': Caste and Class Conflict of Christians in 19th Century South India' in *Ecumenism and Independency in World Christianity: Historical Studies in Honour of Brian Stanley*, ed. Alexander Chow and Emma Wild-Wood, 262-282 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

to define the identity of Middle Eastern Christianity and the forms of intra-Christian unity practiced. Indeed, scholarship on the early Islamic era from Michael Penn²⁴⁰ suggests that Islam's initial impact on Middle Eastern Christianity did not unify, but rather it divided them further. The earliest Christian-Muslim encounters were coloured by the particular Christological positions that divided one church from another, and Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches continued to define their boundaries against each other, generally considering one another heretics rather than Christian fellows. For their part, Muslims then and now generally paid little attention to these theological nuances. If anything, they saw the schisms among the churches as further proof of Christian inferiority and Islamic truth.

The long-term presence of Islamic rule in the region further complicated intra-Christian relations. For both practical and theological reasons, the early Islamic empire developed a practice of limited tolerance for Christians. As part of this framework, Christians received a *dhimmi* status, meaning they were second-class citizens with certain protected rights. One of these was communal autonomy over internal church and social affairs. Under this system, church leaders were co-opted into the Islamic government apparatus as the political representatives of their respective religious communities. They became functionally responsible for church-state relations, the main avenue through which lay Christians gained local privileges or lobbied for redress. Over time, and perhaps unintentionally, this Islamic policy preserved and strengthened Christian divisions and geographically specific church identities. It made conversion even across Christian boundaries more difficult and solidified ever-dwindling Christian power within church leadership. Under the Ottoman Empire, the *dhimmi* concept was enshrined within the *millet* system for non-Muslims. Because individual *millets* were loosely based on pre-existing church boundaries, the system kept churches politically separated even as the shared experience of local life under Islamic rule might have cooled thousand-year-old theological disputes.

In the final centuries of Islamic rule, European Christians began entering the Middle East in larger numbers. Some came as missionaries for either Catholic or Protestant churches, while others sought business opportunities or worked politically inside the region. In other words, some who acceded to Catholic missionaries and converted to an Eastern-rite Catholic church might have hoped mainly for material gain from the French government.²⁴¹ Likewise, others who

²⁴⁰ Michael Philip Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

²⁴¹ In Jordan especially, Islamic rule and local politics meant that church identity became synonymous with tribal belonging. Mohanna Haddad has written extensively about the way these issues played out in Jordan, both the tribal associations of certain church denominations and also the way that, as European missionaries

entered into foreign business ventures or served as translators for a European government might have thought mostly of improving Christian fellowship across borders. At the same time, and while misunderstandings doubtless proliferated among these different languages and traditions, the Christians of the Middle East also engaged deeply with the newcomers who offered much in turn. Growing levels of scriptural and theological literacy – borne largely of the educational resources brought by Catholic and Protestant missionaries – granted lay Christians a new and unprecedented spiritual and social autonomy. The most important point for this study is that those who converted to these new churches transformed not only their relationship with God, but also with other Christians, both Middle Eastern and European.²⁴²

Such complications only increased as time went on. From the nineteenth century at least, as part of both their global evangelizing efforts and political machinations against the Ottoman Empire, European governments offered diplomatic assistance to Christians in the region. This was accompanied by informal help from missionary groups and sometimes preferential treatment by European merchants as part of a growing sense of world Christian identity. As non-Muslims were legally second-class citizens in the Ottoman Empire, these actions were often welcomed by Christians who wanted – and in several extreme cases, needed – extra-legal assistance to ensure the social, economic, and religious survival of their dwindling communities. Heather J. Sharkey writes that by the early twentieth century:

While Protestants had a minute presence in the Ottoman Empire, Protestant missionaries cast a long shadow with their new ideas, foreign diplomatic and imperial contacts, readiness to dismantle or break from traditions, opportunities for females, promotion of printing and reading, and ability to equip students and proteges with skills in a world that was tipping in favour of western Europe and North America.²⁴³

For their part, these increasing interventions on behalf of Christians in the Middle East, whether diplomatic or educational, can be seen as a growing form of intra-Christian catholicity in action.

Ongoing engagements

and other foreign powers become important in the area, tribal leaders sought to manipulate their church identity for material gain. Haddad, “Detribalizing” and “Retribalizing”.

²⁴² Deanna Ferree Womack’s historical research on Arab Protestant women and their churches in Beirut sheds light on the dynamic nature of conversion, as well as the way that lay Christians became empowered to make important changes in living their faith, and ultimately, the world around them. Deanna Ferree Womack, *Protestants, Gender and the Arab Renaissance in Late Ottoman Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

²⁴³ Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 211.

The Pan-Arab movement appealed to a Pan-Arab unity of Christians and Muslims against European colonialism and other foreign interventions, claiming that their shared Arab civilization had and could continue to rival the twentieth-century achievements of Western nations. Arab nationalist plans succeeded, at least for a time, by advancing an ‘Arab Christian’ identity that could supersede any religious inhibitions sufficiently to allow the formulation of new, multi-religious Arab societies. The great hope of Pan-Arabism was that Arab Christians would no longer need foreign interventions because inclusive political participation would ensure their engagement and security within the newly forming Arab nations. Such a move would diminish the sense of transnational catholicity with Western Christians, but it also offered a new channel for intra-regional catholicity among Middle Eastern Christians.²⁴⁴

In practice, as Pan-Arabism lost political traction in the region, it was increasingly replaced by familiar but combustive tropes within Arab Christian-Muslim relations. It follows that references to Middle Eastern Christians as ‘Arabs’ in some parts of the region has become increasingly controversial, signifying as it does a declaration of support for an Arab, Muslim-majority society that many Christians no longer support. In response, Christians throughout the region have increasingly sought to rebrand their heritage as natives to the region. Christians in Iraq call themselves ‘Assyrians’ or ‘Chaldeans’, pointing to their associations with the ancient empires of the same name. In Egypt, Christians might use Coptic words to highlight their connection with the ancient Pharaohs.²⁴⁵ Christians in Lebanon increasingly wish to appear connected with the ancient Phoenician traders and shun the title ‘Arab’. Indeed, the Jordanian refusal to embrace such a strategy is one sign that Christian-Muslim relations remain relatively

²⁴⁴ Twentieth-century efforts such as the establishment of a Middle East Council Churches may be seen as evidence of growing regional catholicity. The proliferating number of joint statements among churches, in which various church leaders lend their differing authority to a shared political or social concern in the region, suggest its continuation. Consider, for example, the Kairos document in Palestine, or these more recent statements:

‘Open Letter from The National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP) to the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement’ *Sabeel* 20 June 2017, <https://sabeel.org/2017/06/20/4919/>
‘An Open Letter from Christian Clergy from the Bethlehem Area’, *Joint Advocacy Initiative* 7 July 2020, <https://jai-pal.org/en/publications-information/jai-publications/calls-statements/1227-churches-bethlehem-july2020>

²⁴⁵ The shift in Egyptian Christian identity and political formation is presented in detail the following scholarly works:

Sebastian Elsässer, *The Coptic question in the Mubarak era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Sana Hasan, *Christians versus Muslims in modern Egypt: The century-long struggle for Coptic equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Randall P. Henderson, ‘The Egyptian Coptic Christians: the conflict between identity and equality’, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 16, no.2 (2005): 155-166

Peter E. Makari, *Conflict & cooperation: Christian-Muslim relations in contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

strong there.²⁴⁶ In similar ways, each of these new identities pointedly seek to undermine Arab Muslim claims to legitimacy, political power, and cultural achievements. In their respective rhetorical claims, Christians note the greatness of the ancient Assyrian Empire and the long Pharaonic rule over Egypt. They try to remind Muslims that the Phoenicians, for example, predated the Arabization of the Levant by many centuries. Indeed, Anthony O'Mahony notes that such identities enable Christians to shift the debate rhetorically from second-class citizens pleading for their rights to erstwhile heroes 'reconquering a territory'.²⁴⁷ All of these campaigns respond to both the failure of Pan-Arabism and its replacement by Islamist and authoritarian nationalist ideologies, most of which understand citizenship primarily in terms of Islamic belonging and could dangerously relegate Christians to a new, second-class *dhimmi* status or worse.

At the same time, these new claims to a distinctive ethnic heritage for Christians should also be read in light of the above history and its effects on the Middle Eastern sense of catholicity. As I noted earlier, many Christians in the Middle East appreciated the interventions of Western missionaries and governments, seeing them as a reliable political alternative to Islam. If affairs went badly for Christians in the region, as they did so disastrously for many Christians in the former Ottoman Empire at the turn of the century, it was nice to know that someone powerful on the outside could offer help, or at least a place of refuge. If, in the shifting sands of internal Western politics, the 'Christian' identity ceased to draw forward such help, then perhaps a distinctive, ethno-religious identity might be more effective. Such runs the logic. One might say that Lebanese and Syrian Christians were not blind to the fact that the Greeks and Armenians who ultimately gained Western support for their causes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could truthfully claim a non-Arab minority status by pointing to their distinctive language and other features of ethnic culture.²⁴⁸ Admittedly, the advocacy of separate political representation for Christian 'ethnic minorities' has been most pronounced in the case of the Assyrian Christians

²⁴⁶ Joseph Maila, 'The Arab Christians: From the Eastern Question to the Recent Political Situation of the Minorities' in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East*, ed. Andrea Pacini (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1998).

²⁴⁷ Anthony O'Mahony, 'The Coptic Orthodox Church in modern Egypt', in *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Anthony O'Mahony and Emma Loosley (New York: Routledge, 2010), 63.

²⁴⁸ It is worth noting that after ISIS invaded Iraq in 2014, the United States under then-President Barack Obama resisted full mobilization until the militants threatened the Yazidis, a recognized ethnoreligious minority in Iraq. Doubtlessly, the American hesitation that prevailed while the same militants ransacked the homes and places of worship of countless Arabic-speaking Muslims and Christians registered among the region's inhabitants. See the following analysis from an American news source at the time; note the justification of airstrikes as being authorized for the purpose of protecting 'religious minorities': Jeremy Diamond, 'Why Obama decided to strike ISIS', 9 August 2014, <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/politics/obama-iraq-turning-point-political/index.html>

in Iraq. But then, since these Iraqi Christians are alone in the region as religious minorities who really do continue to speak a non-Arabic language – Aramaic – as their mother tongue, they might be said to have the strongest case for doing so.

This reality is an essential part of Sabra's framework for 'two types of Christians' in the region. The Jordanians who generally call themselves 'Arab Christians', are trusting in the remnants of Pan-Arabism – in the form of Jordan's Hashemite monarchy – to protect them from budding Islamist ambitions. Like their Palestinian neighbours, they have cultivated strong social ties with Arab Muslims and continue to press for political representation within the majority-Muslim governments that rule their native lands. Indeed, Christians have long played outsized roles in Jordanian and Palestinian politics and especially in grassroots movements.²⁴⁹

On the other hand, the Egyptian Christians who protest unanswered attacks on their churches by wearing Pharaonic garb are not trying to shore up relations with Muslim co-citizens. They are trying to call attention to their distinctiveness, not build common ground. They want to suggest that their presence predates Islam in Egypt, and they seek to demonstrate their superiority to Arab Muslims in a new and different way.²⁵⁰ They are, we could conclude from Sabra's analysis, 'Middle Eastern Christians', whose paramount aim is to 'save Middle Eastern Christianity at all costs'.²⁵¹ The sense of desperation that appears to accompany such analysis should not be seen as accidental, nor should the effect of this divided strategy for the internal catholicity of Middle Eastern Christianity be ignored. Whether they are placing their hopes for a Christian future in Arab Muslims or in Western Christians, they are not, it would seem, putting overmuch confidence in the commonality they share with one another.

Expectations relating to catholicity

This complex history yields a peculiar situation, as Jean Corbon, a theologian of the region, notes. He writes that the churches emphasize their theological identities ever more forcefully, even as their shared experience of Middle Eastern history and custom renders the differences themselves less significant. He suggests the possibility of a functional catholicity across the region, for despite centuries of conflict among denominations, many have also learned to

²⁴⁹ Betty Anderson traces some of these grassroots movements throughout the twentieth century in Jordan, including Christian involvement and contribution in populist, leftist causes especially. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan*.

²⁵⁰ Candace Lukasik 'Conquest of Paradise: Secular Binds and Coptic Political Mobilization', *Middle East Critique*, 25 no.2 (2016), 107-125.

²⁵¹ Sabra, 'Two Ways of Being a Christian', 43.

transcend differences through centuries of shared experience, intermarriage, and common institutions. While all the churches originally established in the Middle East were connected to particular geographies, historic migration has further mixed their locales. This partially explains the fact that, while historic divisions between the Middle East churches were bitter, their common struggles over the centuries mean that ‘the expression of their identities, which seem to be radically different, is common to all of them’, as Corbon argues. ‘This is especially true on the social and cultural level. The main factors which contributed towards the division of the Churches have in fact disappeared. . . .Nowadays, it is difficult to distinguish an Orthodox, a Catholic, or a Protestant on a social level’.²⁵² Corbon is not suggesting that the churches of the Middle East are all the same, or that real debates around worship and ecclesiology are unimportant; but rather he argues that many centuries of struggle and survival under the same circumstances have eliminated the original causes of their once-bitter divisions. Thus, ‘the expression of their identities, which seem to be radically different, is common to all of them, and current rivalries among denominations have themselves become expressions of identity’.²⁵³ Corbon suggests a ‘unity within diversity’²⁵⁴ across Middle Eastern Christianity. While debates among the churches often remain difficult and contentious, in times of crisis, Middle Eastern churches increasingly recognize their shared mutual experience relative to Muslims and, as I next show, Christians from outside the region. This long history helps to define the way that Jordanian Christians practice catholicity to this day, dictating not only who is helped but also which and how churches work together during times of crisis.

All these historical and more recent engagements among Christians have given rise to several perceptions that affected local politics. The first is a Muslim perception that their Christian neighbours were traitors to Middle Eastern society or simply pawns of Christendom or Western colonial empires. Some Muslims responded to this perception by mistreating the region’s Christians in various ways, thus inviting more European intervention and further reinforcing this pattern of foreign patronage. Among many Arab Muslims, an anti-Christian trope developed to suggest that Arab Christians received a constant outpouring of foreign favours in everything from cushy business investments to free visas to America. Although, as later chapters of this study show, many Christians remain distressingly susceptible to

²⁵² Corbon, ‘The Churches of the Middle East’, 99-100.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

unemployment, poverty, and dead-end emigration applications, this widespread stereotype remains an effective red herring to avoid addressing socio-political problems.

Second, the Christian communities themselves develop expectations about foreign help that dampen their willingness or ability to make constructive changes. As Tarek Mitri argues:

Insecure communities in one place are tempted to seek protection from others elsewhere who are perceived to share a common identity, in order to achieve political empowerment, inviting external attention to, and support for, minority rights. Rather than strengthening such empowerment, external support often runs the risk of weakening further the minority communities it purports to rescue'.²⁵⁵

Furthermore, this expectation can damage internal Middle Eastern catholicity and whatever constructive projects it might produce. Joseph Maila argues that this history has created a relationship of dependency, in which many Arab Christians do not believe they can maintain their own churches and Christian witness without foreign support.²⁵⁶

To conclude, while the importance of catholicity is well-established within Christian theology, its nature is contested among churches with different theological and geographic backgrounds. The application of catholicity is complicated by both theological and political disagreements. Within the Middle East, its application across the different churches has been hampered by their long subjugation to Islamic *dhimmi* status, which inadvertently fossilized ancient Christian divisions that, in turn, hampers their ability to work together. At the same time, catholic relations with Western churches often accorded them special treatment relative to the region's Muslim population. Expectations that such special treatment will continue have both complicated Christian-Muslim relations and proved difficult to meet in the modern context, as Chapter Four will demonstrate.

2. Sacred geography

The nearby presence of sacred geography destabilizes the Jordanian church response to refugees by yoking the churches uncomfortably to foreign powers with ambivalent interests in the region. Historical church battles over control of the holy sites left many Arab Christians cautious about foreign Christians operating in their homeland, even as others became increasingly reliant on

²⁵⁵ Tarek Mitri, 'Christians in Arab Politics' in *Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries: Arab Christians in the Levant*, ed. Kail C. Ellis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 114.

²⁵⁶ Maila, 'The Arab Christians', 40.

shared Christian institutions that continue to support Christian communities in the Middle East. This section argues that the ongoing struggle to control and access holy sites divides Jordan's churches, both from foreign Christian networks and from each other. Two different approaches to the holy sites have emerged: one of competition among Christians, and another of shared participation in institutions that are grounded in the holy sites.

Historical engagements

This analysis references the contemporary memories associated with the First Crusade of European Christians to Jerusalem (1095-1099), a period of history that has received a great deal of attention in the last two centuries. Indeed, some have argued that these events have influenced modern politics far more than they affected the politics of their own day.²⁵⁷ While much recent scholarship has sought to present these events from new angles, my study is interested solely in the way that these events – or, to speak more precisely, contemporary memories of these events – alter intra-Christian relations in modern Jordan. To be specific, I suggest that events broadly known as the Crusades become a useful rhetorical window into the emergence of two, contrasting approaches to sacred geography. These might be understood as competition for the holy sites and collaboration around them.

The first of these approaches is likely better known. Indeed, competition around control of the holy sites becomes evident – sometimes violently so – to anyone who undertakes a visit to modern-day Jerusalem or tries to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Historically, these conflicts appear to emerge – though perhaps they began even earlier – when Latin²⁵⁸ Christians from Europe, still fresh from their schism with the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054, achieved

²⁵⁷ Many scholars have noted that to the Islamic Empire of the eleventh century, ongoing wars with the Persian Empire were much more significant than the temporary European takeover of Jerusalem. These events received minimal attention from leaders and historians of their era, but they have seen a great revival of interest in recent centuries as East/West engagement has increased. See the following: Christopher MacEvitt and Ruth Mazo Karras, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2009).

Nicholas Paul and Suzanne Yeager, *Remembering the Crusades: Myth, Image, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

²⁵⁸ The designation 'Latin' here refers to the Roman Catholic Church that, at that time, exclusively represented Western Christianity. This designation is commonly used in the Middle East to this day, as it helps to distinguish between Roman Catholic Christians whose worship is European in origin and the Eastern-rite Churches – sometimes called Uniate Churches – that emerged centuries later after Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches made contact with Catholic missionaries from Europe. These Eastern rite, but still Catholic, churches kept many of their Orthodox customs but have formally transferred their allegiance from the Patriarchs of the East to the Pope of Rome. While they are rarely found outside the region, they are numerous in Jordan and across the Middle East to this day. For this reason, and to maintain clarity, I refer to them as Eastern Catholic and call the Western Catholics of Europe 'Latins' throughout this study.

military control over Jerusalem in 1095. While historical opinion is ambivalent on the initial reception of local Christians to Crusader rule, a mix of catholic collaboration and hostile ecclesiastical competition followed, as Arabic- and Chaldean-speaking Christians were offered a prominent but rather lower place beneath the Latins.

Despite these harsh realities, conflict was not the only approach to intra-Christian relations during this time. Andrew Jotischky is quick to remind readers, ‘The Latin settlers saw themselves as the guardians of the shrines; indeed, the stated purpose of the Crusade was the protection of the Holy Places and of pilgrimage to them’.²⁵⁹ After all, Christian life and practice in the tenth and eleventh century Middle East had become noticeably difficult, for reasons ranging from general regional instability to violent anti-Christian persecution by the Fatimid caliph in 1009. Church leaders in Constantinople had requested assistance from fellow Christians on the grounds of catholicity, and the Crusades were, at least in part, an answer to that call.

Indeed, church-building predominated for two centuries of Crusader rule, and this project included benign neglect or even support for internal Orthodox establishments, as well as new, Western monasteries or convents that added to or occasionally replaced a Byzantine church. Despite the political problems, Jotischky notes, ‘Notwithstanding the position of non-Latin rites and churches in the ecclesiastical, legal, and political framework of the Crusader States, local Christian traditions and styles were influential in the ways in which the Holy Places were managed and presented to pilgrims and worshippers’.²⁶⁰ Collaborations between Western builders and Eastern artisans would decorate many of the new churches that were built, and Western Christians ‘commissioned and admired’ icons for the first time. Even after the majority of the Latins left, many of their churches and other Christian institutions would remain, and centuries-worth of pilgrims would continue to require, fund, and staff many of these buildings in a way that benefited local Christians and connected them with these foreigners. In this way, sacred geography becomes the impetus for both intense competition and collaboration among Christians of different nationalities and a practical means for working out the catholicity of intra-Christian relations.

At the same time, competition over the holy sites also became an important element of intra-Christian relations. Most importantly, Jotischky notes, both the Latins and the Eastern Orthodox church continued to maintain their schism by appointing their own clergy to the same

²⁵⁹ Andrew Jotischky, ‘Christianity during the Crusades’, in *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East*, ed. by Mitri Raheb, Mark A. Lamport (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 71.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

posts in Jerusalem.²⁶¹ That both churches continued to appoint separate ecclesiastical leaders throughout Crusader control of the Holy Land can be seen as an initial flashpoint in intra-Christian relations, especially when Crusader kings prevented Greek Orthodox patriarchs from taking seat in Jerusalem. These fights over control and ecclesiastical authority between Latin and Byzantine Christians came in addition to the existing quarrels between Chalcedonian Christians and the non-Chalcedonian Syriac churches, which also operated in the area.

The effects of all these divisions on the Crusader period were of course complex, but this study restricts analysis to sources that explicate the Crusades from the perspective of Christians local to the Holy Land and, more specifically, to Christians currently living in Jordan and the self-understanding of Middle Eastern Christianity more broadly. For that reason, I note only that the Crusades were ostensibly launched at the request of Eastern Christians who sought the help of their co-religionists against a common Islamic enemy. In that sense, they may be seen in part as an effort to repair the then-recent ecclesiastical schism between Eastern and Western Christianity. Functional disagreements over management of the holy sites quickly muddied the waters of Christian unity, however. Jason Bruner writes:

The sacking of Constantinople in 1204 [by Latin Crusaders] was the most obvious sign that whatever common goals and faith conjoined Western Crusaders and Byzantine Christians at the end of the eleventh century had utterly dissolved in the misunderstandings about what the other was doing and needed with respect to the Holy Land, the governance of pilgrimage sites, and Islamic armies'.²⁶²

Ongoing engagements

This dual approach to the tradition of sacred geography has only grown since European and, later, American missionaries began proliferating throughout the Middle East. Whether Latin or Protestant, ongoing contact between Western and Middle Eastern Christians is attested by the institutions that foreign churches built to honour and claim their piece of the faith's sacred geography. Such institutions included both the brick-and-mortar churches and pilgrim-houses and the charitable work of religious orders associated with them. Doubtless, the influence and available resources of these institutions waxed and waned with the changing fates of different churches and their corresponding congregations at home. When the Ottoman Empire granted a

²⁶¹ Ibid., 69.

²⁶² Jason Bruner, *Imagining Persecution: Why American Christians Believe There is a Global War Against Their Faith* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ, 2021), 52.

series of Capitulations to selected European nations, it freed not only traders and governments to operate more freely across the region, but also missionary societies and other church operations could proliferate and strengthen or create new ties to the Christians of the Middle East, as Heather Sharkey has documented.²⁶³ In time, hospitals, schools, national embassies, affordable accommodation projects, and employment schemes would join the milieu of Western, usually church-supported, establishments that helped to nourish the remaining Christian communities living in and around the Holy Land. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed after World War I, the establishment of a British Mandate system over the territories of Palestine and Transjordan opened the area even further to the influence of Western churches and societies. The complexity of ownership over the holy sites had, by that time, become so great that the British officials adopted an official policy of non-intervention in their administration, seeking to maintain the status quo rather than sift through centuries worth of conflict and compromise over sacred geography.

All of these activities suggest something more than a land grab for holy real estate, however. An idea had developed of collaborative intra-Christian action. While each church wanted a piece of the Holy Land to call its own, they also cared for the faith living around their spiritual embassy. The people living there mattered, too, it seemed, and most churches seemed to want a few local people to participate in – and perhaps to legitimize – their sacred enterprise. Sometimes this meant evangelizing to locals to establish a Jerusalem Patriarchate or Diocese of this or that, and at other times, it was interpreted simply to mean that Christians of some sort must continue to live nearby. The differences depended, of course, on the theology of the particular church, as well as their actual history in the area and access to resources. In any case, a discourse often referred to as ‘living stones’ emerged to describe this collaboration, and this discourse of living stones suggested that the Christians of the world should care about and sustain the small and sometimes harangued communities of Middle Eastern faithful.

The importance of what he calls a ‘unique relationship between the living stones and the Christian institutions’ is captured in an anecdote from a Palestinian Christian whose family has called Jerusalem home for many centuries:

‘In my own family, my grandfather was born in 1890 during the tail end of the Ottoman Empire; my father was born in 1921 during the Palestinian mandate; I was born in 1960

²⁶³ Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

during Jordanian rule; and my four children were all born after 1967 and hold birth certificates issued by the State of Israel! Four generations born in the same city, and yet each generation has a birth certificate issued by a different authority. Despite this unstable situation, what has been a constant safety net in many people's lives has been the Church and the institutions of the various churches that provide services in education, healthcare, and social services'.²⁶⁴

The experience of this Palestinian Christian with intra-Christian sacred geography has been a very positive one. Because politics have made his family's life in the Holy Land unstable, they have been sustained by the warm constancy of his own church – likely with some support from fellow church-members in other lands – alongside the collected institutions and catholicity of other churches. These other churches have provided for this and other families because they believe that Christian life in the Holy Land is essential and exceptional and worthy of their sacrifice. In this way, Christians from many lands can collaborate, and even mitigate the adverse effects of worldly troubles, because of catholicity and sacred geography.

On the other hand, sacred geography can also prompt less irenic encounters, when Christians from different places find their interests conflicting around the political battles of the Middle East. The competition approach is illustrated in this note from an American Christian writer who met with a Palestinian priest, Father Elias Chacour:²⁶⁵

Chacour has a gentle impatience with those who come to Israel to venerate shrines of the past while ignoring human beings, who come to see only 'holy stones and holy sand'.

With a spreading smile, he directed his challenge at me: 'Did you come for the shrines – or do you want to learn about the *living* stones?'²⁶⁶

In this encounter, Chacour recognizes the importance of sacred geography; many Christians come to the land of his birth, he acknowledges, in order to celebrate the events that occurred there. He defines his expectations of such travellers, however, clarifying that he expects that Christian visitors from other places to look after the local Christians, through the building and

²⁶⁴ Sami El-Yousef 'Christian Contributions to Education and Social Advancement' in *Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries: Arab Christians in the Levant*, ed. Kail C. Ellis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 121-122.

²⁶⁵ He later became the Archbishop of the Greek Melkite Church for Akko, Haifa, Nazareth, and Gallilee.

²⁶⁶ David Hazard, 'An Urgent Word Before' in *Blood Brothers*, Elias Chacour (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1984) 15.

maintaining of institutions that serve others. He argues, in effect, that such institutions are also essential to Christian faith and engagement with sacred geography.

The competitive approach to sacred geography may be seen in a discourse often called Christian Zionism. In response, Naim Ateek, a Palestinian Anglican priest, expresses much more than ‘gentle impatience’. He refutes the idea that God has given a modern state of Israel to the Jewish people and complains, ‘Although Christian Zionists love and support Israel, one would have thought that their Christian compassion would compel them to equally support their Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters and be, at least, committed to alleviating their suffering’.²⁶⁷ Instead, he says, thousands of Christian Zionists visit the holy sites each year, without visiting or caring for the Christians who have lived there for centuries. Ateek contrasts this attitude with the collaborative care of many mainline churches for living stones, however, noting that these have ‘supported [Middle Eastern Christians] not only through various social, educational, medical, and religious projects but equally in the work of advocacy’.²⁶⁸ This work acknowledged the fraught double-standard associated with the intra-Christian tradition of sacred geography. Ateek condemns other Christians for employing a competitive approach that sides with the state of Israel, against the Palestinians, but he advocates for the collaborative, living stones approach that emerged throughout centuries of intra-Christian engagement.

This argument – living stones versus Christian Zionism – is simply the most contemporary debate within a long history of contestation around sacred geography. Just as there are Palestinian church leaders and Vatican advocates for ‘living stones’ who believe that shrines and people in the Holy Land merit special attention, there are Christian Zionists who justify displacement of Palestinians in favour of the Israeli state, a twenty-first century competition over control of the Holy Land. In both approaches, however, Christians from many contrasting traditions – including those who consider one another heretics, rather than fellow Christians – employ theological language to prioritize sacred geography. When, among Christians from many lands, other human interests contradict appeals to catholicity, conflicts are both inevitable and extremely difficult to resolve, precisely because all can appeal to the convoluted tradition of sacred geography.

Expectations relating to sacred geography

²⁶⁷ Naim Stifan Ateek, *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 2008), 90.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

The tradition of sacred geography is associated with a somewhat convoluted set of expectations. First, there is a certain universality to the holy sites in and around Jerusalem. Christians of all traditions hold them sacred, and nearly all expect their churches to be able to maintain some sort of presence there. A complex tangle of ecclesiastical authority results, confusing the issue of catholicity and making it difficult for local Christians in the area to navigate relations with outsiders. This expectation reflects the competitive approach that I identified in both historic and ongoing engagements around sacred geography.

But collaboration is also expected. There is an idea that the churches and Christians living around the holy sites can expect a somewhat singular experience. Because of the exceptional status of their churches, it has often been understood that Middle Eastern Christians require and deserve particular assistance from churches elsewhere. I note that this exchange is not necessarily transactional in nature, but rather that it is an acknowledgement of the particularly essential – and often particularly difficult – task of Christian living in this part of the world. This view has been described by Palestinian Christians in particular as one of looking after the ‘living stones’ of the Holy Land. In that sense, this foreign exposure can give Arab Christians access to resources and institutions that strengthen communities internally and muddy local ties.

Third, historic and ongoing engagements have created an expectation that the Vatican in particular takes a kind of protective stance toward all the region’s Christian communities and holy sites. Middle Eastern Christians have often welcomed the Pope or his representatives into their affairs. For example, one Greek Melchite Patriarchate who viewed the existence of a Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem with distaste, at the same time approved of the existence of a ‘distinguished Latin representative in the Holy Land . . . to guard the shrines and give added Catholic witness (*vis*) to Christ in his own land’, simply wishing that a nuncio, perhaps or an official custodian of the Holy Land would be appointed in the stead of an additional patriarchate with ecclesiastical powers that overlapped its own.²⁶⁹ Latin and Eastern Catholic Christians are not alone in seeking such representation. This expectation received recent expression in the Pope’s first-ever visit to Iraq. He undertook this risky journey in the midst of Covid-related concerns, it was said, in an effort to raise global awareness for the difficult situation of the ancient Christian communities in Iraq. This visit was an excellent example of sacred geography in practice, as the Pope acted as a global ambassador to the world on behalf of the Christians living

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

near ancient holy sites.²⁷⁰ The expectation that the Pope functions as a kind of all-Christian ambassador is important to Middle Eastern Christians, and it is directly related to the traditions surrounding sacred geography.

In summary, sacred geography prompts intra-Christian engagement because so many churches from around the world express interest in and desire control over the Holy Land. Efforts by so many to control the same space have often prompted churches to approach one another in a spirit of competition. At the same time, centuries of engagement in the same spaces have also yielded intra-Christian collaboration, as shared Christian institutions stabilize the lives of vulnerable travellers and locals alike. Efforts related to sacred geography support the local Christians who live in and around Jerusalem at times, but in other cases, they displace them.

3. Neighbourly hospitality

Neighbourly hospitality continues to shape the way that Jordanian churches respond to refugees because of a precedent of partnership between Christians. During the Armenian Genocide, American Protestant Christians and ultimately the United States government provided significant personnel, funding, and migration opportunities to Armenian survivors. They were, in turn, rehabilitated through the facilities and local expertise of Middle Eastern churches on the ground. This historic partnership continued throughout the twentieth century during times of crisis. This section introduces neighbourly hospitality as a practice and argues that this historical precedent created an expectation that Middle Eastern and foreign Christians could cooperate to share responsibility for refugees in the region.

Historical engagements

Neighbourly hospitality is a living practice with deep ties to both the ancient customs of the Middle East and the scriptural traditions of Christianity and Islam alike. While different names and descriptions have characterized it in these different contexts, I have chosen to call this practice ‘neighbourly hospitality’ for two reasons. First, somewhat obviously, I wish to distinguish between it and the separate but related concept of Arab hospitality that I introduced in Chapter One. Second, and more importantly, I believe that neighbourly hospitality is a distinct

²⁷⁰ A detailed history of Catholic engagement in Iraq, and particularly the notion of ambassadorship, may be found here: Fernando Cardinal Filoni, *The Church in Iraq*, trans. Edward Condon (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017).

Scholarly observations on the Pope’s recent visit to Iraq might be seen in this post: Steve Cochrane, ‘The First Papal Visit to Iraq: Embracing Hope-filled Hospitality’ Christian-Muslim Studies Network, University of Edinburgh. <http://christianmuslim.div.ed.ac.uk/the-first-papal-visit-to-iraq/>

approach to charitable aid that I observed at work in Jordan. I do not believe that this approach is limited to Christians, but rather, as this section demonstrates, it is part of the region's culture historically. Whether this practice originated with the New Testament church or whether early Christians simply drew upon and expanded existing traditions from the area is difficult to determine and fairly irrelevant to this study, but I suggest that both Christians and Muslims in the Middle East employ this distinctive approach to aid, with slight differences that reflect differing religious structures. Features of this approach appear in the New Testament, but its origins are largely lost to the long history of the region. What is more important, I argue, is that this approach constitutes a distinct and living theology of charitable giving, a generous way of life that is part of the heritage of Middle Eastern Christianity. The fieldwork observations from which this practice emerged are introduced in Chapter Four of this study.

The appendage of 'neighbourly' is important because, unlike 'hospitality', it is a word that translates easily into Arabic and is used frequently by Arabic speakers in describing how and why they might help others. It has theological significance within Christianity, as it references the call of Christ to love God and neighbour. Within Islam it is also important, however, as many sayings of the prophet Muhammad delineate the duties of believers toward their neighbours. Additionally, the concept of a neighbour suggests an involuntary, non-familial relationship. Neighbours cannot generally be chosen, and newcomers who settle nearby become neighbours regardless of where they originated. This makes 'neighbourly' a useful way to describe an approach to aid that applies to refugees and the local poor alike. Most importantly, a neighbour is part of everyday life. The distinct approach to aid that I describe is not a special ministry, set apart from the weekly activities of a congregation, nor is it a particular project embraced only during the Christmas season or other special occasions. For those who practice neighbourly aid, engaging with others in this manner becomes a way of life; in other words, it becomes a particular way of caring for one's neighbour.

Neighbourly hospitality has much broader implications for this study than simply one part of the Jordanian Christian relationship with the West. Rather, I argue that neighbourly hospitality constitutes a real set of practices that I observed in action during fieldwork in Jordan. Furthermore, I ultimately aim to make explicit a theology that runs through the Jordanian Christian engagements with refugees and one another. For that reason, the answer to the question, 'What is it?' is only addressed partially in this chapter, as it receives further detail and ample demonstration throughout the rest of this thesis. Because neighbourly hospitality is a concept that can transcend Christian and Islamic faith, a useful guide toward understanding is

found in the work of Mona Siddiqui, a Muslim theologian. As I do in this thesis, Siddiqui identifies neighbourly hospitality – albeit by a number of different names – as a virtue within the scriptural and lived traditions of both Islam and Christianity. It should be no surprise to find the practice at work in Jordan, or indeed, in any other place whose local customs draw from the deep and often intersecting wells of ancient Abrahamic tradition.

Indeed, Tahir Zaman observed neighbourly hospitality at work in Syria, where – attempting as a Muslim scholar to identify the Syrian welcome to Iraqi refugees – he noticed that assistance was more informal and neighbourly, but also more widespread, than he had anticipated. He found efforts to welcome the displaced as sisters and brothers ‘brought into the fold of family’²⁷¹. He concludes that the significant role of the home in Arab societies as a space for economic growth, tribal politicking, and religious engagement, as well as learning and family, eases this practice of everyday, neighbourly hospitality. He also found significance in the Arabic expression *haraka baraka* – ‘to keep moving is a blessing’.²⁷² Welcoming the displaced and needy becomes more natural, Zaman argues, when the broader society is oriented towards pilgrimage and almsgiving as a token of virtue and faith.

Neighbourly hospitality is especially well-developed within Christian theology and history. Indeed, Christine Pohl articulates a tradition of hospitality that has deep roots in both the scripture and historical practice of Christian faith. She argues, furthermore, that what distinguished Christian hospitality in its earliest forms from the social gatherings and dinner parties of the Roman Empire was its choice of object. First-century Romans and Jews all welcomed family and friends, but early Christians distinguished themselves by adding the poor and unpopular to their tables. Furthermore, early Christians saw in hospitality a sacramental quality. ‘The practice of Christian hospitality’, Pohl writes, ‘is always located within the larger picture of Jesus’ sacrificial welcome to all who come to him’.²⁷³ As time went on, the practical application of hospitality rested on the strength of Christian institutions, including not only churches, but also schools, hospitals, or shelters, as well as extended families.²⁷⁴

Siddiqui seeks to connect the well-developed literature of theoretical hospitality, and the known yet difficult-to-pin-down practice therein. She writes, ‘I believe strongly that “doing hospitality” is not simply about making physical room for others in our homes but is essentially

²⁷¹ Tahir Zaman, *Islamic Traditions of Refuge in the Crises of Iraq and Syria* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 37.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁷³ Pohl, *Making Room*, 17.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

an attitude to life', an attitude that incorporates – in an everyday manner – the habits of forgiveness, compassion, and generosity to others.²⁷⁵ This is one of the most important characteristics of the tradition that I describe, and it is one of the reasons that I assigned the appendage 'neighbourly' to a well-known theological concept. While hospitality has been employed in organizing events for interfaith dialogue,²⁷⁶ in calling for improved care towards the refugee²⁷⁷ or the imprisoned,²⁷⁸ none of these single activities can define in its completeness the practice of neighbourly hospitality in Jordan. It is an everyday virtue cultivated because of faith in God and respect for scripture. In speaking of hospitality within both Christianity and Islam, Siddiqui writes:

Hospitality is good for the individual, the host and the guest, and attitudes of hospitality can transform society around us. This is not easy, but being a certain way can eventually become our character; it is possible to speak and act more charitably towards those we know and those we don't know. The stranger and the traveller are still there in the form of refugees and migrants, except now they are identified through the political language of our age.²⁷⁹

While I argue that this practice is part of everyday, neighbourly life, rather than being a special project or response to crisis, its value certainly becomes apparent to those in great need or moments of crisis.

Ongoing engagements

While I elaborate on the practice of neighbourly hospitality later in this study, as a tradition, it gained a new dimension during a relatively recent moment of crisis in the region. This moment of crisis, already discussed briefly in earlier chapters of this study, occurred in the final days of

²⁷⁵ Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam*, 18.

²⁷⁶ See the following for applications of hospitality in the context of interfaith dialogue:

Martin Accad, *Sacred Misinterpretation: Reaching Across the Christian-Muslim Divide* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2019).

Fadi Daou and Nayla Tabbara, *Divine Hospitality: A Christian-Muslim Conversation* (World Council of Churches Publications: Geneva, Switzerland, 2017).

Alana Harris, 'Patron Saint of Catholics and Hindus: Saint Antony and Ecclesial Hospitality in East London' in *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body*, ed. Susanna Snyder, Joshua Ralston and Agnes M. Brazal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 159-174.

²⁷⁷ Matthew Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2018).

²⁷⁸ The following applies the practice of hospitality to the context of care for the incarcerated:

Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2017).

²⁷⁹ Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam*, 242-243.

the Ottoman Empire, as the new political structures of the modern Middle East were beginning to take shape. During these uncertain days, the Armenian, Syriac Orthodox, and Assyrian Christians then living throughout present-day Turkey, Iraq, and Syria became victims of a series of brutal anti-Christian displacements and massacres. These events are often remembered as the Armenian Genocide²⁸⁰ or the *Sayfo*; the Syriac Orthodox and Assyrian Christians have received less attention, perhaps because so few survived.²⁸¹ The Armenian community survived and re-formed in new contexts largely because of a robust partnership between Middle Eastern and American churches. Armenian survivors benefitted from a new, large-scale provision of neighbourly hospitality with transnational contributions.

This hospitality became possible because, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, American Protestant missionaries had established hospitals, schools, Armenian Evangelical churches, and mission outposts throughout the Ottoman Empire. When the violence against largely rural Armenians began, unredressed by the Ottoman government, such institutions became the only refuge of those fleeing for their lives. These American missionaries realized that they were becoming eyewitnesses to a large-scale massacre and mounted diplomatic pleas to various governments on the Armenians' behalf. When diplomatic efforts failed, they continued to provide what assistance was possible and ultimately sent stirring accounts of injustice to their home churches in the United States. Although their efforts did not stop the mass displacement – the new state of Turkey was emptied of once-thriving Christian communities in a matter of years – their concern for the Armenians prompted a new form of foreign Christian intervention in the region. The eyewitness accounts of missionaries became a rallying cry for American congregations, who gathered financial, personal, and ultimately, political resources on the Armenians' behalf. The stories they sent home to their church bases in the United States prompted the creation of an Armenian Relief Committee, which eventually became a government-operated Near East Relief fund.

New missionaries were dispatched to the Levant to meet the Armenian survivors of death marches into the desert. The nature of the massacres meant that families were separated,

²⁸⁰ Use of this phrase is controversial in many circles. It is one of the sensitive topics that, as I earlier noted, requires further work from scholarship and political leaders, and many nations officially refrain from referring to an 'Armenian Genocide'. Indeed, an incident in which Pope Francis referred to these events as 'genocide' stimulated accusations of 'crusader' attack from the Turkish government. This incident reflects many of the complex dynamics discussed in this chapter.

Associated Press, "'Mentality of the Crusades': Turkey and Pope Francis in row over Armenian genocide'. *The Guardian*. June 26, 2016. Retrieved November 17, 2016.

²⁸¹ R. B. Betts, *Christians in the Arab East* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1979).

and children were often the only survivors, a strategy that would have secured the Armenians' complete destruction as a community, unless robust assistance saved them. Importantly, however, the support from the United States did not fall in dry ground within the Middle East itself. American efforts not only helped to build temporary refugee camps and fund relief workers who would literally search out traumatized orphans in the desert, but they also funded the work of Armenian churches and other Christian institutions across the region. Such institutions connected the Armenian refugees with not only food and shelter, but also legal papers, education, and long-term employment in their new homes. Helped by outside funding, local churches, especially in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, cared for orphaned children. The churches provided for spiritual and trade-based education and arranged marriages for adolescents, activities that would be critical to the long-term survival of the Armenian community. As Chatty writes, 'Many [Armenian] orphans or separated children survived solely because of the efforts of Near East Relief and the Armenian Church'.²⁸²

This response to crisis may be understood as one dramatic highlight within a broader pattern of engagement. At around the same time that predominantly American Christians were helping the Armenians, for example, British Christians were similarly connecting with Russian Orthodox Christians. Many 'informal acts of intercommunion in emergencies' connected Anglican and American Episcopalian Christians with those of Turkey, Greece, and Russia. Notably, many Serbian students left the chaos of their homeland to receive seminary training in England and the United States, one of many activities that prompted G.K.A. Bell of the Anglican Church to call the period surrounding World War I an 'effectual turning point' for intra-Christian unity across borders.²⁸³ In other words, similar events, smaller in scale and drama than the Armenian Genocide, but similar in form, helped to establish this precedent of intra-Christian cooperation. Catholicity was at work here, certainly, but it took an enhanced and deeply practical, transnational form that I call neighbourly hospitality.

Expectations relating to neighbourly hospitality

The dramatic, transnational, and for the Armenian community, lifesaving partnership between Middle Eastern and foreign churches transformed the intra-Christian relationship. At a time when predominantly Christian societies in Europe and North America were motivated to engage with other Christians around the world, a precedent of sustained, tangible support was created.

²⁸² Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*, 164.

²⁸³ G.K.A. Bell, *Christian Unity: The Anglican Position* Olaus Petri Lectures at Uppsala University, October 1946 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948), 93.

This support was vital to the survival of the Armenian Christian community in the short-term, and strong, transnational ties among churches were created in the long-term. Middle Eastern churches formed an expectation of robust partnership with foreign congregations. They expected to contribute to this partnership in significant ways, offering translation work, local expertise in dealing with bureaucracy and assisting the poor, and the use of facilities on the ground. They also anticipated that they would not be left alone in times of crisis, however, and that wealthier Christians from other lands would offer material resources and even a possible escape in times of trouble. From the perspective of Middle Eastern Christians, this satisfying partnership strengthened local churches and institutions while creating a safety net in times of crisis. An expectation was established that if relations with local Muslims ever again troubled them, the Christians of the Middle East could rely on help from Christians and Western governments abroad.

Of course, many American Christians also derived their own expectations of their relationship with Christians abroad. While the focus of this study is on the perspective of the Middle East, several points from this reciprocal relationship are worth noting here. American Christians noticed, for example, that Christians in the Middle East were experiencing a level of violent, faith-based persecution and material deprivation unknown to themselves. Jason Bruner argues that these and other events of the twentieth century created an American expectation that Christians of other lands were suffering without redress, that life under Islamic rule was dangerous, often deadly, and untenable to church life, and that their help was desperately needed. A second element that emerges from the American side is what Bruner calls a ‘spiritual community that transcends borders’.²⁸⁴ The borders transcended are not only of nationality, he suggests, but also of denomination. The largely Protestant Americans who rose to help largely Orthodox Armenians drew upon the same, budding ecumenism that inspired Bell’s sentiments of cross-denominational Christianity in Britain. Third, helping Christians in other lands became an important means for American Christians to strengthen their own piety. As time went on, Bruner writes, moving accounts of foreign Christian persecution – in the Middle East and elsewhere – as well as photographs of those in distress were expected to move the truly devout to action. As Bruner writes, ‘The most fundamental question images and stories of martyrdom ask of the viewer is not *Can I identify with this pain?* – the goal of so much disaster or humanitarian photography – but rather *What is the state of my soul?*’²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Bruner, *Imagining Persecution*, 6

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

Several differences between these two perceptions of neighbourly hospitality are important to note in this study. First, the idea that religious persecution was a constant in Middle Eastern Christian life oversimplified a long and rather complex history and obscured the ongoing contributions of Christians to the Arab civilization. As absorbed by American Christians who were unaware of the complex and multifaceted political, religious, and social life of the Middle East, such a view had the potential to disempower the very people who sought – and now, expected – Christian fellowship. Bruner notes with concern:

Religious persecution alone can be a reductive way of presenting the issues certain Christians face, and power dynamics that suggest that Westerners are the only people who can at or intervene leave little space for the agency of the Christians who are the objects of these efforts.²⁸⁶

Second, Middle Eastern Christians may not necessarily apprehend in neighbourly hospitality the same level of functional ecumenism as their American counterparts. As members of much more traditional, usually Orthodox, churches, and as residents of the very region where the boundaries among churches were once formed, they might be less likely to forget their affiliations, even in a time of crisis. More to the point, their existing church and Christian institutions, rooted in denominational identity, were themselves strengthened by the distribution of neighbourly hospitality to the Armenians and others. This may have something to do with the ambivalence of intra-Christian history in the Middle East. As Bruner notes, during the centuries of polemic that began in the Middle East, ‘Christian martyrdom and suffering were not generally seen as experiences that transcended Christian traditions but rather were more frequently used to solidify those boundaries’.²⁸⁷ This is not to say that Arab Christians did not and never could embrace an ecumenical spirit, but their theologies and histories are less likely to budge for the cause of religious persecution.

Lastly, while Middle Eastern Christians might be willing to praise the faith and good works of those who come to their aid, they are more likely to celebrate their own fortitude not only in enduring specific suffering, but also in continuing to maintain their churches and institutions within their ancient lands. While American Christians might measure their piety in response to images of dramatic deprivation, the deprived Christians themselves might rather be depicted in an attitude of courageous steadfastness. This and the other differences noted here

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 151

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

become tremendously important in shaping the way that contemporary Jordanian Christians respond not only to refugees, but also to the actions of foreign Christians on their behalf.

In summary, neighbourly hospitality is a longstanding tradition of the Middle East with deep roots in the region's religious traditions. Neighbourly hospitality gained a new, transnational dimension during a time of crisis and unrest in the Middle East, as American Protestants in the region and at home worked with local churches to sustain Armenian survivors of massacre. While this and ongoing episodes of neighbourly hospitality created noteworthy precedents of intra-Christian cooperation, they also left differing expectations about what each party needs from or contributes to the other.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have showcased a focused history of intra-Christian engagement to illustrate the ways that Middle Eastern Christianity remains affected by and connected to Christians elsewhere. Ties with foreigners outside the region are not the only issue at stake, however. As my conversation with Mariam suggested – ‘They’re all Orthodox, you know’ – this complex history also affects intra-Christian relations within the region, making Jordanian Christians more or less hostile in engagements with one another. All of this becomes important in dictating the ways that Jordanian Christians respond to refugees and the resources they access in doing so.

I have argued that historical and ongoing engagements around catholicity, sacred geography, and neighbourly hospitality have shaped important expectations on the part of Christians inside the region and outside it, and even their Muslim neighbours. In some dramatic cases, they have helped to shape whether Christians identify more with their ‘Arab’ heritage or another, more ancient empire in the region. Most importantly, I have demonstrated that relations with fellow Christians – whether warm or hostile – constitute an essential part of what it has always meant to be a Middle Eastern Christian. In the next chapter, I point toward the defining implications of this reality on the ground.

4. 'They are not strangers': Articulating an Approach to Aid amid Intra-Christian Tensions

A conference was called in Washington, DC, just a few months after the self-proclaimed Islamic State declared a caliphate in Mosul. A group of Middle Eastern Christians and church leaders, alongside American politicians, attended a two-day summit organized by a network called 'In Defense of Christians'. While the event aimed to galvanize American Christian support for Middle Eastern Christians in the wake of ISIS, a speech given by Senator Ted Cruz of Texas became so controversial as to arguably distract from the event's stated aim. When Cruz declared, 'Christians have no greater ally than the Jewish state', the crowd began to shout, and despite organizers' efforts to restore calm, his remarks ultimately ended with a departure from the stage.²⁸⁸ The senator described the events in a press statement shortly thereafter:

I came to this event tonight to help shine a light on the tragic persecution and slaughter of Christians by ISIS and Islamic radicals throughout the Middle East. American leaders have been far too silent as to this horrific evil. But bigotry and hatred have no place in this discussion. Anti-Semitism is a corrosive evil, and it reared its ugly head tonight. After just a few minutes, I had no choice. I told them that if you will not stand with Israel, if you will not stand with the Jews, then I will not stand with you.²⁸⁹

This incident illustrates the tension that Middle Eastern Christians often experience in their transnational, intra-Christian encounters. Although the stated aim of this event was to highlight Christian unity and support Middle Eastern Christians, this episode instead exposed a political tension between American and Middle Eastern Christian interests. While the senator stated that his concern about the status of Christians in the Middle East drew him to the event, he also brought a particular understanding of Middle Eastern politics that required specific American policy commitments. Rather than finding a way to prioritize Christian unity, the senator reiterated his national loyalties to the detriment of his relationship with the Middle Eastern Christians present.

²⁸⁸ A transcript of the speech, including the audience response, can be found at: Jonathan Coppage, 'Ted Cruz Crashes Defense of Christians Summit' *The American Conservative*, 11 Sept. 2014, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/coppage/ted-cruz-crashes-defense-of-christians-summit/>.

²⁸⁹ Sen. Ted Cruz Press Office, 'Sen. Cruz Statement Regarding "In Defense of Christians" Event', 10 September 2014, accessed 15 November 2019, https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=1723.

Similarly, just one year before the incident in Washington, the Middle East Council of Churches made a call for worldwide support to strengthen the Christian presence in the Middle East, even as they criticized foreign nations acting within the region:

The elements of this crisis include . . . Christian emigration from the region, and a generalized sense of abandonment following decades of unhelpful intervention.

Christians, Muslims and Jews all experience the destructive effects of these trends.²⁹⁰

Several paragraphs later, however, the Council asked the World Council of Churches to ‘engage on a regional and international level in advocacy on behalf of the Christians in the Middle East’.²⁹¹ I note that within the same statement, the Middle East Council of Churches both requests foreign advocacy and claims that past interventions have harmed the entire Middle East. Indeed, the statement departs from its intra-Christian conversation to, at one point, suggest that Christians in the Middle East have suffered alongside Muslims and Jews in the region from ‘decades of unhelpful intervention’, presumably from the same foreign powers to whom they now appeal for help. The Council moves freely between enthusiasm for foreign advocacy and wariness that questions both the past and present effects of such interventions. Not unlike the Cruz speech, the statement from the Middle East Council of Churches reveals a struggle between the loyalty to complex international forms of Christian unity and the urgent political concerns of the Middle Eastern context.

The legacy of this ambivalence on intra-Christian relations in Jordan has already been identified at length in Chapter Three of this study, when I identified the resources that Middle Eastern Christians have turned toward during times of trouble as catholicity, sacred geography, and neighbourly hospitality. Amid the tensions with Arab Muslims that I identified in Chapter Two, Jordanian Christians would typically draw strength from these traditions and old alliances within global Christian networks. In this chapter, however, I analyse new troubles for the intra-Christian relationship in Jordan. I argue that the arrival of refugees since 2011, and the way that foreign Christians and organizations chose to respond, have upset the delicate web of intra-Christian relations in Jordan.

²⁹⁰ The Middle East Council of Churches, “Christian Presence and Witness in the Middle East,” International and Ecumenical Conference, 21-25 May 2013, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/WCC-MECC%2Bstatement%2BLebanon%2Bconference, 2>.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

This chapter analyses the growing tensions in intra-Christian relations with reference to the three traditions I identified in Chapter Three. My source material is drawn from fieldwork in Amman, including formal and informal conversations with Christian and humanitarian organizations operating in Jordan, as well as members of Arabic-speaking congregations. In the first section, I argue that the strategies of many Christian organizations operating in Jordan transgress the intra-Christian commitment to catholicity. In the second section, I demonstrate that the tendency of many global humanitarian approaches to commodify refugees offends the Jordanian Christian interest in sacred geography. In the third section, however, I elaborate on the lived practice of neighbourly hospitality, suggesting it as a path toward strengthening the intra-Christian relationship. Readers will see that while the traditions I introduced in Chapter Three are not used by name among the Jordanian Christians I interviewed, these three concepts were at the root of the deep concerns they expressed about their relationship with foreign Christians, and indeed, the viability of the region's ongoing Christian presence.

1. Global approaches undermine catholicity

Arab Christians I interviewed described a sense of confusion, resentment, or betrayal in response to the actions of both explicitly Christian and historically Christian aid organizations. Such actions included refusing to partner with Arabic-speaking churches, changing practices to conform to specific, political priorities, and cutting Christian language and practices from their programs. Because aid projects generally had grown in scale and number in response to the burgeoning refugee presence since 2011, decades of subtle changes in the operation of ostensibly Christian humanitarian organizations became more obvious to Jordanians by 2019. Jordanian Christians have, perhaps, registered the significance of these changes to both the intra-Christian relationship and the overall operation of these humanitarian organizations more quickly than have the organizations themselves. In this section, I analyse these developments, noting the growing sense of separation between the aid workers and the Jordanian Christians and refugees, whether Christian or Muslim. I argue that increasingly secular strategies by many Christian humanitarian organizations have undermined the practice of catholicity and, indeed, the Christian presence in Jordan more broadly.

These tensions first became apparent to me in February 2019, when I attended a weekly breakfast meeting of church leaders in Amman. The meeting included two Anglican priests – Palestinians with Jordanian passports – who had previously worked in Lebanon and Palestine. A third Anglican priest was visiting from his parish in Palestine. An Orthodox woman – her family was originally from Palestine like many Christians in Amman – led a diaconate arm of the

Orthodox Church in Jordan. Throughout the discussion, the four would allude to their contacts, lunch meetings, and general familiarity with the country's other churches, whether Anglican, Orthodox, Catholic, Arab, Armenian, or international.

Perhaps for this reason, when I introduced my enquiry regarding 'the Christian response to the stranger', an Orthodox lay leader blanched. 'They are not strangers', she said, eyeing me sceptically and alluding broadly to the common history, language, and customs of Arabs in the area. She went on, 'Our programs are for everyone. The Syrians and the Iraqis – we live with them normally because we are all from the Levant, but they are sharing our food and infrastructure, and there is not enough for poor Jordanians'.²⁹² Her comments showed that while conflict was present, these Jordanians did not see the Syrian and Iraqi refugees as the direct cause. To these Palestinian-turned-Jordanian Christians, the Syrians and Iraqis were not strangers, but neighbours with whom they shared a common history, language, and home. They were willing to share what they had, but what they had was running out. It made sense to them that wealthier neighbours could share their abundance for the good of all. In other words, she anticipated help from foreign Christians to the Jordanian churches in a time of crisis. She expressed dismay, however, that fellow Christians from wealthier countries were not cooperating with the churches in the way they had historically, by setting up institutions in Jordan to offer help to locals and refugees alike. 'Churches are the bridge between the Muslims and Christian communities', she said. 'There is no networking between the INGOs²⁹³, even the Christian ones, and the churches, because they believe in separating churches and INGOs'. In other words, these church leaders were confused as to why these English-speaking churches – their natural allies, they had thought – ignored them. Surely, they recognized the Arab Christian potential as congregational service projects, full-time aid workers, and local interpreters? It would seem not, they concluded, because these organizations often denied their Christian roots, even when churches funded them. They brought their own, English-speaking employees to Jordan, or what was seen as even worse, they hired Arab Muslims instead. It seemed to them as though their former allies and fellow Christians were using a standard of morality outside of Christianity, and they justified their refusal to partner with the churches using this unnamed standard.

²⁹² Anglican breakfast meeting, focus group.

²⁹³ INGOs stands for International Non-Government Organization. This label denotes humanitarian aid given by an organization that is based in a foreign country but is not affiliated with a specific government. Most independent aid agencies from Europe and North America that offer aid to refugees operate as INGOs. Even foreign churches usually give their international aid via an established INGO. It is a relatively new designation, however, and denotes particular treatment by national tax systems and international law.

In other words, these leaders expected catholicity in their relationship with foreign Christians in Jordan and faith based INGOs, but the global Christian networks and INGOs were taking care to separate themselves from the Jordanian churches. Such a decision was particularly difficult for a gathering such as this to understand, because these leaders were themselves a gathering of mixed nationality and Christian tradition, yet they gathered around their commitment to Christian service, an obvious sign of catholicity. They shared their own resources with the Syrians and Iraqis without seeing them as ‘strangers’, because they shared their same earthly commitment to life in the Levant. Finally, these Jordanian Christians expected a Christian ‘unity amid diversity’, what Corbon identified as a kind of functional ecumenism among Christians from various churches in the Middle East. They intended to act as a ‘bridge’ between their fellow Christians from foreign lands and the Arab Muslims with whom they shared a national commitment. By contrast, these foreign Christians were successfully separating the Jordanian churches – the institutions of Christianity, albeit in a foreign land – from the INGOs – the institutions that represented cultural commitments to specific national governments or to secular principles more broadly.

While not as dramatic or public as the disagreement between Ted Cruz and various Middle Eastern church leaders, this interview illustrates similar tensions in Jordan. When local and foreign Christians in Jordan disagree about their political interests, they often retreat toward them, to the detriment of the intra-Christian relationship. The tradition of catholicity is not primary in their helping of refugees because they disagree about who should most naturally be involved – in the case of hiring practices by foreign churches – and whether the category of ‘stranger’ implied an exclusion of either displaced Syrians or visiting Americans. While not directly responsible for causing these conflicts, the presence of the refugees made apparent what few would have seen before; namely, that catholicity was no longer the motivating principle for global Christians operating in the Middle East that it had once been. These global church networks departed from centuries of practice in making this change. Such a change posed dramatic repercussions for the Jordanian Christians, however, because of the way catholicity has been practiced historically.

As examined in the previous chapter, George Sabra²⁹⁴ noted how the Christians of the Middle East had long ago been forced to choose whether and how to navigate their loyalties to global Christians and Arab Muslims. Their ongoing presence in the region depends on their ability to choose among these loyalties strategically, and many Christian communities have

²⁹⁴ Sabra, ‘Two Ways of Being a Christian, 43-53.

already been displaced or eradicated when one loyalty ceased to be efficacious. Therefore, by cutting ties to the Christian communities who have already aligned themselves with global support, these foreign Christian agencies are not simply disappointing the expectations of their Arab allies. They are threatening the Christian presence in the region by removing a source of support without warning. While tension within the tradition of catholicity is not new, the unique situation of Middle Eastern Christians has tended to place them at the forefront of such debates.

Perhaps this long history accounts, in part, for the confusion and even dismay of many Christians who were trying to partner with foreign Christians in the refugee response. Wafa Goussous, the representative for both the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Middle East Council of Churches in Jordan, oversaw refugee responses for both in the country, but she expressed frustration with the way that the global humanitarian regime was handling the refugee crisis, particularly because the laws originated in historically Christian societies that should, in her view, adopt a more generous approach because of the practice of catholicity. She told me:

Christians in the West give a little to assuage their guilt, but it is not enough. [When I was recently speaking at an international] conference, I was bold, and I said, “Your best partner is your neighbour, but the other neighbours are supposed to not just sit by.” We are a poor country, but we share our electricity and water, and our infrastructure is not well.²⁹⁵

This attitude may be difficult to understand, or at least, easy to dismiss as a rather self-serving effort to preserve sectarian interests at the expense of the less fortunate.²⁹⁶ I do not believe that this was a transactional offer, however. Like the Anglican gathering, Goussous was drawing from historic experience with catholicity and expected that all Christians would want to share what they had with those in crisis. The question here is not about how much or how little anyone is helping, but rather how that assistance is framed. Goussous was concerned by what she saw as a lack of attention to the intra-Christian relationship on the part of global networks because, as I mentioned previously, it is vital to the overall Christian presence in the region.

²⁹⁵ Goussous, interview.

²⁹⁶ That was the opinion of many of the Western Christian aid organizations with whom I spoke in Jordan. Some who were aware of the types of concerns that Goussous expressed viewed them as sectarian and self-serving. The perspective of these aid organizations and their place within humanitarianism generally would constitute a useful contribution to research; however, they are outside the scope of a work that aims to engage with Jordanian Christianity.

This issue might be clarified with another episode in Amman, this time with a Latin Catholic congregation that was heavily engaged with both helping refugees and global aid organizations. When I arrived at this church in Marka, the leaders – several priests and nuns who met with me privately after a Sunday service – greeted me enthusiastically. They were pleased to hear about my research and welcomed my involvement in their church even before they asked me how I had heard about them. When I told them that a historically Christian aid organization, World Vision, had told me about their work, they were even more enthusiastic. Calling that organization, ‘our good friends’, they pointed to a plaque on the wall, a World Vision award for their longstanding partnership in service. They told me proudly that they had worked with this organization for many years, even before World Vision established a permanent office in Jordan. Though relations were warm, the leaders alluded to a disagreement about the inclusion of prayer in their programme, which the organization had recently removed. ‘We keep telling them’, a visiting priest said as he shook his head. ‘Yes, I keep explaining to them that there’s no need for that’, said another priest, in a tone which suggested that their actions were beyond rational understanding. ‘Everyone knows they are a Christian organization. What are they thinking?’ These leaders continued to describe their partnership with World Vision in positive terms, but they said they disagreed that omitting prayer from the programme of a Christian organization could be more respectful to Muslims, although this was how the organization had justified the action.

This issue of aid agencies is an important one, as it has a specific history and ever-changing impact on life in Jordan. The Kingdom of Jordan, within its current borders and operating within the modern consumer economy, has struggled economically throughout its history.²⁹⁷ As a consequence, the nation has, since its establishment as a nation a century ago, relied heavily on foreign aid. Officially, this aid originated first from Britain towards the end of the colonial era, was taken up briefly by Arab states in the Gulf, and now comes mainly from the United States. Since 1948, supplemental aid has also come from efforts by the international community to sustain Palestinians as refugees in states neighbouring Israel/Palestine. The economic instability of these arrangements has led many Jordanians, particularly the wealthy and

²⁹⁷ Relevant scholarship about the specific political and economic dynamics of Jordan throughout its history is as follows:

Peter Gubser, *Jordan: Crossroads of Middle Eastern events* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).

Russell E. Lucas, *Institutions and the politics of survival in Jordan: Domestic responses to external challenges, 1988-2001* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

Mansoor Moaddel, *Jordanian Exceptionalism: A Comparative Analysis of State-Religion Relationships in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993).

particularly Christians, to leave Jordan in search of better work elsewhere. It has also meant that the government of Jordan has, as part of its economic strategy, tried to attract additional sources for foreign investment and aid. This strategy has influenced the unfolding of refugee crisis since 2012. In response, many large, professional aid agencies, such as UNHCR, have established long-term projects in Jordan for the first time. They have brought large amounts of money and many foreign workers. They have also been followed by numerous smaller agencies from Europe and North America, many of which were established and funded by churches.

At the same time, the Jordanian government requires that churches become officially registered in order to operate within Jordan, and no church is permitted to evangelize. While all of the Arabic-speaking churches with historic roots in the region are registered to operate in Jordan, many Western churches are not. This limits their ability to operate inside the country. In order to offer humanitarian aid, therefore, many churches establish an official non-profit organization to operate both their humanitarian projects and the church's presence on the ground. Many who work in these agencies consider themselves missionaries; some are volunteers. Some operate clandestine evangelization, either among Muslims or Christians from other churches, while others resolutely refrain from publicizing their faith out of respect for the law. While the specific circumstances vary, such aid agencies have proliferated in recent years. Most such agencies, in an effort to avoid legal ramifications from the Jordanian government and to appeal to increasingly secular societies back home, operate within established, secular humanitarian principles in Jordan. In interviews, they justified their activity using global humanitarian discourses, rather than Christian mission or charity.²⁹⁸

This practice of outsourcing refugee care to an independent aid organization is not unique to Jordan. Joshua Ralston examines this practice within the United States, noting that church-owned aid agencies increasingly rely on the United States government for funding and on international humanitarian agencies for their goals and modus operandi. Ralston argues:

By dislocating refugee engagement from its ecclesial context and placing it primarily with state-funded NGOs contracted with USORR, the church has allowed the state to set the terms of Christian engagement. These NGOs end up mimicking the state in prioritizing service provision over solidarity, mutual exchange, and growth in personhood.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ While I conducted a number of interviews with global humanitarian agencies sponsored by churches of Christian networks, I refrain from quoting them extensively in an effort to prioritize the Jordanian perspective in this study.

²⁹⁹ Ralston, 'Towards a Political Theology of Refugee Settlement', 388.

Through this practice, churches allow their national loyalties and secular ideologies around displaced refugees to overwhelm their particular Christian commitment to helping the needy, evangelism, or catholicity. When they operate in this fashion in Jordan, these churches bring a foreign, secular approach to their encounters with Jordanian Christians and Middle Eastern refugees. While many of the individual employees may identify as Christians, their motivations and actions appear secular and un-catholic to the Christians of the Middle East. While they might criticize Jordanian Christians for seeking partnerships and funding on the basis of Christian identity, the inherent tensions within this strategy mean that their own motivations are perceived as no less sectarian, and perhaps more opaque. Furthermore, many of these agencies continue to operate within local, Jordanian churches, often residing in the same physical space and using the physical resources and networks accumulated by local Arab Christians. Benefiting from the institutional resources of Jordanian Christians while denying requests for employment help or other assistance risks exploiting the tradition of catholicity.

The sense of disappointment and betrayal that many Arab Christians feel as a result was articulated by the Reverend Archpriest Father Bassam Shahatit. Like Goussous, he could share his observations on the refugee response across the Christian communities of Jordan, rather than a single congregation. The various Catholic churches and organizations in Jordan had been particularly involved with Iraqi Christian refugees, many of whom had lived inside the churches' walls until better accommodation could be found. Speaking on behalf of the Greek Catholic Church in Jordan, Shahatit described many partnerships that had made the ongoing aid to Iraqi refugees possible. These included ecumenical relationships among the local churches, as well as help from Catholic and Protestant organizations from Europe and North America. While Shahatit applauded the help given to many in need, he identified something lacking in some of the aid agencies he worked with. He described one Baptist pastor who had accompanied him for months on visits to Iraqi refugees but then used the contacts he gained in this process to engage in covert evangelism. This pastor had formed a new Baptist Church on this basis and then, to Shahatit's horror, used this congregation to fundraise from both American churches in the pastor's home country and from the newly Baptist refugees themselves.³⁰⁰ Shahatit struggled to understand their motivations for some tactics, he said, and argued instead for a carefully articulated understanding of Christian hospitality. "The spirituality of hospitality is very important, to welcome with love, with simplicity, because sometimes we do this to show, "I am doing this", he said.

³⁰⁰ This incident is revisited in Chapter Five, section 2 of this work.

Particularly as an Eastern-rite Catholic, Shahatit's perspective on Christian history in the region led him to expect meaningful communication and partnership with foreign churches. He said that such a sense of partnership was increasingly difficult to find. This lack of communication sometimes meant refugees were doubling or tripling up on the same services from various agencies, with churches competing for numbers. While he said this was a natural human weakness, it created a stumbling block for both his ideal of hospitality and the practice of giving aid. 'But when we enter into competition we lose force, because sometimes we do things two times instead of together, once', he said. By contrast, he defined virtuous hospitality to refugees or others as lacking a spirit of competition but being motivated instead by love. 'The important thing is to give with love. It is better to give a little with love than a lot without love.'³⁰¹ Love was important, he argued, because it led one to focus on the concerns of those in need, rather than the reputation of one's own organization. Shahatit was concerned by the approach employed by many foreign Christians and their organizations, and for what it meant for the intra-Christian commitment shared ideals around catholicity.

In sum, I have shown that Arab Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox leaders were concerned and alienated by the actions of global Christian networks and their approach to helping refugees. Newer practices do not meet the standards for catholicity that Jordanian Christians have come to expect from the long history of intra-Christian engagement in the region. The global aid networks – sometimes declaring themselves to be explicitly Christian, but sometimes simply drawing from historically Christian roots – are prioritizing secular commitments or national, political aims over their ties to Jordanian Christians. Moreover, they exploit the resources of Arab Christians without returning to them the assistance and fellowship that they have come to expect through the bonds of Christian catholicity. These practices are increasingly alienating Jordanian Christians and constitute a real threat to the ongoing Christian presence in the region. Jordanian Christians increasingly frame their critique of these practices in terms of a failure of Christian hospitality, as the next section of this chapter explores.

2. Global practices undermine sacred geography

In this section, I continue to differentiate between the approach to aid that Arab Christians expect, based on their long history of intra-Christian relations, and the approach that many Western Christian organizations have employed increasingly in Jordan since 2011. This section

³⁰¹ Bassam Shahatit, interview by author, St George Rum Melchite Cathedral, Amman, Jordan, 14 October 2019, English/Arabic – translation by author.

shows evidence of Arab Christian discomfort with the way that foreign organizations treat those in need, and I identify their concerns about the Christian presence in the region as reflecting the tradition of sacred geography. This means that foreign Christian organizations that employ context-blind – global – strategies toward refugees undermine the tradition of sacred geography even when they seek to justify their approach using secular humanitarian language. The primary argument of this section, however, is to differentiate between the existence of a context-specific approach to helping refugees and global approaches that – practiced by Christians and non-Christians alike – can threaten the local commitments represented by sacred geography.

As I noted in the last section, many Jordanian Christians see themselves as a bridge between global Christianity and Jordanian Muslims. They are often puzzled by what they see as an incoherent strategy of intervention and aid by global aid workers. While Jordanian law – and Arab custom more broadly – requires all Christians – whether foreign or Arab – to refrain from evangelizing among Muslims, Middle Eastern Christians have not traditionally interpreted this as requiring that they conceal their religious identity from Muslims. Likewise, they are disappointed by the short-term, individualized approach to aid that has become increasingly common, as they have long expected to anchor the building of longstanding Christian institutions, such as schools or hospitals, within the churches. The confusion is exacerbated when local and foreign churches try to work together to help refugees. In reflecting on these tensions, Al-Kopti noted the changes since his grandfather – as a young Palestinian refugee – had benefitted from the education offered by a Protestant school system that spanned the Levant. ‘The old missionaries were different from those who come nowadays. They built institutions that served people for decades’.³⁰² He spoke from an experience that was typical of many Palestinian Christians, the ‘living stones’ who benefitted from the intra-Christian tradition of sacred geography. His grandfather, after suffering displacement to Jordan, had joined a group of other Palestinian Christians in inviting the then Lutheran/Anglican missionary alliance to build a third Schneller School for Jordanians, to complement those existing among the Palestinians and Lebanese. With support and assistance from this global Christian network, these enterprising Palestinians helped to secure the land for an extensive school complex outside of Amman, where orphans and other children could reside and receive their education in marketable skills. To this day, the school’s extensive grounds also provided a place for leadership retreats and summer camps. For his part, Al-Kopti was proud of the school’s heritage and eagerly fomenting plans to expand its operations sustainably. He hoped to establish a smaller school in Amman that could train lay

³⁰² George Al-Kopti, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 13 October 2019, English.

leadership, a dream he continued to nurture and plan even as his congregation launched aid projects for dozens of refugees.

What is important to note is that this preference for – and confidence in – local Christian institutions reflected a theological emphasis on sacred geography. Al-Kopti and others expressed a belief that that investing in local institutions could strengthen a Christian population whose roots in the sacred geography of the faith offered something real and valuable to the catholic body of Christianity worldwide. Al-Kopti agreed when a fellow Anglican priest, in describing their assistance to refugees, told me, “The one thing we will not do is help anyone to emigrate, because this would empty our land. This is our land. We have been here since Pentecost. The Arabs were there, descendants of the Nabateans”.³⁰³ Such confidence in the stabilizing influence of Christian institutions went hand-in-hand with a theology of place, as these Anglican leaders urged the refugees and local Jordanians alike to resist the wide-spread temptation to leave the region. They employed the language of sacred geography when they urged fellow Christians to stay and preserve the region’s heritage. As Al-Kopti said:

Our goal is everlasting life. . . I tell [members of my congregation] when they are thinking about leaving, ‘If you feel oppressed by Islam here, who’s to say that there you won’t feel oppressed by atheism? Or even by work? They work very long hours there, and there may not be time to go to church’.³⁰⁴

He believed that the continued emigration of Christians from the Middle East risked something valuable enough to be worth Christian suffering. Moreover, his approach would suggest that the right application of assistance to the ‘living stones’ of the area might make it possible for even the refugees who had fled ISIS to remain in the Middle East. This belief rested on the experience of his own family, who not only survived their displacement, but also drew strength from the Christian institutions inspired by sacred geography and ultimately became leaders in Jordan’s churches.

By 2019, however, Al-Kopti observed a disparity between the Christian institution building that had facilitated his family’s own conversion to the Anglican Church – and arguably their survival in a tumultuous time – and the strategy of contemporary missionaries and aid workers who were concerned with attracting individuals to their programs in large numbers. This disappointment on the part of even Protestant Jordanians is one response to the shift by

³⁰³ Anglican breakfast meeting, focus group.

³⁰⁴ Al-Kopti, interview.

Western churches toward the individualist approaches associated with Western politics. Jordanian Christians feel increasingly worried by this inattention to the institutions that preserved previous generations of Christians refugees in the region. How could Jordanian Christians continue to serve as a bridge between worldwide Christians and Jordanian Muslims if their institutions became too weak to sustain them?

Furthermore, as Al-Kopti's family history demonstrates, the building and preservation of institutions provides a means to assist refugees while ensuring their dignity. Such concerns about dignity constitute a significant Christian critique of global humanitarian strategies. Luke Bretherton, a Western theologian, critiques humanitarian strategies – including those ostensibly sponsored by churches and Christian networks – that operate without reference to the particular needs of local context and institutions. He notes that such work is often based in part on the premise that humanitarian work is apolitical, and therefore non-institutional, particularly when the aid is conducted by professional agencies, legally registered as secular non-profit organizations. Bretherton disagrees, writing that while the first crisis of forced displacement may require an initial provision of food or shelter, the refugee's *raison d'être* lies in the loss of social and political ties, becoming 'placeless'. He writes, 'The problem with only responding in a humanitarian as opposed to a conscious way that addresses structural issues is that questions of justice are unaddressed, so that while the symptoms may be ameliorated, the causes of the problem are at best ignored and at worst legitimated or colluded with'.³⁰⁵ In other words, global approaches that are blind to the context of local places often fail to resolve the refugee's chief problem of 'placelessness'. While Bretherton acknowledges that explicitly political concerns – as opposed to the short-term humanitarian essentials of food or education – are often resolved more effectively by different people at different times, this does not absolve churches of reckoning with the tensions raised by their work with refugees, which is, in fact, always political, institutional, and specific to a given context.

In short, Bretherton – speaking from a British context – raises the same concern that troubled many Jordanian Christians; namely, Christian organizations and professional aid workers often assisted refugees without reference to the specific needs of the Jordanian context. This inattention to local context posed two threats, one to the dignity of the refugees themselves, and a second to the stability of Jordanian Christian institutions. An understanding of the delicate tradition of sacred geography, however, reveals that the practice risks even further damage to the

³⁰⁵ Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 141.

refugees in the long-term, because short-term, crisis-based humanitarian aid will not sustain these refugees for the years and decades they will likely reside in Jordan. As the history of Al-Kopti's family and many others demonstrate, the best hope of long-term survival for these refugees lies within the strength of Jordanian Christian institutions. Such institutions, however, subsist on the strength of contextually aware institution-building. For that reason, when Jordanians worry that Christian aid organizations deny their requests for partnership or youth employment projects, they are not merely trying to enrich their own community by exploiting a crisis, but rather, they want to strengthen the context-specific institutions that offer the best of hope of long-term survival to Jordanians and refugees alike.

3. Neighbourly hospitality as a context-specific approach to aid

The solution to problems relating to sacred geography may be found within the third intra-Christian tradition that I introduced in Chapter Three of this study. A global humanitarian approach is, by definition, global, and such organizations may operate without reference to local context and custom. In this section, however, I provide an alternative approach that not only assists refugees without undermining the local Christian presence, but it also provides a bridge between global strategies and local concerns. In this section, I build on the introduction to neighbourly hospitality from Chapter Three to articulate a theological justification that distinguishes the Jordanian Christian approach to refugees. The concept of neighbourly hospitality emerged directly from my fieldwork in Amman. As a living practice with deep roots in Christianity and in the region more broadly, neighbourly hospitality offers an alternative framework for Jordanians and refugees, as well as a valid critique of the global humanitarian approaches that inadvertently threatened them. I describe this concept at work using three descriptive features: preserving the dignity of those assisted, strengthening family and social structures, and assistance through institutional participation. Importantly, because neighbourly hospitality builds upon the resources of a given context, it also offers models for effective partnership between local, Jordanian churches and global humanitarian organizations. I argue that these models are defined and empowered by the effective practice of neighbourly hospitality.

Preserving the dignity of refugees

I suggest that neighbourly hospitality not only offers a local alternative to 'placeless' global approaches, but it also offers a path to collaboration between foreign and local organizations. An illustration of this dual potential for neighbourly hospitality emerges from the story of an early

attempt by an Anglican church in Ashrafieh to collaborate with foreign Christian partners in assisting refugees. Al-Kopti described his experience with such an event after a foreign, Christian organization had sent boxes of food for refugee families in 2013.³⁰⁶ Because the organization sent food boxes without a representative, they asked him to photograph the aid distribution and return the photos as evidence that the boxes had reached the refugees in need. ‘It was a disaster’, the priest told me. In this case, most of the refugees being helped were Syrian Christians who lived and participated in this traditionally Christian neighbourhood. As the refugees left the church carrying a heavy food box, they were observed by their new neighbours, which included poor Jordanian Christians. This not only embarrassed those receiving the food, but it also meant that other poor members of the congregation asked why they did not receive food boxes. This created tension within the congregation, including resentment of the refugees by poor Jordanians, as my other interviews found.³⁰⁷

These tensions caused problems for the church leadership, but Al-Kopti specifically complained that the photo requirement insulted his integrity and that of his congregation. He argued that if this foreign church did not trust him, as a Jordanian Anglican priest, to distribute the aid appropriately, then they should not send the aid at all. ‘Never again’, he said of the experience. Al-Kopti first spoke of ‘embarrassment’ for the refugees who, because he was required to photograph them with an ostentatious food box in hand, broadcast their poverty and dependence to the entire neighbourhood, not to mention the foreign church in receipt of these photos. Other scholarship has already identified this as an ethical problem for Syrian refugees in particular. Kholoud Mansour argues that Syrian refugees who enter the international humanitarian regime face a double humiliation: first from the conflict that drove them from their homes, and second from global aid workers who require once-independent humans to beg for food and then distribute photographs of refugees in their new position as beggars for international pity.³⁰⁸

Second, Al-Kopti believed that the photo requirement implied some doubt that the aid would reach the refugees, and the priest was offended that the foreign church did not ‘trust’ him to distribute resources ethically. To understand this criticism, I draw upon the work of William

³⁰⁶ St Paul’s Anglican Church, focus group.

³⁰⁷ Martha, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 11 August 2019, English/Arabic – translation by author. ‘Martha’ is a pseudonym.

³⁰⁸ Kholoud Mansour, ‘Protecting the Dignity of Displaced Syrians’, *Forced Migration Review*, 57 (2018): 5-6.

A. Barbieri Jr³⁰⁹, who crafts a theological approach to aid that prioritizes the dignity of refugees, using scriptural definition of the human creation as the image of God. In Barbieri's work, the image of God is placed at the core of ethical practice between host churches and refugees. Understanding refugees as beings who are made in the image of God, Barbieri argues, carries a theological mandate for dignity in the practice of the church toward the refugee. Barbieri writes:

[A Christian practice would stand] in contrast to models of humanitarian assistance that revolve around large-scale provision of services and may tend, in effect, to commodify their clients. An acknowledgement of this dignity is reflected in the understanding that the accompanied are not only recipients of support but also take part in the evangelization of their accompaniers.³¹⁰

In the food box situation, the refugees did not play any role in planning or contributing to their own assistance. The refugees simply took a food box from the church leadership and, because the photo provided proof of the aid reception, neither was responsible for even a modicum of reflection or follow-up to the process. From Al-Kopti's perspective, the photo requirement signalled that the aid organization did not think that the Jordanian church was reliable enough to be trusted with this simple distribution task. Truly, the refugees and the Jordanian church functioned solely as recipients or clients within a large-scale, transnational aid operation. They had no opportunity to contribute to the plans that were made, much less to offer any of their own contributions or even gratitude to those who provided the food boxes. These practices, to use Barbieri's word, 'commodified' both the refugees and the Jordanian Christians by treating them as clients in a one-way operation.

Barbieri suggests, however, that dignity can be achieved through active participation in the process. In this case, Al-Kopti reasserted the dignity of the refugees and his church alike by rejecting the food box plan in favour of a different model for helping those in need. Along with many other churches in Jordan, he instituted a new system of distributing paper vouchers that refugee families could exchange for food at local shops. 'This is very discrete', he said, pulling a paper voucher from his pocket to show me. He explained that he had casually distributed one at a Bible study session earlier that evening. 'No food boxes and no photos'.

³⁰⁹ William A. Barbieri Jr, 'The Migrant *Imago*: Migration and the Ethics of Human Dignity' in *Christian Theology in the Age of Migration: Implications for World Christianity*, ed. Peter C. Phan (London: Lexington Books, 2020), 169-184.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

It is important to note that the food voucher system did not change any of the essential facts on the ground. The refugees in this poor neighbourhood still required assistance to feed their families. The Jordanian church still relied on global Christian networks in order to provide that life-sustaining assistance. In fact, the food voucher system doubled, or perhaps tripled, the work required from the Jordanian church leadership. Al-Kopti or another member of the congregation would have to visit various food vendors in the area individually and employ their own social capital to persuade the vendors to accept the vouchers with promises that the church would pay later. He also committed the food vendors to sell only food and other essentials to the refugees, so he could assure funders of how the vouchers were being used. This plan required his in-depth knowledge of the area, interpersonal relationships of trust, and extensive follow-up as the church paid the food bills week after week. But by using the funding – alongside local expertise – to strengthen existing Christian institutions, Al-Kopti's plan enabled both his congregation and the refugees to participate in their own assistance with dignity.

In this priest's understanding, the photo requirement violated both his dignity as a church leader and that of refugees in his congregation because it portrayed the Jordanian church and refugees as 'recipients of support' rather than reliable partners who 'take part' in the spiritual work at hand. I suggest that the photo requirement deprived the refugees of dignity by representing them as beggars to their neighbours and foreign Christians. But at the same time, the requirement also violated the dignity of a third party – the host church in Jordan – because it suggested that they were also beggars rather than trustworthy contributors in responding to refugees. At the same time, Al-Kopti's church and others found a way for both the Jordanian churches and the refugees to 'take part' in the work, for, as the priest who pioneered this scheme told me, fathers could now take their children to local shops for 'a fun shopping trip' and feel that they were providing for their families' needs.³¹¹ While foreign churches were still playing an important role in this plan by providing funding, the food voucher scheme truly did stand 'in contrast' to the food box idea that threatened to commodify everyone in Jordan – whether refugee or not – by emphasizing the distribution of aid over the rehabilitation of people in need. In this way, a neighbourly hospitality approach that preserved the dignity of those in need also provided a means for local and global partners to collaborate effectively.

³¹¹ Khalil Jaber, interview by author, Marka, Jordan, 13 February 2018, Arabic – translation by author. The efforts of this priest and his congregation in Marka to respond to refugees is described at length in Chapter Five of this chapter.

Furthermore, Al-Kopti's emphasis on 'discretion' was repeated frequently in response to my questions about aid to refugees. Many who I spoke with refused to describe their sacrifices to help others until I had questioned them for months. In one interview with a group of Orthodox Christians, one young lay leader lowered his voice almost to a whisper in answering my question about hospitality to refugees. He quietly and quickly described his own work, along with others from the church, in visits to the homes of the poor, whether Jordanian or refugee. Throughout his description, he repeatedly emphasized that this was the church's Christian responsibility, but also that it must be done quietly.³¹²

Al-Kopti's emphasis on discretion, and this Orthodox leader's nearly whispered description of quiet helping parallel scholarly findings from similar contexts. Using ethnographic research from the Palestinian city of Nablus, Emanuel Schaeublin argues that 'openly visible need is seen as "shameful"', and he documented 'discreet gestures' for keeping ostentatious poverty out of the public eye.³¹³ While the economic circumstances of Nablus are such that many families rely on the charitable giving of neighbours, friends, and relatives, the issue is rarely discussed openly and not framed in terms of a hierarchy between the haves and the have-nots. On the contrary, Schaeublin interviewed many wealthy givers who refused to accept gratitude and instead expressed their gift as an opportunity to redistribute and share the wealth that truly belongs to God.

Likewise, in Schaeublin's observations, most of the poor who received assistance insisted that they were too shy to openly request aid, but instead they relied on a complex network of social ties and customs to inform their relations or neighbours about their needs. Schaeublin writes:

Some of them explicitly framed this as a matter of Muslim piety—or a pious display of shyness (*hayā*). Others practiced modesty simply by hiding their own material need from the gaze of others in order to hold on to their own dignity. Through the embodiment of shyness, those in need sought to shift the responsibility to cover need onto their relatives and neighbours. Refraining from asking for or refusing to accept support . . . marks a kind of autonomy and piety.³¹⁴

³¹² Radio Sawt Al-Kanissa, focus group with author, Amman, Jordan, 3 September 2019.

³¹³ Schaeublin, 'Islam in face-to-face interaction', 124.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

Ethnographic work among Bedouins in nearby Sinai finds parallels to this discretion in giving. Leila Abu Lughod argues that in this context, less powerful individuals navigate the tension inherent within their own dependence by claiming their shyness as a form of pious modesty. This enables them to reclaim their own independence and honour even without improvements to their material circumstances.³¹⁵ In a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, Sylvain Perdigon found a similar reluctance to talk directly about problems such as a home's leaky roof or lack of school supplies. Instead, the refugees framed their material wants as political problems, that is, they drew attention back to the broader issues of foreign occupation or conflict with various governments in the region.³¹⁶ And of course, in an important sense, they were accurate in doing so.

Since individuals from these places – Palestinian, Egyptian, and Bedouin – were well-represented both in the interviews I conducted, and in Jordan more broadly, it is not surprising that I found the same emphasis on discretion as a means for preserving dignity. What is striking, however, is that these scholars tend to identify this idea explicitly with Islam: Schaeublin sees this discretion as an aspect of *zakat*, the religious obligation of Islamic almsgiving.³¹⁷ In my research, however, I found that this principle was active among Arab Christians, who framed their approach according to their own scriptural and theological traditions.

My findings suggest that Arab Christians consider this feature of neighbourly hospitality to be part of their own heritage as well. Their belief finds support in the work of David Briones, who traces the idea back to the letter of Paul to the Philippians. Paul expresses gratitude directly to God, despite having received life-sustaining aid from the church in Philippi. This practice led Briones to conclude that Paul attributed the virtues, accomplishments, and hospitality of the Philippians to 'the creative activity of God, the ultimate giver of their gift. And if God is the ultimate giver in this relationship, then the Philippians operate as mediators of his divine beneficence'.³¹⁸ This system – that Briones describes as 'broker-client', mediates aid through the human relationship with God to protect the dignity of those in need. At least in theory, this idea minimizes a hierarchy of dominance between the giver and receiver, because, as Briones argues, Paul states theologically that while he is currently the 'client' and the Philippians the 'broker',

³¹⁵ Leila Abu Lughod, *Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016 [1986]).

³¹⁶ Sylvain Perdigon, 'For us it is otherwise': Three Sketches on Making Poverty Sensible in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon', *Current anthropology*, 56, no. S11 (2015): 88–96. DOI: 10.1086/682354].

³¹⁷ Schaeublin, 'Islam in face-to-face interaction', 123.

³¹⁸ David Briones, 'Paul's Intentional "Thankless Thanks" in Philippians 4.10-20', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34, no.1 (2011): 56.

these two roles can be freely swapped back and forth, with the only permanent role being held by God. As Barbieri noted above, this enables all to take part in, but not monopolize, their own aid, thus strengthening rather than harming the dignity of all concerned.³¹⁹

In summary, whether this practice has its origins in Christianity, Islam, or indeed, in the millennia-old customs of the region, is less important than the way that it has become associated with the region where all three Abrahamic traditions originated. As Siddiqui notes, ‘Christian and Islamic cultures have emphasized the significance of hospitality as a structure and as an act in the cultivation of the virtuous life. In both traditions. . .attitudes of hospitality can transform society around us’.³²⁰ It is clear from both my fieldwork and this literature that discretion plays an important role in preserving the dignity of the poor and refugees, who, in turn, are seen as the beneficiaries of God’s gifts rather than the wealth of the host. This may account partly for the reluctance I found among many Jordanians to discuss their own hospitality to refugees in need, which in turn demonstrates the vitality of neighbourly hospitality as a context-specific aid practice. At the same time, partnerships between local and global groups, working within the practice of neighbourly hospitality, can preserve the dignity of refugees and Jordanian Christians alike.

Building and strengthening refugee families

Within the practice of neighbourly hospitality, one practical way that dignity is preserved is to maintain the importance of family institutions within resettlement efforts. This facet of neighbourly hospitality is closely related to local cosmopolitanism. As Chatty notes in her discussions with Armenians who resettled in the region, ‘The actual homeland [of successfully resettled refugees] is lived within the family and its networks and in the focus on perpetuating Armenian language and culture’.³²¹ The importance of families to long-term resettlement accounts for the extraordinary sacrifices that many Armenians made to reunite their family members scattered by displacement, as well as the focused effort by the Armenian churches to arrange marriages for young Armenian orphans once they were grown. The practice of strengthening and even building families anew was one of the most distinctive features of neighbourly hospitality as a response to a long-term crisis of displacement.

³¹⁹ Barbieri Jr, ‘The Migrant *Imago*’, 181.

³²⁰ Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam*, 242.

³²¹ Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*, 282.

The long-term implications of this strategy became apparent in an encounter with one family who attended the Anglican church in Amman. During a meeting in her home, Martha³²² described with particular emotion her initial meeting with Louisa, her daughter-in-law, who now lived next-door to Martha and her husband in a building a stone's-throw from the Anglican church. Martha's son, 'Amer, had met Louisa at the church in the early 1990s. Louisa, an Armenian Christian, was nineteen years old when she fled conflict in Iraq with four younger siblings. 'Amer told Martha of his interest in marrying Louisa, and Martha asked the orphaned young woman to meet with Samuel formally to consider an engagement, as was the custom in Jordan. Martha told me with great emotion, however, that she gave Louisa specific instructions to only accept 'Amer's offer of marriage if she liked him; otherwise, she should feel free to refuse the offer. 'Consider me like your mother', Martha told Louisa. When the young couple did decide to marry, Martha told me that the family rented a formal reception hall and planned an elaborate party for the wedding, then Martha personally took Louisa to the downtown shopping area of *Wasat Al-Balad* to select her wedding dress and bridal trousseau. Martha told me in detail about everything she had done for Louisa at her wedding, pointing as she did so to a painting of Christ that hung above her. 'I did it for my Jesus', she said repeatedly.

Martha's story exemplified neighbourly hospitality and stood in contrast to exploitation of refugees that was occurring within broader Jordanian society. Even after 2011, when Syrians began to settle in Jordan in large numbers, reports emerged of underage marriages between young Syrian girls and Syrian or Jordanian men.³²³ Many such marriages were arranged by desperate Syrian families who sought the financial boon of a *mahar* – or bride price. Once married, however, these young brides were vulnerable to poor treatment from their husband's families. The traditional means of recourse for a wife in distress – an appeal to her family for intercession with her husband's family – would be unavailable to a poor refugee family far from their home and kin, and especially to an orphaned young woman. This context helps to explain why Martha punctuated her story by pointing toward a painting of Jesus Christ on her wall. 'I did it for my Jesus', she said with feeling. She continued to speak affectionately both about and –

³²² Martha, conversation with author. All of these individuals are described using pseudonyms in this study.

³²³ See the following for scholarly analysis of this phenomenon and its probable prevalence:

Rachid Acim, 'Underage Syrian Refugee Girls at an Impasse', *Journal of identity and migration studies* 11, no. 2 (2017): 121–153.

Marianne Hattar-Pollara, 'Barriers to Education of Syrian Refugee Girls in Jordan: Gender-Based Threats and Challenges.' *Journal of nursing scholarship* 51, no.3 (2019): 241–251.

An Van Raemdonck, and Marina de Regt, 'Early Marriage in Perspective: Practicing an Ethics of Dialogue e with Syrian Refugees in Jordan' *Progress in development studies* 20, no.4 (2020): 312–327.

An Van Raemdonck, 'A Desire for Normality: (early) Marriage Among Syrian Refugees in Jordan Between Waiting and Home-making', *Social anthropology* 29, no.1 (2021): 174–187.

when she arrived – to her daughter-in-law. She spoke of how she was loved by her students at the Latin School where she taught, what a wonderful wife she was to her son, and how much she appreciated her presence in their home.

For her part, Louisa demonstrated quiet affection for her mother-in-law and especially her father-in-law, with whom, I was told, she had been close before his illness. Louisa told me that her younger siblings were now scattered across North America. I asked whether she would like to join them, but she shook her head firmly. She was part of Jordan now, she explained. Her marriage had even provided Jordanian citizenship. She was much more comfortable here, in a fellow Arab nation, than she would be in Canada or Texas, where her siblings were. To a question about returning to Iraq, she was equally negative. She had no wish to return to Iraq now, because all the family and friends who made Iraq home were now gone. She successfully resettled in Jordan.

Martha and ‘Amer had deliberately offered neighbourly hospitality to an orphaned refugee who could easily have been exposed to exploitation or further displacement. The discrete marriage proposal from ‘Amer and his parents was the first act of hospitality. By taking Louisa into their family, they promised her room, board, and ultimately Jordanian citizenship. Furthermore, by taking her shopping for a dress and jewellery, and then by renting a hall for a proper wedding celebration, they had assured Louisa a dignified place in their family. These acts ensured that Louisa could indeed call Jordan her home. The family had indeed welcomed Louisa in, and Martha justified this unusual action on the grounds of her commitment as a Christian – ‘I did it for my Jesus’ – even as she extolled Louisa’s ongoing contributions to their family.

By contrast, a humanitarian effort that failed to consider delicate, context-specific customs might be inattentive to family structure to the point of undermining it. One example is a German project aimed at Yazidi women who were tortured by ISIS. Over a thousand of these women and their children were flown to Germany in 2015-2016 with promises that husbands and other family members would soon join them.³²⁴ By July 2018, no family reunification had begun, despite the efforts of one-quarter of the women’s husbands to reunite with their families in Germany. Their refusal was a result of political tides changing in Germany, but what is more important is that the program’s original plan transplanted 1,100 Iraqi women and children into Germany without their family members in the first place. While one author criticized the

³²⁴ Kristen Chick, ‘A Radical German Program Promised a Fresh Start to Yazidi Survivors of ISIS Captivity. But Some Women Are Still Longing for Help’ *Time* 24 August 2020, <https://time.com/5878967/yazidi-woman-germany-program/>

program for failing to provide sufficiently flexible childcare and therapy, and particularly for offering ultimately false promises of family reunification³²⁵, an understanding of the neighbourly hospitality suggests that some failures were not in implementation, but in design.

A neighbourly hospitality approach would not have separated these women from their family members in the first place. Knowing that politics may change from year to the next, or that governments could lie, such an approach would have kept families together at all costs to avoid further damaging social ties and exacerbating a refugees' sense of placelessness. After all, lost social ties were the initial reason that these Iraqi women became refugees. To return to the Armenian example with which I introduced neighbourly hospitality, Heather Sharkey, echoing several other historians,³²⁶ describes the Turkish practice of adopting Christian children and forcibly marrying Armenian women into Muslim families as much a part of their genocidal efforts to destroy the Armenian community as the forced marches into freezing mountains and mass executions.³²⁷ In essence, this Arab Christian approach might recognize any aid efforts that split and scatter families across the globe as effectively completing the work of destruction launched by ISIS.

Assisting refugees through institution-building and participation

Neighbourly hospitality includes close cooperation between hosts and those assisted, as refugees are served by participating in local institutions alongside Jordanians. At a church in Marka, I found that one congregation assisted hundreds of refugees by inviting their active participation in the church and its broader institutions. To accommodate the Iraqi children, a second 'Iraqi school' was established alongside the original school, where Iraqi children – taught by Iraqi refugees who were paid by the church – also received free uniforms and a daily meal. The priest – Khalil Jaber – told me that they required any family who sought help from the church to enrol their children at the school because he believed that the children needed the education and the sense of normality.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ See the following:

Ara Sarafian, 'The Absorption of Armenian Woman and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide' in *God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 209-221.

Taner Akcam, *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 314.

³²⁷ Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East*, 286.

It is important to note that this was not the only church that, in 2014, welcomed desperate Iraqi refugees to live inside the church for months. It was one of the few, however, that was still involved in this operation by 2019. By that time, even sympathetic Jordanians wanted their buildings back.³²⁸ Jaber conspicuously resisted this attitude. When the Jordanians in his poor congregation asked in alarmed disbelief what they could possibly give, Jaber said he responded, ‘All I am asking you to do is to love these people’.³²⁹ He said happily that resentment diminished, and friendships increased, especially as services were offered to both refugees and locals. The Jordanians allowed the Iraqis to participate in their church at every level, and neighbourly hospitality continued in Marka even after it ran its course elsewhere.

The assistance the Iraqis received was funded, however, by global aid organizations, foreign churches and governments, and private donations from abroad. The donations he collected were, he explained, essential to maintaining the operations that had begun in 2014, especially the running of the Iraqi School.³³⁰ In this way, the approach of neighbourly hospitality provided a bridge between global and local participation in aid by funnelling global resources through a local institution in which Jordanians and refugees could both participate. It should be noted that this approach also mitigated some of the concerns raised by disagreements over sacred geography, as I noted in Section Two.

Such partnership did not come without its own problems, however. This approach placed the Marka church at odds with some of the global organizations from whom he sought funding. Jaber told me that a foreign Christian aid organization had wanted to fund refugee aid programs in Marka. ‘They came to me, wanting to help our people, and of course I said yes at first, but then they told me that this money was only for Syrians’, he said. ‘I sent them away’. He continued, explaining that the organization had returned three times with similar offers of money for Syrians only, but he accepted only when they agreed to his terms, offering the funding package without the Syrian-only requirement. Jaber recounted the story with triumph, but no apparent hostility toward the global aid organization, with whom he maintained a strong and ongoing relationship.

For his part, Jaber justified his decision to refuse the global organization’s Syrian-only requirement in scriptural terms using the Parable of the Good Samaritan. ‘I will help anyone’, he

³²⁸ Steffen Schwarz, interview by author, World Vision Jordan office, Amman, Jordan, 7 February 2018, English.

³²⁹ Jaber, interview.

³³⁰ My first visit to the church was in February 2018. These efforts continued into 2020, although they have partially halted at the time of writing due to Coronavirus-related lockdowns.

emphasized. ‘Syrian, Iraqi, Christian, Muslim, even Yazidi’. For this reason, the church’s programs were available to everyone in the area. He saw the Iraqi refugees as the church’s particular calling simply because, in his view, they were being neglected by other organizations. ‘Who is helping the Syrians? The United Nations, all the aid organizations, the government, too. The same goes for the Jordanians. But who is helping the Iraqis? No one’, he said. The Marka church consciously assessed the need around them and their own capabilities in light of their Christian commitments, using the parable of the Good Samaritan. They determined that at present, the Iraqis needed their help most, as they were – to use the parable – ‘passed by’. Bretherton examines this approach within the context of the same parable. The parable of the Good Samaritan, Bretherton notes, ‘is often read as justifying a universalistic ethic of unconditional love’. But he suggests that while aid is indeed rendered borderless by the parable, it also an understanding that hospitality is given from one person to another, not from a mass of people to ‘some generalized “other” who exists nowhere and everywhere’.³³¹ With this approach, the Marka church focused their aid on those who seemed neglected by others in their area.

While it was widespread among Christians in Jordan, the truth of the assertion that the Iraqis were being ‘passed by’ is difficult to assess. The Jordanian government engaged in a years-long, ultimately unsuccessful battle of numbers to determine how many Iraqi refugees had resettled in Jordan during the conflict of the late 2000s,³³² and many Arabs concluded that the global humanitarian regime was refusing to take responsibility for the collateral damage of a conflict launched by Western governments. I also found broad ignorance about the plight of Iraqi refugees in Jordan among many global organizations. For example, an Amman-based researcher for USAID told me in 2019 that she knew nothing about the Iraqi refugees and church responses described in this study.³³³ It seems possible that the Marka congregation had good reasons for thinking that they were helping those who the global humanitarian approaches were ‘pass[ing] by’.

³³¹ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 148

³³² Luisa Gandolfo states that roughly 300,000 Iraqis entered Jordan after 2003, with as many as thirteen percent being Christian. Gandolfo, *Palestinians in Jordan*, 70.

The debate between the Jordanian government and global humanitarian organizations is described in the following:

Turner, ‘Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees’, 396.

Jonathan Darling, ‘Forced Migration and the City: Irregularity, Informality, and the Politics of Presence’, *Progress in Human Geography* 41, no.2 (2017): 178-198.

Stevens, ‘Legal Status, labelling, and protest: the case of Iraqi refugees in Jordan’.

³³³ Conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, August 2019.

A further question within this debate is the issue of Christian-Muslim relations. Most Syrian Christians having emigrated by then, the Marka church's decision to prioritize Iraqi refugees was a de facto preference for Christian refugees over Muslims. Was this church sincere in Jaber's claim that his church was choosing to 'help anyone' regardless of faith or national background, or were they selectively assisting Christians? Again, the truth of that statement is difficult to verify in a study dedicated to long-term refugee responses, but as I tried to demonstrate in Chapters One and Two of this study, the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan operates according to local customs and has itself become a source of tension where refugees are concerned. And again, the feature of neighbourly hospitality that I am investigating here is that of participation in host institutions. Because the dynamic of Jordanian Christian-Muslim relations relies on norms of coexistence that presume real difference, Christians and Muslims from otherwise similar demographic groups interact daily in business or other public settings. In intimate pastoral matters and social participation in local institutions, however, Christian-Muslim cooperation is rare. This custom, whether desirable or otherwise, is based on the reality that Muslim conversion to Christianity is illegal – and possibly dangerous – in Jordan, and the Christian population of the Middle East is small and reliant on the goodwill of individual nation-states. It is probable, in that sense, that the overwhelming majority of refugees who sought help from the Marka church were Christian, rather than Muslim, and that Muslim refugees preferred assistance from non-church institutions. Therefore, for the Jordanian churches to invite the Muslim refugees to participate fully in their churches and Christian institutions would, first, endanger the wellbeing of the Christian hosts and Muslim refugees alike, and second, reinforce the special status of the refugees rather than welcoming them to treat Jordan like home. While worthy of question and critique, such pragmatic choices are, according to Bretherton, symptomatic of refugee assistance that prioritizes its context. As Bretherton writes, 'Christian eschatology is neither utopian nor idealistic. We are not to fret that we are not gods. We can only take little steps operating within the world as it is'.³³⁴

In other words, for the Jordanian churches to offer a Muslim the same type of intimate pastoral care they offer to their Christian congregants, simply because that Muslim is a refugee, reinforces the refugee's sense of difference and alienation from Jordanian society. On the other hand, by offering the same type of hospitality to Muslim refugees that they might share with a Jordanian Muslim, the churches demonstrate respect for their broader society and the Muslim refugees. Ideally, one might hope for a day in which a sense of distance and caution would not

³³⁴ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 151.

be the default setting of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan or anywhere else. At this time, however, these churches have significant but separate commitments to both refugees and relations with Muslims. Both of these commitments present complex but different challenges, and conflating the two risks instrumentalizing the refugee as a bargaining chip in the long, often tense, history of Christian-Muslim relations. I do not believe, then, that this emphasis on Christian refugees necessarily represents a failure of neighbourly hospitality, but rather it is a particular feature of the Arab Christian approach to refugees that is informed by attention to the delicate context of Christian-Muslim coexistence in the Middle East.

In that sense, the conflict between the global aid organization and the Arab church was resolved when the Jordanian church took a leadership role in negotiations and prioritized aid according to their understanding of neighbourly hospitality. They saw themselves as God's brokers, with a Christian responsibility to help the needy who were 'passed by' in their area. The Marka church welcomed the Iraqis to participate fully in the life of their congregation and even created a new institution – the Iraqi School – to serve them in the long-term. For their part, the global aid organization and other donors helped by funding the institution that provided the aid on Marka's terms. Although the political interest of its home country aimed toward Syrian refugees, the global aid organization ultimately permitted the Jordanian Christians to participate in their own disbursement of neighbourly hospitality. Through neighbourly hospitality, the hierarchy among the refugees, Jordanian hosts, and global aid diminished, and the institutions of the Jordanian hosts were strengthened and transformed by the participation of refugees. As a result, relations between all these parties remained warm over years of engagement with a long-term refugee crisis, rather than cooling after a few months of intensive and exhausting activity.

To summarize, in this section I have described neighbourly hospitality through three episodes. First, I showed that neighbourly hospitality preserves dignity through discrete reliance on a client-broker relationship with God. In the second, I demonstrated the way that neighbourly hospitality preserves and strengthens social ties connected to place. In the third episode, I demonstrated that neighbourly hospitality includes inviting those in need to participate in the host community's own institutions. While this provides a model for global and local collaboration in aid, it could also be seen as a limitation of neighbourly hospitality, in that the approach is confined to what is permissible within the local context. Of course, all three of these features work together, as all rely on local, Arab Christian leadership and expertise to identify the best practices and thus help refugees by strengthening, rather than undermining, the Christian presence and institutions in Jordan.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the global humanitarian response to refugee crisis has increased tensions within intra-Christian relations, especially as foreign Christian networks fail to meet the historically established expectations of Jordanians. In the first section, I showed how the refusal of historically Christian aid organizations to partner with Jordanian churches undermines the historical practice of catholicity. Next, I argued that threats to the Arab Christian understanding of sacred geography revealed a disparity between global and context-aware approaches to aid, which would require that refugee dignity, institutions, and families be preserved and strengthened. Finally, I demonstrated the potential for neighbourly hospitality to restore elements of the transnational intra-Christian relationship by re-establishing respect for Arab Christian expertise and understanding of the region's delicate dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations.

As stated previously, the refugees are not themselves the primary cause of the friction I have described. The argument of this chapter is, in that sense, similar to that of Chapter Two: the strain caused by the arrival of so many refugees in such a short space of time has made growing problems more apparent. The misunderstandings and conflicting motivations predate the war in Syria. It is only since 2011, however, that Christians in Jordan have become aware of the extent to which their goals and understandings have diverged from their foreign Christian allies.³³⁵ This divergence is manifested in practical terms by their different approaches to helping refugees.

Understanding the difference between their approaches to refugees makes the difficulty over expectations clearer. If the aim of humanitarian organizations is largely to identify and assist refugees as a special category of need, then a short-term, global approach that tends to commodify or treat the recipients as clients is a natural and efficient strategy. Indeed, what would seem odd, or possibly even wrong, would be to spend time and money building with local partners, building institutions designed to serve everyone within a small geographic area for decades. Even less appropriate, within this understanding, would be an emphasis on building long-term ministries inside church networks or hiring Christians rather than Muslims. In this

³³⁵ This is not to suggest any naivete on the part of Jordanian churches. On the contrary, my impression during interviews with aid representatives from foreign churches is that they are still largely unaware of how their activities affects the Jordanian churches. Some seemed unaware of the existence of Jordanian churches or Christian refugees. Because the focus of my research was on the Jordanian churches, and not the foreign aid workers in Jordan, further research would be needed to complete the picture of international, intra-Christian relations in the Middle East.

understanding, therefore, the sort of mutually reinforcing cooperation and occasional diplomatic advocacy that Middle Eastern Christians have come to expect from foreign Christians seems at best, unnecessary, and at worst, a gesture of sectarian favouritism that risks antagonizing a Muslim-majority region and secular sensibilities back home. At most, these aid groups might use the Jordanian churches as distributors. Those are the tactics that best fit this new, politically specific understanding of who refugees are and what the Middle East needs.

The Jordanian perspective is grounded in Middle Eastern history, however, and remains unfamiliar with this global approach. To their eyes, then, such tactics are not only a confusing departure from centuries of historical precedent, but also a pointed insult from erstwhile allies. In this model, Jordanian churches cease to be partners in the aid process and become recipients instead. They increasingly identify with the concerns of the refugees, rather than the foreign aid groups. Even within Arabic-speaking churches in their native lands, they increasingly feel like strangers, and Barbieri's model for dignity now becomes important to them as well. Are they being allowed to 'take part in the evangelization of their companions' by working in partnership with foreign Christians to serve their community? Increasingly, many complain, they are not.

In contrast to this foreign approach, the Jordanian churches I cited seek to employ sensitivity and discretion when alleviating the poverty of relatives, friends, neighbours, and even refugees. In this understanding, the refugee need not be insulted with special treatment, but rather refugees need the same care that any Jordanian would. Genuine conflict over scarce resources can emerge over time, and in Jordan, such debates have already generated such resentment that the Jordan Compact took dramatic action to resolve them. Notwithstanding these problems, however, I have argued that the Jordanian approach to migration and even forced displacement is fundamentally different. These refugees from Syria and Iraq are 'not strangers'. And the Jordanians who choose to assist them do so with an understanding that they might someday share their plight. In the context of this chapter, this gap in perceptions becomes incredibly important to the ongoing relationship between the Arabic-speaking churches in Jordan and their fellow Christians from Europe and North America. There is a categorical difference in how the Jordanians see the refugees versus how the global networks treat them. To the global aid groups and Western churches, these refugees are the Other who might be assisted or avoided, but must be dealt with. To the Jordanians, however, the refugees are simply part of their own social fabric.

All of this becomes important to the Jordanian Christian community in considering their long-term presence in the region. What has made Jordan's Christians unique, even within the

region, is the extent to which they have succeeded in inhabiting two different communities authentically. They have been ‘Arab’ among their Arab Muslim neighbours in the Middle East and ‘Christian’ among the European Christian churches. While the compromise has not always been comfortable, as noted in Chapter Three, it has ensured them a space to live, and often to thrive. This dual identity is threatened, however, when their co-identities lose resonance. As noted in Chapters One and Two, the Pan-Arab ideals of the late Ottoman era have faded for the last half century. This has rendered their local credentials less potent. Likewise, the declining identification of Europe with Christianity raises questions about their old alliances in the Middle East. New generations of Europeans and North Americans perceive their boundaries of belonging in ways that – consciously or otherwise – exclude the churches of the Middle East.

Middle East Christians do not view their churches as categorically different from Christianity as a historical and worldwide family, but rather, they see themselves as a contemporary phenomenon of Middle Eastern Christianity with a catholic connection to other Christians. In this view, they are one essential part of a wider whole, and a part whose unique value is grounded in their relationship to sacred geography. Jordanian Christians are puzzled by the deployment of a humanitarian approach to refugees, rather than the tradition of neighbourly hospitality that has historically solidified an intra-Christian partnership. From this perspective, the unmet expectations constitute affronts to their dignity by Western churches, and thus raise troubling doubts about their position within world Christianity. To the question of whether that second relationship with worldwide Christians offers support to the troubled first, these affronts to the dignity of refugees and Jordanian churches alike represent a startling negative.

Part Two: Case Studies

The first four chapters of this study have identified a rather long list of challenges for Christians in Jordan. I have described the ways in which interfaith tensions from within the region and intra-Christian tensions from without have caused anxiety for Jordanian Christians by damaging the essential relationships upon which they rely: Christian-Muslim and intra-Christian relations. While Jordan has been mentioned – and promoted itself – as a regional haven for interfaith harmony, the concerns I described in Chapters Two and Four of this study raise doubts about the stability of the oft-cited Jordanian ‘oasis’, even if violence still stops at the Jordanian borders with Iraq and Syria.³³⁶ If even Jordan, the ‘kingdom of happy Christians’,³³⁷ is beset with challenges from within and without the region, what hope remains for Middle Eastern Christianity? Many Jordanian Christians, and indeed, many Muslims and Christians across the region, have answered that delicate question by leaving the Middle East permanently. This pattern has literally affected the internal coherency of Christian communities, as Anthony O’Mahony writes:

Christian communities in the Middle East have inevitably lost many of their most educated and young members. The churches thus have lost the leadership that should be guiding their communities’ futures. In some communities, more men than women have left, changing the gender balance. When Christian women marry Muslim men, this fractures and diminishes the Christian population, with implications for property rights and the education of children.³³⁸

Indeed, such emigration has become so widespread as to become something of an automatic response to trouble, as I noted previously. This phenomenon of widespread emigration is well-documented on a scholarly level. Andrea Pacini’s collection, published in 1998, recounted large-scale emigration among Jordanians and Palestinians, and the situation has only escalated in the decades since then. Saleh Hamarneh wrote in 2012 that the Christian share of Jordan’s population had ‘dropped to three percent of the total’, of which roughly one-quarter resided abroad.³³⁹ In Jordan’s neighbouring lands, emigration has become pronounced. An estimated forty percent of Christians left Israel and the West Bank between 1967 and 1991, and

³³⁶ O’Mahony, ‘Christianity in the Wider Levant Region’, 68.

³³⁷ Maggiolini and Twal, ‘Jordan’, 152.

³³⁸ O’Mahony, ‘Christianity in the Wider Levant Region’, 79.

³³⁹ Saleh Hamarneh, ‘Christians in Jordan’, *Politeja* 9, no. 19 (2012): 443.

Christians left at twice the rate of their Muslim neighbours.³⁴⁰ Even among those not actively displaced by violent conflict, migration increased due to the general instability, economic struggles, and an increasingly hostile political environment. Many of them fled to whatever Western nation granted a visa, while others went to Jordan. Such phenomena, whether a result of active conflict or the more mundane economic problems that also plague the region, impact the entire region across the Levant and Egypt. The question might appropriately be asked as to whether this is truly a faith-based migration pattern, as Arab Muslims have certainly emigrated, both to flee violence and improve their economic prospects. The fact remains, however, that the Christian share of the Middle Eastern population is noticeably dropping. As of 1900, an estimated fourteen percent of the population was Christian, a number that declined to seven percent by 1970 and five percent by 2015. Gina A. Zurlo projects that number will drop to three percent by 2050, noting, ‘Without resolutions to conflict and strategies for refugees to return home, it is unlikely that the Christian situation in the region will improve’.³⁴¹ As Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen describes the situation today:

The taking of Mosul by the Islamic State (*Daesh*) led to a massive exodus of Christians from the plain of Nineveh to Iraqi Kurdistan. The payment of a tribute (*jizya*) imposed on the last Christians of Raqqa in Syria in February 2014 by a “pact”, then the beheading of 21 Copts in Libya a year later, together with the ostentatious destruction of churches, indicate the Christianophobia at work in the ideology of *Daesh* ... And we can fear that enforced departure and massacres may end by emptying these countries of their Christians, already few in number. Confronted with a general wave of migration, which for Christians seems like a haemorrhaging, prophets of the ‘death’ of ‘Eastern Christians’—a literary genre in a West which feels itself threatened—are not short of arguments for condemning the millions of Christians living in the Near East to imminent disappearance.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Sotiris Roussos, ‘The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and community of Jerusalem’ in *Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*, ed. Anthony O’Mahony with Goran Gunner and Kework Hintlian (London: Swedish Christian Study Centre, Jerusalem, 1995), 223.

³⁴¹ Gina A. Zurlo, ‘A Demographic Profile of Christianity in North Africa and West Asia’, in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Mariz Tadros and Todd M. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 13-14.

³⁴² Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, ‘Les chrétiens au Moyen-Orient à l’heure de Daesh’, *Annuaire français des relations internationales*, 17 (2016): 681. Mayeur-Jaouen is referring to the work by Jean Pierre Valognes, *Vie et mort des Chrétiens d’Orient. Des origines à nos jours*, (Paris, Fayard, 1994).

This phenomenon of emigration is not, however, the focus of this study, but rather it forms an important backdrop to the purpose of my work. This study is interested in those who remain in Jordan, and above all, in those who remain committed to responding to the theological and socio-political challenges initiated by this so-called refugee crisis. For this reason, the rest of this study explores the agency of Jordanian Christians over and against the challenges relating to migration. I seek to present tangible approaches for a Christian presence in Jordan that meaningfully confront the challenges I described in Part One of this study. In the next three chapters, I offer a series of case studies that explore how three different churches have sought to navigate these tensions. In each of these three responses to the same complications and challenges, I see the agency of Jordanian Christians at work. These are ordinary Christians from various denominational and socioeconomic backgrounds who have chosen to navigate their surroundings conscientiously.

What follows carries social, political, and theological implications. Each of the following chapters offers a practical, living model for Christian life in Jordan. While each model is prone to different weaknesses and pitfalls, as I note, it is important to remember that each of the three congregations I have chosen to document are actively confronting the same challenges that have prompted others to emigrate, or even to predict the near demise of Middle Eastern Christianity. That reality creates its own challenges. As Jean Corbon notes, the long and rather complicated history of the Middle Eastern churches – which I have presented in brief – risks placing them in possession of an ambivalent past and uncertain future. Corbon concludes, “The current problems lie in the relationship between the two poles which are the *raison d’être* of any church of God; being “called” by the living God to be “sent” into the world”.³⁴³ In Jordan, this dual reality yields a tension between self-preservation and achieving each church’s proactive mission.

[Selection of the three case studies](#)

Before presenting my findings on these three case studies, I want to briefly describe the means by which I selected these locales for research. I anticipate three general topics relating to this process, which I address in order: first, my choice to remain in Amman and its surrounding area; second, my decision to prioritize study within church institutions; and third, the qualifications for selecting three particular churches, to the exclusion of others in Jordan.

³⁴³ Corbon, *The Churches of the Middle East*, 105.

First, I elected to conduct most of my research in Amman after several exploratory ventures to other areas of Jordan early in the research process. To be sure, a case could be made for my research to be conducted in the historically Christian village of Madaba, or in one of the refugee-dense towns of northern Jordan, several of which also boast prominent Christian communities. Amman remained attractive to me for three primary reasons. First, the diversity of Amman's urban context would make it possible for me to explore several socioeconomic realities simultaneously. Given my fixation on tangible approaches to economic challenges within the host community, I considered the contrasts between wealth in western Amman and financial difficulty in Marka and Ashrafieh to be an asset to scholarly comparison. Second, since I sought to explore the practice of lived hospitality in a long-term setting, I needed to visit an area where refugees and locals could interact somewhat regularly. This is one reason why I refrained from visiting formal refugee camps, despite numerous suggestions from Jordanians and aid workers that I do so. Likewise, the people of Amman could – and frequently did – cite tangible changes to their everyday lives that were linked to the large-scale phenomenon of urban refugee settlement, including overcrowded schools, significant delays in traffic, and reduced access to healthcare. Even as a visitor to the country, having spent several months studying Arabic in Amman in 2012, I could observe many of these changes almost immediately. This dramatic contrast, which appeared less concerning to the inhabitants of rural Jordan, seemed a fitting backdrop for the kind of exploration I wanted. Third, interviews and conversations early in the research process suggested to me that inhabitants of Amman were more enthusiastic – or at least more articulate – about the problems and approaches that I describe in this study. In Amman, I more easily found Jordanian Christian leaders who regularly corresponded with communities around Jordan and sought wide-ranging pastoral solutions, as well as those who engaged with government officials and other Christian leaders to advocate for their communities. Their awareness of and ongoing participation in national and international discourses was a valuable resource to me in my efforts to understand how Christian-Muslim and church-state relations, for example, were developing and changing on the ground. Such articulations of problems and possible solutions to the whole country's difficulties seemed better fodder for the comparative analysis I have conducted. A similar study in Madaba or Salt would certainly be valuable, but I feared it would lack the wide-ranging analysis of transnational ties and regional realities that I sought. As a peripheral benefit, I also admit that, for reasons I offer later in this section, I consider the Orthodox case study to be essential to this study, and I was assured and believe that the largest and most active Jordanian Orthodox congregations are found in Amman.

Second, I chose to embed my research within three institutional churches. This represents a departure from an initial plan that had included a range of humanitarian organizations, government institutions, or private homes. Early research, however, particularly a series of interviews with representatives from Western humanitarian organizations and even some Jordanian Muslim institutions, pushed me towards the churches. While I remain grateful for those early interviews – they assisted me in shaping my understanding of the refugee response overall, and they prompted my thinking about neighbourly hospitality and transnational partnership in formative ways – I have consciously limited their presentation within this study. I see my task in Chapters Five to Seven as presenting the self-understanding of Jordanian Christians, and limiting my analysis to Arabic-speaking churches – where Jordanians felt free to both demonstrate leadership in response to local problems and to engage with or reject different approaches – has helped me preserve their voices and experience in response to refugees. As a doctoral candidate in World Christianity, this focus on the needs and actions of Christians on the ground was paramount. Likewise, from a migration studies perspective, I sought the conditions of the host community, not the professional standards of expatriates whose interest in Jordanian concerns might vary.

Third, I selected three particular congregations for case study analysis using several criteria. The first qualification was that congregations needed local leadership, preferably at both the congregational and regional level. Early explorations took me to several Arabic-speaking Evangelical congregations with robust, articulate, and long-term strategies for engaging with refugees. I found, however, that while the membership of many such congregations was Jordanian, including Arab pastors, these churches' decisions about funding, events, and resources were made by Western Christians. Sometimes these lived locally and described themselves as missionaries or humanitarian workers, while others answered more directly to institutions abroad. I rejected these congregations as case studies for reasons I explained previously. I reasoned that a person might feel and respond very differently to a long-term refugee presence in one's own country, in which the possibility of economic deprivation or violent conflict could threaten one's home and livelihood, than he or she might while living abroad, a little more secure – perhaps – in the knowledge of easy departure if circumstances became dangerous. On those grounds, I wanted to study congregations whose leadership was forced to confront the real challenges relating to refugees in their homelands.

Next, I sought congregations who were still, years after the immediate sense of emergency had abated, actively engaging with urban refugees. The Ashrafieh and Marka

congregations I introduce in Chapters Five and Seven offered two different but robust approaches to refugees in the long-term. Last, I sought a diverse range of theological and socioeconomic circumstances. Reference to an Arab Orthodox church – the subject of Chapter Six – was a priority, because they constitute the largest and most politically powerful church family in Jordan.³⁴⁴ As such, they provide de facto leadership and representation of Jordan’s entire Christian body, especially to the government.³⁴⁵ Their actions help to constitute Jordan’s official discourse of Christian-Muslim and church-state relations, to which others must on some level respond. I sought the most broadly applicable approaches I could find to the issues of ongoing Christian presence in Jordan, so smaller church families whose situation was fairly unique – the Coptic Orthodox Church in Abdali, for example – were less attractive to this study. A Latin Catholic congregation in Marka, however, and an Anglican parish in Ashrafieh, offered representations from the second- and third-largest church families in Jordan. Likewise, conversations with many Jordanian Christians persuaded me that these are generally seen as respectable and enculturated Christian institutions. These last two churches also presented an alternative to the wealthy Orthodox congregation I selected. The Anglican church lay within a now-impooverished sector of Amman’s downtown, while the Latin church was located so far east of Amman’s city centre as to be considered almost a rural location by locals. Lastly, all of the churches I selected as case studies had to accept my presence for ethical reasons. While some of these three did so more enthusiastically than others, as I explain later, all gave me formal permission to participate.

Structure of Part Two

These case studies describe how three different churches have navigated this tension. In the face of ‘the current problems’³⁴⁶ – and especially the challenges described in Chapters One through Four of this study – Jordanian Christians utilize the theological, social, and political resources of

³⁴⁴ The Arab Orthodox Church has long been Jordan’s largest, with an estimated 70,000 adherents in Jordan. ‘Jordan,’ *World Christian Encyclopaedia*.

³⁴⁵ Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, who manages interreligious affairs for the Jordanian government, stated that he views the Orthodox Church as Jordan’s national church and Western Protestant denominations as being of an inferior theological calibre due to their lack of ancient origins. The polemical nature of such comments notwithstanding, that view renders the Orthodox Church the best equipped of any Jordanian church to be able to intervene in, or at least contribute to, government policy with regard to refugees or other issues discussed in this study. Ghazi Bin Muhammad, ‘Between us and you: Reflections on love as the ‘common word’ in Christian-Muslim relations’, public lecture, University of Edinburgh, 22 May 2017, <http://christianmuslim.div.ed.ac.uk/the-christian-muslim-studies-network-hosts-prince-ghazi-bin-muhammad-of-jordan/>.

³⁴⁶ Corbon’s article was published in 1998, but his discussion of conflict between past and future hopes, and of the fraught relationship among the churches of the Middle East and between the Christians of the region and outside it, have become only more relevant in light of the newer problems presented in this study.

their heritage to creatively reimagine coexistence with Muslims, with refugees, and with each other. The Middle Eastern Christians who remain in Jordan – whether Jordanian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Armenian, or otherwise – are conscious of their rich heritage inside the region, and they exercise agency in revisiting, reinforcing, and revising the traditions of Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, Pan-Arabism, catholicity, sacred geography, and neighbourly hospitality. The next three chapters of this study show how Jordanian Christians have responded proactively to the dual threats raised by weakening relations with the Muslim majority and with Western Christians by reimaging these six traditions in the context of refugee crisis.

Structurally, the following chapters depart from patterns established previously in this thesis, as I organize my findings and analysis by site, rather than by topic. During my time in Amman, I noted that amid the ongoing activities of a living community, several traditions might be apparent in a single act. For this reason, the first chapter focuses on the work of a Latin Catholic congregation, the second on an Arab Orthodox congregation, and the third on an Anglican parish. The analysis is not a comprehensive study of all the actions of a given church family in Jordan, but rather, my interviews and participant observations within each church constitute a case study of one congregation's agency in response to refugee crisis in 2018 and 2019. In this way, the chapters demonstrate that Jordanian Christians respond constructively to the weakened traditions of their heritage. In each chapter, I describe the specific efforts of Jordanian Christians to strengthen or renegotiate the various traditions. I then illustrate each response using my findings from fieldwork in Amman. While each response is different, each represents a type of hope for the future of Christianity in Jordan by reimaging existing traditions over and against various threats.

5. ‘Don’t you speak Christian?’ St Mary’s Latin Church in Marka Renews a Vision for Local Cosmopolitanism

The long-awaited and many-times rescheduled celebration had finally arrived.³⁴⁷ The Latin Catholic complex in the poor Amman suburb of Marka buzzed with the excitement of some 200 Iraqi refugee children. Their families were also present, straightening hair and ties. Teachers and students alike wore neat maroon uniforms, stitched by Iraqi church employees in an impromptu sewing factory within the church complex. Their teachers were fellow refugees, mostly from Mosul, and although the school was free to the students, the teachers were paid by the church. At the same time, the warden who watched the gates to the compound, the nurses at the free clinic, and the church employee who persuaded the reluctant sound system to make itself heard over the crowd, were Jordanians and long-term residents of the area. The church’s priest, a Palestinian refugee, insisted that the families who requested help must enrol their children in the school.

Father Khalil Jaber, the Palestinian parish priest, was a dynamic force behind the push to help Iraqis in Marka. He said he wanted the school to serve the children educationally and provide a source of stability. On graduation day, that meant a well-rehearsed program of song, dance, and speeches. In attendance were the children’s families and selected guests, both Arab and foreign, the supporters and sponsors of the ‘Iraqi school’. The guests had already begun to join the throng, driving cars into a courtyard/basketball court full of children in their school best. Jaber hurried to welcome the area’s Arab patriarch, clad in long clerical dress and a formal pink hat that indicated his ecclesiastical status. Next, he greeted the celebration’s guest of honour, Canon Andrew White of the Anglican Church.³⁴⁸ For this guest often honoured with the title, ‘the Vicar of Baghdad’, the graduation had been rescheduled several times, both to accommodate his ailing health and a rigorous international travel schedule. His presence at the day’s events reassured them that they were not alone in their journey, a promise that someone,

³⁴⁷ Iraqi School graduation, observations by author, St Mary’s Latin Church, Marka, Jordan, 10 August 2019.

³⁴⁸ Canon Andrew White has been an influential leader and advocate for Middle Eastern Christians both inside and outside of the region for several decades. Originally from England, he served as the Anglican Vicar of St George’s Church in Baghdad from 1998 to 2014, in which position he undertook numerous ambassadorial missions on behalf of Iraqi Christians and the stability of the region more broadly. Additionally, this church in Baghdad became not only one of the largest Anglican congregations in the region, but also functionally served as the headquarters for extensive humanitarian aid to Iraqis during that tumultuous time. He and his congregation left Iraq under duress in 2014, at which point his advocacy for the displaced became even more global in scope. The holder of many doctoral degrees and the author of many books about his experiences and the Christian faith, he continued to work with and on behalf of the Iraqi refugees of Jordan despite a serious personal health struggle with multiple sclerosis.

somewhere, was reminding the world that one of Christianity's oldest communities was struggling for life in a forgotten suburb of a poor Arab country.

The festive scene at the graduation event offered a living illustration of the traditions I have introduced in previous chapters as local cosmopolitanism and catholicity. What follows is a case study for how a poor Jordanian congregation responded to a refugee crisis with long-term presence in mind, as this church incorporated Iraqi Christian refugees without downplaying their particular differences or forcing them to assimilate. Through interviews and extensive participant observation with this congregation from 2018-19,³⁴⁹ I determined that this church had consciously chosen to welcome and incorporate the participation of many Iraqi refugees. In this chapter, I argue that approach of St Mary's Latin Church in the Amman suburb of Marka represents a model for local cosmopolitanism, reimaged for a changing political and religious climate with the support of catholic ties. The emphasis on catholicity becomes clear through the church's approach to emigration and the help received from abroad. In this chapter, I analyse how the four features of local cosmopolitanism identified in Chapter One were deployed and renegotiated in the Marka church alongside catholicity. I conclude by assessing the long-term viability of this approach for a community of Jordanian and refugee Christians.

1. Renewing the vision for local cosmopolitanism

This section argues that the Marka congregation offers a practical model for local cosmopolitanism, renewed within a single congregation in response to refugee crisis. As I noted in Chapter Two of this study, local cosmopolitanism may be understood using four descriptive features: government assistance, supportive laws, the help of in-group institutions, and an expectation that newcomers contribute meaningfully to their host society. In the section that follows, I highlight two of these features and analyse their significance within this case study: expecting and encouraging newcomers to contribute and the provision of help through charitable institutions.

Expecting and celebrating refugee contributions

This first feature of local cosmopolitanism – the celebration of migrants' unique contributions – was on display at the graduation event. Most obviously, the customs of Iraqi national belonging were presented and celebrated in a variety of ways. The Iraqi children who filed into the church

³⁴⁹ This congregation invited me to both participate in church activities, serve in church ministries, and engage with individuals formally and informally for the purposes of this research. Since so many members of this congregation were refugees, however, I have anonymized most individual contributions for their protection.

hall for the graduation celebration were each provided with a miniature Iraqi flag. They waved their flags enthusiastically and, in the middle of the formal graduation programme, they held them high while singing an Iraqi patriotic song. It was a bold display of Iraqi difference. This display was part of the graduation programme, however. In this way, their unique belonging was not merely tolerated, but also celebrated, as part of their inclusion within this Jordanian church community.

The model for local cosmopolitanism would suggest inclusion and even incorporation of the Iraqi newcomers within the Jordanian church, but it does not imply assimilation. This model for local cosmopolitanism produced inclusion with difference. Both the differences in political belonging and the contextual differences in religious practice became part of the community's practice without distracting from their shared belonging to this church community. The children's enthusiastic waving of Iraqi flags allowed these families to celebrate their political belonging without excluding them from participation in the Jordanian church.

Of even deeper significance, however, was the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic. It was the introductory act on the programme of celebration. The children stood in on a stage before their families and assembled church leaders and foreign guests. They closed their eyes and raised their palms upward, then recited the words in unison in an act that functioned as both opening prayer and performance. For many of these children, Aramaic was a first language, and still the one they spoke at home. A few of the younger children spoke only Aramaic and had not yet learned their second language of Arabic. Others spoke only Arabic, depending on precisely where in Iraq they had grown up and in which church. Regardless, however, all of the Iraqi children had been taught to recite this prayer in Aramaic. This recitation opened the formal graduation programme; it was a regular feature of their start-of-day routine at the Iraqi School.

On the one hand, the Aramaic prayer demarcated an obvious difference between the Jordanian hosts and foreign Iraqis. The linguistic difference between the Aramaic spoken by Iraqi Christians and the Arabic they shared with the Jordanians set the two groups apart. Even Iraqi children who may not have spoken Aramaic in any other context still participated in the recitation, which suggests more than a linguistic difference. The political divide – and all that it represented to them – was on display here. Importantly, though, it appeared to be a positive display. Whether this recitation had been volunteered by the Iraqis themselves, or whether the Jordanians had requested it, the Aramaic prayer had become a distinctive feature that both celebrated in front of guests. Indeed, Jaber said that in the early days of the Iraqis arrival at the church, some of them had come to him in concern. *'Ya Abuna, tabki Meseehi?* (Father, don't you

speak Christian?)', they had asked him.³⁵⁰ When he replied that he did not know what that meant, they clarified: '*Ashuuri* (Aramaic)'.³⁵¹ The Aramaic language was a stark sign of difference, as Jordanian Christians established their belonging to the region largely on the basis of their Arab heritage. Many Iraqi Christians, by contrast, spoke Aramaic as a mother tongue, learning Arabic only to communicate with the broader society or at school. Far from being alarmed by this sign of difference, however, Jaber told me that he continued to delight in hearing 'Christian' spoken. In fact, he frequently asked the Iraqi membership to recite the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic for foreign guests, believing that it communicated something rare and valuable about their shared Christian faith. In this activity, local cosmopolitanism became manifest, as the Christians from elsewhere expressed appreciation for – and even learned from – the unique Christian practice of these Aramaic-speaking refugees.

On the other hand, this recitation also showcased an important similarity between the Jordanians and the Iraqi newcomers. They were, after all, reciting the Lord's Prayer, a practice that the Jordanian Catholics were certainly familiar with, albeit in Arabic. Indeed, a recitation of this traditional Christian prayer represented a generally common way to open a graduation programme for a Catholic school. In that way, the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic also highlighted for the church community and their foreign guests an important feature that the Iraqis and Jordanians shared. This was not accidental. When the priest described to me some of the early events of the Iraqis' arrival at the church – and even the need to overcome some reservations among the Jordanian congregation – he said he had persuaded them that they could create 'one community – one *Christian* community'.³⁵² In that sense, the Christian faith that the Jordanians and Iraqis held in common was not merely a notable similarity, it was the determining feature that the community used to establish the boundary between outsider and insider. Perhaps

³⁵⁰ Khalil Jaber, conversation with author, St Mary's Latin Church, Marka, Jordan, 17 July 2019, Arabic – translation by author.

³⁵¹ The implications of this exchange certainly go beyond the main argument of this paragraph; namely, the congregation in Marka has chosen to celebrate the unique characteristics and features of the Iraqi newcomers. First, we see the level of ignorance that these Christians held about one another, despite their centuries of living so closely together. Even an educated priest with some experience of travel in the region did not expect the level of commitment to Aramaic that these Iraqi laity would presume as attendant to their practice of Christianity. The significance of Aramaic – and perhaps liturgical languages more broadly – to the historical and contemporary development of church identity in the Middle East is an issue deserving of further research, particularly in light of the scattering that the Iraqi Christians have been experiencing for nearly two decades. Second, the speaking of Aramaic holds implications for the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in Iraq, particularly in light of the history of Pan-Arabism in the region. If speaking Aramaic is to 'speak Christian', then presumably, to use the Arabic tongue in church services would be to 'speak Muslim'. Again, this topic deserves further research, but it could interest anyone who desires to examine and strengthen the frayed relations between the two faiths in modern-day Iraq.

³⁵² Jaber, conversation with author.

this Christian sameness enabled the church to tolerate and even celebrate their political and linguistic differences.

In addition to celebrating their unique characteristics, these refugees also made noticeable contributions to the life of the church in Marka. At the Iraqi School, for example, classes were taught, uniforms were sewn, and activities were organized by Iraqi refugees who were paid for their labour by the church. Even the principal and her assistants were Iraqi. Church services were no different, as leading roles in the choir and altar servers included places for Iraqis. All of these appointments represented an even more significant deployment of local cosmopolitanism than the simple celebration of Iraqi heritage. By allowing and encouraging the Iraqis to participate, administer, and even lead in various aspects of communal life, this congregation invited them to change their experience of shared life. These Iraqi refugees not only partook of the church's resources but also altered its daily reality permanently. This congregation in Marka was transformed by both the Jordanian decision to welcome and the enthusiastic Iraqi response to that welcome. This kind of shared experience is ultimately transformative for all involved, including the host community in Marka, whose institutions and customs become new and different in the hands of those who were once their guests but had now become – through local cosmopolitanism – fellow church members.

Assistance from in-group institutions

Resentment of refugees had become a major force in 2014,³⁵³ making Jordanians on the ground far less sympathetic to visiting Arab refugees than they might be otherwise, and happening just as Iraqi refugees began to join the Syrians in Jordan. As I explain later in this chapter, complex diplomatic negotiations by Vatican representatives were needed before the Iraqi refugees were permitted to enter the country, and the Catholic negotiators had promised to care for the Iraqis without assistance from the Jordanian government. At first, the frightened Catholics in Jordan were too alarmed by events that brought the Iraqis into their churches to be annoyed by their continuing presence. In the initial excitement of the Iraqi Christian arrival, I learned, many other Catholic churches around Jordan had welcomed the refugees. Catholic congregations across Jordan had housed newcomers inside their halls and classrooms, and I heard stories of dozens of families trying to share a single church bathroom, for example, while another church opened an Italian restaurant on their premises, which was staffed by Iraqi Christians trained on site. As the

³⁵³ Schwarz, interview.

months dragged on, however, many of the churches began to return to normality, particularly in their church facilities, even though the time of ‘crisis’ for these Iraqi refugees was far from over.

In the Marka church, however, leaders spoke against such calls and instead urged Christians in Jordan to become transformed by their Iraqi visitors.³⁵⁴ I noticed this phenomenon in February 2018, during my first visit to the Marka church. At that time, nearly everyone I had spoken to previously either complained about refugees in Jordan, or worried about the way that other Jordanians had grown to resent them. When I asked several Marka church leaders about overcoming Jordanian resentment, I was surprised to see them exchange smiles. One lay leader who was assisting refugees at the Marka church said that some priests did not have the gifts that Jaber had used to help his congregation overcome their fears. For his part, Jaber raised his hands as he explained that a congregation is like an orchestra, and its leaders must know how to direct each of its members toward harmony. When he told his Jordanian congregation that the Iraqis were their guests, and they must take care of them, they greeted him with shocked dismay. How could they care for others when they had nothing? His response to his congregation reflected his unique understanding of what these poor Jordanians truly had to offer, as well as what the Iraqis needed the most. He had responded, ‘Sometimes a smile is as good as a piece of bread. All I am asking you to do is to love these people’. As time went on, he reported, the Jordanians were soon asking whether they could invite their new Iraqi friends to their homes for celebrations. In other words, as I described at length in Chapter Four, this congregation concluded that a refugee’s central problem is not a lack of short-term material assistance, but rather it is the need for a new place to belong. The poor Jordanians in Marka could offer the Iraqis a safe haven, knowing that ‘a smile’ – the offer of fellowship and belonging – ‘is as good as a piece of bread’, which can sustain a person for only a short while. As I argued in Chapter Four of this study, this congregation’s recognition of the refugees’ need for fellowship and belonging enabled them to craft a context-specific alternative approach to aid. Furthermore, by focussing on the refugees’ need for belonging first, the Marka congregation became able to assist these refugees for years after other, more materially robust efforts, had collapsed under the weight of burn-out.

One of the ways the Marka congregation facilitated long-term aid despite material poverty was by utilizing the institutions of their church. In the help they received from the church and related charitable institutions, I see a second feature of local cosmopolitanism. This congregation housed these refugees – many of whom were made destitute by their displacement – within their church facilities for months on end, and they continued to coordinate material,

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

monetary, educational, and pastoral resources until 2020.³⁵⁵ A partnership with a foreign charity called Loving Humanity helped establish an employment programme in an emptied classroom of the church. Church services – packed to standing-room only – were increased to several sessions every weekend or more as a way to boost morale and offer more opportunities for impromptu Iraqi choirs and memorial services to participate in congregational life. Jordanian youth operated a children’s programme each afternoon throughout the summer, attended by a mix of ages and nationalities. The keystone of the whole operation, however, appeared to be the ‘Iraqi school’, which utilized the same facilities, buses, and curriculum as the pre-existing ‘Jordanian school’, and simply operated during the vacant afternoon and evening hours. Perhaps most important to the issue of resentment and burn-out mentioned above is the fact that all of these activities could be freely advertised to local Jordanians and Iraqis alike, which made the poorer members of the Marka congregation less likely to develop hostile feelings towards the refugees.

Of course, one can see in these activities not only local cosmopolitanism, but also neighbourly hospitality and sacred geography. Neighbourly hospitality may be seen in the way that Iraqis received help as they participated in local communal life, and the Iraqi school particularly reflects sacred geography, as the Marka congregation sought the Iraqis’ long-term welfare by incorporating them into their branch of the Catholic school system, one of the most widely acclaimed Christian institutions in the country. The third element of intra-Christian relations – catholicity – is discussed in further detail in the next section.

None of this is to undermine the importance of local cosmopolitanism within this congregation’s response to refugees, however. In this section, I have argued that the Latin church in Marka developed a sustainable response to refugees through the tradition of local cosmopolitanism. Rather than fearing the strangeness of those who arrived at their church, they encouraged and celebrated their unique contributions. Confronted with growing indifference and even resentment of refugees, they continued to offer in-group support by framing their support theologically in terms of building a unified Christian community. In this way, they renewed the vision of local cosmopolitanism to reflect their changing times and socio-political context.

³⁵⁵ As in most of the world, schools and churches closed on a temporary basis in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Further research is required to ascertain in what ways the pandemic has affected Christians, refugees, and charitable assistance in Jordan.

2. Capitalizing on catholicity

Local cosmopolitanism is a powerful approach to responding to refugees, but it did not enable a single congregation to provide for hundreds of destitute refugees entirely on its own. Material need was simply too great. For that reason, this section argues that the Marka congregation's approach also included appeals to catholicity. Through catholic ties with foreign churches – including Iraqi Christians who had emigrated to the United States – and Christian humanitarian organizations, this congregation obtained funding to expand their offerings to Iraqi refugees. This activity not only strengthened intra-Christian ties through catholicity, but it also provided a means to bridge the gap that I identified in Chapter Four between context-specific aid and global humanitarian approaches.

As Chatty demonstrated, local cosmopolitanism includes support from charities and churches, particularly pastoral support, but government support and migrant-friendly laws were also part of the Circassian resettlement, for example. The Iraqis – even more so than Syrian refugees – suffered from a lack of government support. Fulfilling the entire material needs of hundreds of refugees would quickly exhaust even a wealthy congregation, no matter how great their commitment to love for the stranger. While religious associations may desire to offer both tangible and pastoral assistance to newcomers, they are ill-equipped to house, feed, and employ large numbers of displaced people for years at a time. For this reason, the overall breakdown in local cosmopolitanism across Jordanian society leaves churches with three options: they can stop offering assistance to refugees, request back-up support from networks outside of the country, or encourage the refugees to leave the country by emigrating. Each of these options, in turn, affects both the refugees and Jordanian Christians in significant ways and can potentially damage the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations even further. In other words, the changing climate for refugees in Jordan necessitates changes in the way that local congregations respond. Without robust support from governments and the broader society, churches risk becoming overburdened and drained by the needs that confront them. For this reason, certain features of local cosmopolitanism must be reimagined in this changing context, and even supplemented with reference to the long, intra-Christian traditions associated with catholicity. In this section, I argue that catholicity can complement the tradition of local cosmopolitanism, enabling the Marka church to respond more vigorously to refugees than they otherwise could, while transforming the response and the congregation itself. I describe the way that the Marka church drew from catholicity in its approach to refugees, then note some of the costs associated with this tradition in action. Finally, I conclude by highlighting one instance in which the congregation countered

some of these risks through their approach. Indeed, I show how collaborative partnership can soften the division, identified in Chapter Four, between context-specific approaches and global humanitarian assistance.

Catholicity in response to refugees

Although Jordan's border with Iraq had been open to visa-free travel throughout the twentieth century, the border was closed to the Iraqi refugees – predominantly Christian – who sought desperately to flee the advance of ISIS in 2014. Reverend Archpriest Father Bassam Shahatit³⁵⁶, speaking on behalf of the Melchite Catholic Church in Jordan, shed light on the complex process that had allowed the Iraqi refugees to resettle in Jordan, a process instigated by local emissaries of the worldwide Catholic communion. The diplomatic initiative began when local representatives from Caritas met with the Vatican Ambassador to Iraq and Jordan. They were joined by the Italian Council of Bishops and a group of Jordanian Catholic bishops. This Catholic alliance negotiated entry for the Iraqis, especially those fleeing religious persecution, with the Jordanian government. In return, they promised that the churches and their charitable associations would provide for the refugees. Government aid would be limited; more significantly, the Iraqis would not be permitted to work legally in Jordan or receive an official residency status. As they had promised, Caritas and a group of eighteen Catholic parishes³⁵⁷ throughout Jordan provided the intensive assistance required by the thousands of refugees, many of whom survived only by residing for months inside the buildings and courtyards of Catholic parishes across Amman.³⁵⁸

This act of opening the borders to the Iraqis showed the government's eventual willingness to welcome, but only on condition that the churches provide for the refugees. Such an approach, on the part of the government, is a far cry from the historic practices of local cosmopolitanism that I recounted in Chapter One of this study, when newcomers were seen as the builders of, rather than takers from, Jordan. As I argued earlier in this chapter, Jordan's cooling reception of refugees has significant implications for local cosmopolitanism. At the same time, the diplomatic coup d'état by the Catholic church is also reminiscent of a particular historical relationship between Christians in the Middle East and in Europe, an aspect of the intra-Christian relationship that I described as 'catholicity' in Chapter Three of this study.

³⁵⁶ Shahatit, interview.

³⁵⁷ Other Jordanian churches outside the Catholic communion also provided various types of assistance to the Iraqi refugees, as I demonstrate in detail in Chapter Seven of this study.

³⁵⁸ Maggiolini and Twal, 'Jordan', 160.

Shahatit described this act of assistance in ways that highlight catholicity, both in the manner that the transnational resources of the global Catholic church were mobilized to negotiate with the Jordanian government and in the way that their concern extended across denominational or national boundaries. The partnership between local, Jordanian church leaders and the work of Caritas – a global aid organization – and the Italian Conference of Bishops is telling. It is an echo of similar negotiations that have offered crucial assistance to Middle Eastern Christians many times over the centuries of intra-Christian history. Their effort to help these refugees – many, but not all, of whom were Catholic – extended for years past their act of negotiation with the government, and deep into the everyday lives and challenges of Jordanian Catholics. Noting the difficulties that parish priests under his jurisdiction had encountered, Shahatit commented, ‘It is not comfortable to open the salon [for refugee families to set up temporary accommodation]. Maybe the bathroom is not clean because twenty Iraqi girls were using [the church’s] two bathrooms’. While acknowledging these real challenges, however, he also pointed to the spiritual importance of Jordanians offering help amid their own personal and national poverty, ‘But the churches help and they don’t care about [who is] Latin, Orthodox, Chaldean’. As Shahatit notes, the work required to provide so much assistance to so many in need was challenging. Even on the mundane level of bathroom facilities, the Jordanian churches were making sacrifices to their comfort and congregational standards. They were doing so, however, without regard to national or denominational differences, offering close-contact assistance to refugees they had never met as a sign of Christian service. Through catholicity, they were being transformed by their act of welcome to Iraqi newcomers.

Such actions led to ecclesiological transformation in the Marka congregation. I saw signs of a unique understanding of catholicity at the graduation celebration. After the programme concluded, all were served Jordanian *mansef*, a heaping plate of rice topped with meat, nuts, and a ladle-full of cheese sauce. A mix of Jordanian and Iraqi church members served the feast from a central table, then distributed individual plates to those seated throughout the church hall. As they did so, I noticed they asked each individual a question before offering them a plate. ‘Fasting?’ they asked of each person, and the response seemed to determine which plate they received. I realized then that the servers were dishing from two, central platters of *mansef*, one of which lacked the traditional goat meat topping. Those who responded that they were, indeed ‘fasting’, received a plate of rice and cheese without meat. I asked my fellows at the table what this meant, and my tablemates cheerfully explained that they were in the midst of a four-day fast for Mother Mary. When I asked whether everyone was fasting – obviously not, since meat was being served to many – they told me that only the Orthodox Christians were fasting. As I

continued to watch the food distribution, I concluded that the Orthodox and Catholic Christians were scattered together across the hall, because even individuals seated at the same table were receiving different types of food.

On one level, this offering of *mansef* was a gustatory offering of internal unity, ably demonstrated in the sharing of a celebratory meal. It was not just any meal, of course. Nor was the choice of meal neutral relative to the political differentiation I discussed earlier in this study. *Mansef* is Jordan's traditional dish. While the Jordanians and Iraqis shared many aspects of their traditional menu, *mansef* was one of Jordan's exclusive items. The serving of *mansef* to the foreign guests and the Iraqi-majority audience at the graduation represented a nod to the hospitality of the Jordanian hosts.

On another level, however, a separate category of difference was being acknowledged and incorporated through the sharing of a *mansef* feast. Those who provided this food had prepared in advance to accommodate the fasting practices of some, but not all, the participants. Unusually for an official church function, those who deviated from the religious fasting practice were functionally church members, not foreign guests. The Syriac Orthodox Christians who attended and participated in the Latin Catholic church school were permitted to keep their fast without difficulty or conflict. Their need for a meat-free dish was accommodated beforehand. All they had to do was respond to the personalized question, 'Fasting?'

From this episode, I concluded that while this church represented 'one *Christian* community', they defined 'Christian' in a pluralistic manner. The Chaldean Catholic Church – to which many of these Iraqi Christians belonged – could technically claim fellowship with their Latin Catholic hosts. Despite different histories and practices, their mutual recognition of papal authority made their worship together theologically uncomplicated. The Syriac Orthodox Christians who observed this additional fast, however, were part of a theological split with the Catholic Christians that dated back to the earliest Christian centuries. Traditional sectarian practice would separate them along most every theological line, making their participation in and communion with the Latin Catholic Church impossible, unless they relinquished their Syriac Orthodox ties. The pre-emptive inclusion of a fasting option at the graduation feast suggested that no such relinquishment had occurred, however. The Syriac Orthodox Christians mingled freely and openly with the Catholic Iraqis and Jordanians, and an official church event made provision for their practice.

In other words, this congregation had consciously decided to permit all Christians, regardless of their denominational background or church of origin, to receive communion and participate fully in the life of the church.³⁵⁹ This uncommon approach to intra-Christian relations is not consistent with the Catholic Church's official position³⁶⁰ and thus it constitutes a breaking and making of new laws to contribute to a new emphasis on catholicity, the universality of the Christian faith. Importantly, church leadership also identified this new rule as part of a transformational process due to migration. Jaber told me that when he began his ministry in Marka, he was 'very concerned about who is Latin, Catholic, Orthodox', but that the arrival of Iraqi refugees had prompted theological reflection.³⁶¹ He came to believe that God had placed him in Marka for the purpose of serving refugees, and he cited the Parable of the Good Samaritan as scriptural evidence that his call to Christian service should proceed without denominational boundaries. The parable, in his view, showed that Christians must be willing to serve anyone in need. 'I will help anyone', he concluded.

I saw that this new rule extended to foreign Christians as well. Following Mass at the Marka church, Jaber confronted me, asking why I had not come to the altar for communion. When I began to explain that I was not Catholic, but a Christian of another tradition, he cut me off with a smile. He said he did not care which tradition anyone came from – Latin, Catholic, or Orthodox, and so forth – but rather, he told all the members that this church was 'one community, one *Christian* community'. At a later meeting, he proactively invited me by name to come forward and partake of communion, and in administering the elements to me, he spoke in English rather than Arabic. From a sectarian emphasis on even the ecclesiastical differences between Latin and Melchite Catholics, to say nothing of the Syriac Orthodox Iraqis or other guests, the congregation moved toward a new, internal inclusivity on the basis of Christian self-identification. Jaber's explanation of his aim for the Marka congregation – to be 'one *Christian*

³⁵⁹ Many of the Iraqis came from traditions that were in communion with the Latin Catholic tradition: the Chaldean Catholics, who were plentiful among the Iraqis, would be expected to take communion with any other Catholic tradition. Likewise, the *Ashuriin* from the Assyrian Church of the East had a special dispensation to receive communion from Catholic churches, especially in the context of forced displacement. A number of Syriac Orthodox Christians were also among them, however, and these should not, strictly speaking, have received communion alongside either the Catholics or the *Ashuriin*. Moreover, in response to my queries, the priest specifically told me that any Christian was welcome to receive communion in the church, including foreigners such as myself and my husband. Al-Kopti, interview.

³⁶⁰ Elsewhere in Amman, a Jesuit priest issued a sermon to specifically limit communion to baptized Catholics. This sermon was given in August 2019 to the city's English-speaking congregation, so it may have been in response to congregations such as Marka, or else to specific questions from within the congregation itself. The point is that universal communion was not the position of the Catholic church in Jordan. In fact, in another interview, a Melchite Catholic priest described the importance of creating congregations for the Iraqi Catholics that were separate from the Jordanian Catholics.

³⁶¹ Jaber, conversation with author.

community’ – is a dramatic expression of catholicity in action at the local level, just as the Catholic diplomacy at the Jordanian-Iraqi border illustrated catholicity at the international level.

Costs of catholicity

As impressive as their programs were, as much as this congregation had been able to do – with assistance – to create workable institutions and provide ongoing aid, catholicity came with costs as well. For one thing, the decisions surrounding the intra-Christian tradition of catholicity presented challenges to Christian-Muslim relations within the local Jordanian context. On the one hand, the decision to grant communion and fellowship to all Christians, regardless of their denominational background, was both remarkable and unusual. It was a dramatic and tangible step toward creating ‘one Christian community’, united in the ambitious goal of helping Iraqi refugees in need. On the other hand, it defined the local community in Marka with an important qualifier – *Christian*. While I occasionally heard references to a willingness to help Muslims or Yazidis in need through some of the church’s outreach programs, I did not observe significant engagement with the Muslim-majority neighbourhood of Marka. Like many churches in Jordan, this congregation worshipped behind high walls, with narrow doors that remained locked except to members and guests. The impression I received in Marka was that life beyond those walls might not always be friendly, and the categorical insistence that all the Iraqi Christians must leave for what they saw as a Christian country, as I explain later in this chapter, reflects a certain lack of hope or optimism in the immediate locale. I described the anxieties of many Jordanian Christians in detail in Chapter Two of this study; many of them are relevant to the way that the Marka congregation understood the tradition of catholicity.

One significant effect of the negative perception that many in Marka took of their surrounding Jordanian society was reflected in their approach to emigration. One reason that Canon Andrew White was such an important guest at this event was because of his ongoing efforts to keep the plight of the Iraqi Christians uppermost in the minds of the international community. This, alongside efforts by other Catholic leaders, might persuade governments to grant visas to Iraqi Christians. In turn, leaders of the Marka congregation cultivated hope in emigration while trying to assist refugees in making successful applications for emigration. This long-term aim helped dictate the type of assistance that Iraqis received from the church, as I saw during my first visit to Marka. When the priest showed me the church and school facilities, he explained, ‘We are teaching them all English’, he said. ‘They are all applying to be sent to the West, to Australia’.

In speaking to the Iraqi members, he was equally direct. After securing my agreement to help with the English instruction in the ‘Iraqi School’, the priest introduced me to a full assembly of Iraqi students and teachers. ‘Who here wants to go back to Iraq?’ he asked the children genially. The children shifted uncomfortably, looking at each other as though unsure of how to respond. ‘Who here wants the embassy to let you go to Australia?’ he continued. A smattering of children raised their hands immediately, with the rest following suit once they realized what was expected. Jaber continued to talk, in the same question-and-answer style. He reminded them that many had applications to the embassy already in progress, and when they went for interviews, the most important thing that officials would look for in granting these applications was the English proficiency of the children. Thus, it was very important that they listen to this American accent and study English very thoroughly, so they could help their families. Thus, in this case, the Marka Christians were relying on catholicity to meet the long-term needs of the refugees that still eluded them.

Since the Jordanian government had refused to grant the Iraqis a permanent residency status or the opportunity to work, they must eventually return home – which they claimed to abhor – or emigrate. Through the worldwide connections offered by catholicity, they hoped to advocate the cause of Iraqi refugees with foreign governments outside the Middle East, all the while striving to make the Iraqis attractive candidates for emigration. This practice also raises questions about the long-term Christian presence in the Middle East. It is, however, something that has been part of the Middle Eastern Christian calculation for decades, as Deanna Womack notes – more Christians with the Middle East in their heritage have now left the region than currently reside inside it.³⁶² This, too, is a result of reliance on the tradition of catholicity, as it represents the hope of retaining one’s Christian heritage after life in the Middle East has become untenable. Catholicity – and a strong sense of being part of a global Christian fellowship – are an essential part of this church’s self-understanding as a Jordanian church. Simultaneously theological and intensely pragmatic, this church’s understanding of catholicity and its corresponding global connections offer both challenges and promise to a church that is trying, seemingly against all odds, to welcome strangers in need.

The second cost lies in misunderstandings with different Christians about what constitutes catholicity. Speaking as a regional Jordanian church leader, Shahatit offered a rather

³⁶² Deanna Ferree Womack, ‘Middle Eastern Christianity in the Context of World Christianity’, in *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East*, ed. Mitri Raheb and Mark A. Lamport (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 554-555.

ambivalent assessment of the outside help that came to Jordanian churches through their catholic ties with foreign Christians. Referring to the largely Protestant European and American networks which had provided a great deal of money to the Catholic aid work, Shahatit said hesitantly, ‘They came, and that is good and not good’. The incident with the Baptist pastor,³⁶³ for instance, interfered with his understanding of Christian assistance. ‘They benefit from the need’, he said disapprovingly, calling this practice and other similar occurrences, ‘Machiavellian help’.³⁶⁴ As he described what he saw as lacking in the aid practices of many foreign Christians, I saw again the need for a brokered approach to assistance, for the importance of relations with God and those in need to remain strong, even in the midst of crisis. He said, ‘It is better to give a little with love than a lot without love’. Shahatit believed that evangelizing the refugees in their desperate plight betrayed the catholic trust with which they had welcomed a Catholic and Baptist leader – as fellow Christians – into their homes and lives.

The third cost of catholicity was more subtle, and it relates directly to the division between global humanitarian aid and more context-specific approaches that adhere to local, Jordanian customs. Another damaging practice, in Shahatit’s view, was the widespread use of photos to document the situation of the needy. One aid representative from a Christian network in Spain had accompanied Shahatit on church and home visits to refugees, but to the priest’s dismay, he took many photos of the refugees who were living inside church halls or in other temporary accommodation. ‘I understand that they are bringing money, so they need one photo, but he took thousands’, Shahatit said. The priest said he understood that this foreign network had responsibilities to donors and even governing bodies to provide evidence of their work, but he saw danger in this approach. ‘Photos can be a problem’, he stated bluntly in an interview. Again, Shahatit’s concerns about the dignity and shyness of those being helped overrode his desire for the global organization to advertise their services to donors back home.

Countering the costs of catholicity

Shahatit was not the only Jordanian church leader I had interviewed who expressed concerns about photos. Likewise, scholarship is also beginning to draw attention to the risks of photography in humanitarian settings.³⁶⁵ The church in Marka, however, appeared to have

³⁶³ This incident receives a detailed description in Chapter Four, Section 1 of this work.

³⁶⁴ Shahatit, interview.

³⁶⁵ For critical perspectives on the intersection between photography and human rights and humanitarianism, see the following:

Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), Introduction and Chapter 1: ‘The Spectator of Human Rights’.

devised a rather remarkable solution to what might be called ‘the photo problem’, which is to say, they had embraced it. The Marka church seemed to welcome photos not only within the church itself, but also in the Iraqi school. Nearly every week, a news or aid organization was invited inside the otherwise-locked church compound. Reporters regularly interrupted classes and interviewed the school’s teachers, who were themselves Iraqi refugees employed by the church. Even casual, foreign visitors who came to witness the church’s ministry to refugees were invited to watch the children play and pray in the churchyard. Church leaders freely granted permission to take photos or videos of the refugees in the church.

What made this more remarkable was that the congregation themselves, and especially the children at the Iraqi school, were expected to act in an orderly manner, and the church leaders showed little tolerance for deviance from these standards. At the start of each school day, the children lined up silently by class for prayer and an inspection. The teachers walked up and down the lines to check their hair for tidiness, their hands and nails for cleanliness, and their school uniforms – provided to each child free by the church – for undeviating neatness. Those who passed the inspection were expected to march silently into their classrooms in tidy lines. On one occasion, Jaber watched the children march with a smile of approval and told me, ‘You see the discipline. This is very important to me’.³⁶⁶ Indeed, this start-of-school ritual, which always included a recitation of the Lord’s Prayer in Aramaic, was frequently attended by photo-taking foreign visitors. Even more tellingly, the children had been trained to continue the ostentatious ritual of cleanliness and piety while inside the classroom: every time a classroom door opened to a visitor, no matter what stage of the lesson they were in or whether the teacher had been speaking, the children stood as one, and said – in English – while marking their chests with the sign of the cross, ‘In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit – Jesus save us’. Since very few of the children spoke English, and all normally prayed in Aramaic or Arabic, there was no doubt that the audience of such a display was foreign.³⁶⁷

Sanna Nissinen, ‘Dilemmas of ethical practice in the production of contemporary humanitarian photography’ in eds. Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno, *Humanitarian Photography: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 297-322.

³⁶⁶ Khalil Jaber, interview by author, St Mary’s Latin Church, Marka, Jordan, 24 February 2019, English/Arabic – translation by author.

³⁶⁷ I received this treatment each time I entered a classroom in my early weeks in Marka. Only once I had been there for some time did the teachers persuade the children that I was exempt from this display, as it was interrupting their class-time too frequently otherwise.

Such displays, while certainly distracting from the classroom experience,³⁶⁸ were an important part of the Marka church's approach to helping refugees through catholicity. They helped to present foreign Christian visitors – most of whom would come for only an hour or two and spoke no Arabic – with the vision for what the Marka church was trying to accomplish. The Marka church, such images and displays asserted, was a place where pious and respectable Christian refugees received assistance and education that would prepare them for a brighter future. Importantly, by creating a visual image of cleanliness and Christian symbolism, by teaching the children to utter a simple, universally Christian phrase in a foreign tongue, the Marka church leaders were advertising their Arab approach to aid using language that these English-speaking visitors could understand. On the one hand, what they had done was not so very different from the practices of the aid workers that had distressed Shahatit; they were essentially advertising an idea in order to procure the foreign funding to keep running the Iraqi School and helping more needy families to survive. On the other hand, their approach was miles away from the 'Machiavellian help' that horrified other Catholic leaders. The Marka church was not 'benefit[ing] from the need' because they were not advertising the powerlessness of the Iraqis, but rather they were highlighting the strength and potential of people who happened to be refugees, through no fault of their own. The Marka church no longer had to sell the images of poverty and hopelessness that the other aid representative had collected for their brochures. Instead, they advertised the success of a unique approach to a difficult situation, an approach that utilized local cosmopolitanism and catholicity.

While the Marka church was poor – too poor to provide for hundreds of refugees without outside support – they did not allow foreign requirements for photos to trample on the dignity of refugees. This church used photos and video to subvert violations of dignity and renew the vision for local cosmopolitanism – a tradition that enables poor Jordanians to welcome and resettle refugees peacefully – for all to see. This church recognized the opportunity to exchange photos and video for the Western support that kept the refugees sheltered, fed, educated, and employed. With their crisp uniforms and careful discipline, the Marka church created photo opportunities that would represent these refugees and Jordanians alike as dignified people who stand as brokers before God, ready to take their turn as God's servants. Because

³⁶⁸ I confess that I was troubled by these photo opportunities and meet and greets. My concerns lay chiefly in the disruption to educational activity and in the possibility of vulnerable children being unduly exposed, when they ought to feel safe in their classroom environment. Because I did not see evidence from church and school leaders that they wished to harm the children or their education, however, I sought to understand the purpose of these disruptions from their point of view. I concluded that they must view it as a pragmatic and unavoidable necessity amid desperate circumstances, and my analysis seeks to do credit to this understanding.

they sought to help others with sensitivity and discretion, their programs – and the top-down emphasis on ‘discipline’ – created an environment where photos and videos could be freely taken without compromising the dignity of refugees. This emphasis on discipline, grooming, and industry, where the church created numerous paid jobs for refugees, provided visitors with a much more uplifting photo opportunity than a crowd of dirty people lying on a church floor, begging for food from locals and foreigners. Instead, because the church’s programs were designed to welcome through participation, the refugees were shown to be clean, capable, and faithful Christians. Their contributions were celebrated using song and dance, and they themselves sang and served at Mass. Through neighbourly hospitality, the Marka church could reimagine this tradition and avoid the trap of becoming Western patrons, while still safeguarding the dignity of refugees.

This section has argued that catholicity is the second feature of the Marka church’s approach toward refugees. This intra-Christian tradition draws on a history of foreign diplomatic and material assistance to those in need. It also embraces the catholic idea that one can be a Christian anywhere, even if it means that Iraqi refugees must eventually emigrate to Australia because the Jordanian government denies them residency or work permits in Jordan. The Marka church does not accept financial assistance uncritically, however, but rather church leaders seek to help Iraqi refugees and their church overall to present itself in a way that attracts praise, rather than pity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the St Mary’s Latin Church in Marka created a renewed vision for local cosmopolitanism and catholicity amid a refugee crisis in Jordan. Using this church as a case study, I described an approach that emphasizes these two traditions from the heritage of Jordanian Christianity. While several of the other traditions introduced in this study could also be found, I believe that local cosmopolitanism and catholicity best express the efforts of this congregation to respond to the arrival of refugees in a manner that is firmly grounded in their context and heritage. I described this approach in detail using interviews and observations obtained through fieldwork in Amman, and I now conclude by assessing the implications of this approach.

The Latin church in Marka illustrates one pragmatic response to the changing context of refugee crisis in Jordan. This response carries several inherent weaknesses that could make it unattractive to other Christians in Jordan. First, the greatest risk for this response lies in its

dependence on the Western churches and foreign states. On the one hand, the church's ministries are financially reliant on foreign funding, drawn largely from Christian networks and aid groups from the West, but also from secular aid sources. In the event that Western churches lose interest in the cause of either refugees or Middle Eastern Christians, and as the international community moves on to the next crisis in another part of the world, this church's ability to minister to refugees could wither from lack of resources. On the other hand, this community appears to promote a single-minded strategy of emigration for the Iraqi refugees. Even as the nations of Europe and North America tightened immigration quotas, and many refugee families wearied from the strain of rejected asylum applications, church leadership continually insisted that emigration was the best solution. Under the Marka approach, the school, the in-church employment opportunities,³⁶⁹ and the skills training were all stopgap measures designed to support refugees during their time in Jordan, but none of these offered the Iraqis a permanent path to survival in Jordan or in the Middle East more broadly. They offered the Iraqis a welcoming place of refuge, but resistance from the broader Jordanian society prevented it from being quite the same sort of refuge as the Circassians found a century earlier. The risk for the Iraqis was that, in the event that emigration became more difficult, these refugees might find themselves in an increasingly worse condition, with less hope for their future.

Lastly, this church's response to weakening Christian-Muslim relations carries its own risks. This church responds to their increased anxiety about the surrounding Muslim-majority society by trying to minimize contact with local Jordanians and build relations with foreigners. By literally sheltering behind church walls, these Christians might confirm any suspicions of disloyalty that their Muslim neighbours might harbour, making constructive dialogue even more challenging.

At the same time, the actions of this Marka church, particularly given its location within a poor suburb of Amman, make its example noteworthy. The church's pragmatic actions renewed and renegotiated the opportunities of local cosmopolitanism and catholicity. A theological commitment to understanding themselves as brokers enabled the congregation to keep giving for

³⁶⁹ One of the more prominent of these was associated with a charity called Loving Humanity. The charity provided engineering materials to make reusable sanitary pads for use among the young and sick in refugee camps. Part of the charity's plan was to employ refugees to complete the work, thus providing an avenue for dignified employment. Originally started in Camp Zaatari, this charity had been forced out by the camp administration. The leadership at the Marka church granted permission for the charity to relocate to an upper floor of the church compound, where the work continued with Iraqi Christian refugees working regular hours as new employees for steady pay. In the same sewing shop, a group of seamstresses also made the maroon uniforms worn every day by the Iraqi schoolchildren. (Samuel, conversation with author, 17 July 2019, Amman, Jordan, Arabic – translation by author).

years while protecting the dignity of the refugees. I suggest that without the double-edged approach of local cosmopolitanism and catholicity, the equally complex challenges to Jordanian Christians would become unmanageable. This model can offer hope not only to the hundreds of Iraqi refugees who found assistance there, but also to churches around the region who seek to reimagine a future for Christianity in the Middle East.

6. 'It is a serious thing to be a Christian here': Arab Orthodox Christians Renegotiate Arab Hospitality and Sacred Geography

The spacious Orthodox church nearby was ornate, but the parish office was rather small, and – following the first weekday service of Lent – already crowded. I chose the only open seat to wait, next to several older women who, like myself, had come directly from the church service to the office in hopes of a meeting with the priest. In moments I was speaking quietly with one of them, swapping stories of our birthplaces. She told me that her son had gone to America. She gestured at the waiting crowd matter-of-factly. Everyone had a similar story, she said. Every family in their church had someone overseas. Her expression suggested for a moment that this troubled her, but by the next moment, she was speaking again. Did I not have *baraka*? Her hands were full of soft bread, taken from bowls by the church altar after the service. She handed me a large piece, and added, a little reprovingly – it's for everyone.

This unself-conscious sharing of bread, the tactile blessing of sanctified *baraka*, and the blunt revelation that her family and her church were scattered across the world, were all evidence of her complicated heritage as a Christian of the Middle East. This heritage might be seen in a thousand such moments in the life of this church and its fellows across Amman, but it is more often expressed than articulated. I argue in this chapter that the Arab Orthodox Church has responded to the long-term effects of refugee crisis by prioritizing and renegotiating the traditions of Arab hospitality and sacred geography. I offer analysis relating to fieldwork at an Amman Orthodox church,³⁷⁰ but my analysis notes both the institutional church's activities in light of the refugee phenomenon, which aim primarily to revitalize Christian participation in Jordan, and also the more refugee-focused actions of individuals within the congregation, who act within families, groups, or Christian institutions to show hospitality to those in need. I conclude by summarizing the advantages and drawbacks of this approach for stabilizing the Arab Orthodox presence in Jordan.

³⁷⁰ I do not give the name of this Arab Orthodox church. While I received permission from church leadership to attend church services regularly as a guest member, I did not receive permission to involve the church institution formally in this research. For this reason, in this section I quote only from the results of formal interviews with consenting individuals but not participant observations from the congregation at large. I also identify these sources using only the personal details that are essential for context. The only named source in this section is Wafa Goussous, as I interviewed her formally in her office, as a representative of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Middle East Council of Churches in Jordan.

1. Asserting Arab hospitality

This section argues that Orthodox Christians are responding to the refugee phenomenon in Jordan by asserting themselves within the framework of Arab hospitality. This solidifies their ties to the land of Jordan at a time when – in the form of refugees – displacement appears to threaten. To recall my analysis from Chapter One, in using ‘Arab hospitality’, I refer to Jordan’s longstanding protocols of care for guests and neighbours. The tradition of Arab hospitality is articulated within Christian-Muslim relations and intra-Christian relations because, as I argued in Chapters Two and Four of this study, these foundational relationships have been indirectly threatened by the arrival of refugees. In this way, the Orthodox assertion of Arab hospitality is an attempt to better entrench themselves within the land of Jordan over and against the threat of displacement represented by refugees.

Asserting Arab hospitality within Christian-Muslim relations

My interactions with Orthodox Christians were peppered with assertions about belonging, but I was surprised, nonetheless, when one Orthodox family refused to believe that my husband was a lifelong member of their church. Only after my husband sang the Liturgical opening in Byzantine chant over the dinner table did one Orthodox family begin to see him as their own. Indeed, after the impromptu recital, a reassured Orthodox grandmother told him approvingly that he ‘look[ed] Arab’.³⁷¹ Surely his family must be Arab originally? Once persuaded, however, this family introduced my husband to Amman’s Sunday School institution, where he was booked to speak to the children on American Orthodoxy. One teacher explained to him the importance of his speaking to the children, because they had many concerns about Orthodoxy in Jordan. Their biggest challenge was Islam, she asserted, but their second challenge was other Christians, especially these new American churches that – she claimed – were not even Christian.³⁷²

These encounters illuminate much about the Jordanian Orthodox approach to those who did not belong to their community. I observed that Orthodox Christians in Jordan expressed

³⁷¹ This remark is recounted in this study to demonstrate the belief among many Jordanian Orthodox Christians that ‘Arabness’ or membership in the regions surrounding the Mediterranean, was essential to their religious identity. It is not my intention to argue that the label ‘Arab’ suggests any particular physical or other characteristics, or that an ‘Arab look’ exists. Indeed, during my time in Amman I met self-identified Arabs whose eyes were brown, blue, or hazel; some had dark brown hair, while others were blonde or red-headed. As I sought to demonstrate in greater detail in Chapter One of this study, I believe that the Arab identity as it is currently understood has arisen with the Pan-Arab movement in the last several centuries of the region’s history. If some have come to associate an ‘Arab look’ with that movement, I suggest that it is more incidental than determinative. Family dinner, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 12 October 2019, English.

³⁷² Family dinner, conversation with author.

hesitation and disbelief that my husband, as an American, could truly belong to their Orthodox Christian communion. Even after he demonstrated knowledge of Orthodox practice, he received rhetorical admission to the community with the caveat that he probably had some blood connection with the Mediterranean. This ambivalence illustrates the extent to which Jordanian Orthodox identity is grounded in place rather than intellectual belief or practice. Furthermore, the comments from the Sunday School principal help to highlight the fear that this identity could be threatened by Jordanian Muslims and foreign Christians alike. Such concerns are relevant to this study for two reasons: first, they inform the approach of many Jordanian Orthodox Christians to those they consider outsiders, a category that would include foreign refugees living in Jordan; second, they hearken back to Chapters One through Four of this study, in which I demonstrate that the arrival of refugees has deepened tensions between Jordanian Christians and both Jordanian Muslims and foreign Christians.

The idea of renegotiating Arab hospitality received significant discussion in late 2012. As a result of the conflict in Syria, Christianity in the Middle East generally was receiving particular attention and discussion across the region and the world, and both Christian-Muslim relations and the growing refugee phenomenon were receiving increased attention in the region. In one response to these discussions, an editorial in a Jordanian newspaper argued that despite growing problems for Christians in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, the Gulf, and even Sudan, Jordan stood alone in the Arab world as a place where Christians were completely equal with Muslims.³⁷³ The author of the editorial rather bombastically insisted that Jordan had always been distinguished by hospitality. Jordanians, in this author's view, welcome one guest just like another, absorbing these newcomers into Jordanian society in a graceful move toward the creation of a new homeland.

In response to these sanguine observations, the comment section exploded, as Jordanian Christians vehemently rejected the editorial's suggestion that Christians have ever been the polite guests to gracious Muslim hosts in Jordan. Instead, these Christians reminded the Muslim author that they were living in Jordan before Muslims, the 'original Arabs', as one commenter wrote, and Christian hosts who graciously welcomed Muslim guests to the country. One commenter complained, 'The idea that this country was free from people is often promoted by hostile media,

³⁷³ Musa Al-Kelani, 'The Christians in Jordan' *Al-Rai* 27 December 2012, accessed 5 February 2013, Arabic – translation by author.

because we, in Al-Husn,³⁷⁴ were here from ancient times'. Another pointed out that hospitality did not apply to Christians, the 'original owners of the land'. Another commenter concluded:

Everyone who knows anything about the history of the Levant before Islam and in the Islamic Golden Age would realize that the Arab Christians and Syrians are original residents and not merely guests, and even those who are guests among them became citizens or legal residents, of whom it is necessary that they have complete equality. The fact that the Christians as Jordanian citizens enjoy equality is natural and logical. The tragic circumstances for the Christians and the sectarian hatred in other Arab countries is what requires explanation.

This debate occurred near the beginning of what would become a long-term refugee crisis, and the argument signified growing tensions in the way that Arab hospitality was being deployed in the context of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan. The editorial writer – a Jordanian Muslim – expressed support for the idea of Jordanian Muslim tolerance for Christian guests, and he justified this religious tolerance using the language of Arab hospitality. In his view, Christians should be treated fairly in Jordan not because they were contributing something important to the society, or even because they had an intrinsic right to well-being in the country of their nativity, but rather because the presence of Christians in their midst gave Jordanian Muslims the opportunity to display their superiority over other Arabs in neighbouring states. In other words, Arab hospitality was a virtue that Muslims bestowed upon Christians with self-conscious pride.

Some Jordanian readers of this editorial, however, rejected the application of this narrative toward the Arab Christians of the Middle East. The Christian claim to Jordanian heritage came first, they argued, and thus Christians have the right to set the terms of their hospitality to Muslims, with no obligation to be grateful that Jordanian Muslims refrain from persecuting Christians. This discussion illustrates efforts to renegotiate the discourse of Arab hospitality in a way that reinforces the Middle Eastern Christian attachment to place. This attachment to the land of Jordan would place Christians in the position of hosts. It represents a conscious effort to renegotiate the terms of Christian-Muslim relations in the context of a fading Pan-Arabism.

³⁷⁴ While not a holy site per se, the town of Al-Husn in northern Jordan has traditionally been home to a number of powerful Christian tribes who own large amounts of land there, and it remains significant within the Christian community to this day. Haddad, 'Christian Identity in the Jordanian Arab Culture', 137–146.

This debate over who had the right to set the terms of hospitality occurred at a time when Jordanians were considering how generously to extend welcome to a new group of newcomers – the Syrians – and the language of hospitality was already under scrutiny. It is noteworthy that Jordanian Christians attempted to renegotiate their own position within the paradigm of Arab hospitality at this time. With that said, the Christian effort to define themselves as hosts, rather than guests, within a paradigm of hospitality does not have its origins in 2012. Saleh Hamarneh describes the ancient roots of Christianity in Jordan at some length, concluding, ‘The Jordanian Christians are Arabs, in their land since ages immemorial. They are the descendants of the Arab tribes who lived in *Bilad al-Sham* . . . centuries before Islam’.³⁷⁵ I do believe, however, that this renegotiation gained a special urgency because of the rising tensions within Christian-Muslim relations from 2012-2019. It became especially appealing during this time of upheaval for Jordanian Orthodox Christians in particular to have the rights of hosts, rather than guests.

Asserting Arab hospitality within intra-Christian relations

The active renegotiation of Arab hospitality was an important part of the way that Orthodox Christians responded to refugees in Jordan. Notwithstanding certain tensions within Christian-Muslim relations, Orthodox Christians participated in offering assistance to Muslim refugees inside the country. Wafa Goussous, Jordan’s representative for the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, but also an active member of the congregation I studied, told me proudly that all foreign humanitarian donations to their office went directly to refugees. The superior Orthodox infrastructure already on the ground in Jordan, she explained, enabled the church to cut out the administrative expenses that are usually endemic to professional humanitarian operations. Goussous also explained that she offered assistance to Muslim refugees living in an unofficial camp – and therefore in abject poverty – near Jordan’s border. She expressed the importance of how she provided this assistance, however, and in doing so she differentiated the aid she gave from her concerns about not only secular organizations, but also many foreign Christians. ‘This is Matthew 25 – anyone you help is Christ. I enter a non-Christian refugee camp this afternoon, and I do not carry a Bible like those Evangelicals [American Christian aid workers]. I do not degrade the vulnerable by imposing my religion’, she said, speaking with scorn of suggestions from foreign donors that she slip Bible stories into the food baskets she distributed. Importantly, Goussous was not refusing to evangelize out of a commitment to secular aid principles, as did many Western Christian organizations. Rather, she considered that sharing the resources of a

³⁷⁵ Hamarneh, ‘Christians in Jordan’, 451-452.

Christian institution with non-Christians in need was part of her heritage as a Middle Eastern Christian, as indeed had been the practice of churches in the region for centuries. Such a commitment reflected Arab hospitality. As such, Goussous did not consider herself as being among the ranks of the foreign missionaries to Jordan, but rather she was part of a Christian host community who had a legal and social commitment to refrain from evangelizing to Muslims. In other words, the Orthodox Christians were willing to help non-Christians, but once again, they reinforced their own claims to Arab hospitality by emphasizing through their service that they were not guests in Jordan, but hosts who choose voluntarily to assist refugees out of a sense of Christian magnanimity. Likewise, they saw their service as superior because they could avoid the extra administrative costs that burdened foreign organizations who were ‘guests’ rather than hosts on Jordanian soil.

The comments from Goussous also suggest a second source of tension, however. Efforts to reinforce their presence in Jordan brought Orthodox Christians into conflict with Western Christians who were also engaging with refugees. Goussous refused calls by Western donors to evangelize Muslim refugees on the grounds that it undermined her Middle Eastern Christian heritage. Since Christian evangelism to Muslims was strictly forbidden by centuries of Islamic law and practice, it also would have undermined her church’s status as the de facto national church of Jordan, a danger of which she was certainly aware. Thus, the ever-present tension of Christian minority to Muslim majority was as apparent in her words as was her determination to assert herself.

At the same time, her comments reveal hints of what the Sunday School principal described as the Orthodox Church’s second greatest challenge: the struggle to stabilize their own membership and institutions amid fierce competition from other, highly organized, Christian organizations. In repeated interviews and conversations, devout laity of the Arab Orthodox Church, despite ostensibly remaining the oldest of Jordan’s Christian institutions, despite having – as much as anyone could boast – the ear of the king, and despite claiming the largest number of Jordanian Christians in the country, frequently expressed, in word and deed, their anxieties about the church’s future longevity in the country. I heard expressed among young lay leaders Hamarneh’s sentiments: ‘The greatest fear we have for our Church and our position is Western missionary activities that strive to lure away the sons of the local church’. Likewise, I observed the enthusiastic work of young lay Orthodox who repeatedly urged the children at Sunday School to ‘come to church!’ Meanwhile, I discovered that the children themselves attended Sunday School because school buses picked them up from their homes on Sunday morning,

delivered them to the Sunday service, then transported them directly to the premises of Sunday School before returning them to their homes. Many of the children's parents, these volunteer teachers told me with unconcealed frustration, did not bother to attend church themselves. Such experiences, occurring not as moments of occasional 'crisis', but rather as the day-in, day-out reality of Orthodox life in Jordan, contributed to an Orthodox sense of spiritual siege.

This sense of siege came in large part because of the diverse and plural nature of Jordanian Christianity, a small community where, even in enthusiastically Orthodox families, young adults often married a Catholic or Protestant for lack of Orthodox options. Some of the young Sunday School teachers observed with frustration that the children attended Latin schools during the week, then arrived at Sunday School with difficult intra-Christian theological questions, or even a sense of inferiority vis a vis these Western traditions. Both male and female, old and young, devout and concerned Orthodox Christians expressed concerns about the future viability of their church community and Jordan and frustration with their lack of resources for solidifying it.

What were the origins of this sense of inferiority? And why should the country's oldest and largest church lack the resources to withstand competition from other Christians? These questions are important to consider, at least briefly, in a study devoted to refugee responses, because they affect the way that Orthodox Christians felt about and engaged with refugees as well. Whether their perception of this situation is accurate is difficult to determine, but their frustrations were grounded in two longstanding, ecclesiastical problems: multiple jurisdictions and the Orthodox Issue. While much has been written about both issues, in the remainder of this section I describe them briefly with a view toward their implications for refugees and Arab hospitality in Jordan.

Multiple jurisdictions

The issue of multiple jurisdictions is rooted in the Orthodox understanding of catholicity that I described in Chapter Three of this study. In general terms, the Orthodox Christians in a given geographic area follow their nearest bishop, who, in turn can work in council with fellow bishops in other areas. In the wake of extensive Orthodox emigration away from its traditional heartlands in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, however, members of these separate churches have become neighbours in cities across Europe and North America. Maria Hammerli describes the resulting ecclesiological mix-up that has now become the status quo across what is sometimes,

and rather questionably, called the ‘Orthodox Diaspora’³⁷⁶: ‘Outside the Orthodox heartland, Orthodox churches continue to be organized along ethnic lines and continue ecclesiastical dependence on the mother churches back home’.³⁷⁷ This has created ‘a situation that the whole Orthodox world deplores as contrary to its ecclesiology’,³⁷⁸ but that – so far – the global network of bishops have proved unable or unwilling to confront meaningfully.³⁷⁹

While it may seem obscure to speak of ecclesiological problems in a study on Christian-Muslim relations and refugee responses, my findings in Jordan are intricately connected with this issue. The phenomenon of multiple jurisdictions is significant to the churches that remain in the Orthodox heartland because of the emigration issue I described previously. The Orthodox Christians who have emigrated in hope of socioeconomic gain remain tied to their home churches in Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, and so on. Any wealth they generate, as well as any social or political clout they develop while abroad, returns to their home church exclusively. This prevents Orthodox Christians from establishing either a powerful centralized church that is equipped to assist those in need through the excess wealth of others, such as the Latin Catholic congregation in Marka was able to draw upon, or else by creating a sustainable international network of congregations to fund missionary and other aid societies, as many Protestant churches have done. If wealthy emigrants do not spontaneously offer money and support to relatives and church members in Jordan – assuming they still have the personal connections even to attempt such a move – then the Jordanian Orthodox churches have no other obvious ecclesiological avenue for help or redress. For this reason, the Jordanian Orthodox churches are financially, logistically, and emotionally stranded, and any assistance they need to meet a crisis – such as the arrival of large numbers of refugees, for example – must be supplied by local laity or fundraised by the Jordanians using their personal, rather than institutional, resources.

Furthermore, Hammerli’s observations highlight the longstanding theological history behind an Orthodox identity that is grounded almost exclusively in place. As Hammerli notes,

³⁷⁶ In the below article, Maria Hammerli offers an extensive critique of the term ‘Orthodox Diaspora’. I mention the term in this study, however, due to its ubiquity in common usage. Maria Hammerli, ‘Orthodox *Diaspora*? A Sociological and Theological Problematisation of a Stock Phrase’, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10, no.2 (2010): 97-115.

³⁷⁷ Maria Hammerli, ‘Orthodox Church(es) Stepping Out of the Orthodox Heartland: Solving Ecclesiological Riddles in a Migration Context’ in *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body*, ed., Susanna Snyder, Joshua Ralston, and Agnes M. Brazal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 56.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁷⁹ Hammerli is far from the only scholar to address this issue, and many Orthodox theologians have written extensively on the topic. Hammerli’s work is the most pertinent to this study, however, because she identifies its implications for a migration context.

‘Historically confined to the Orthodox heartland, Orthodoxy has developed an organic bond with the local cultures and with ethnic/national identity’.³⁸⁰ In that sense, the Orthodox grandmother who told my husband he ‘look[ed] Arab’ made a valid – if inaccurate – ecclesiological point. There is an important sense in which Orthodox membership is tied to the people living in a particular place, even more so than those who share a certain belief or fellowship. While this approach to ecclesiology has its roots in Christian history, it also hampers Orthodox Christian activities in Jordan in several ways. First, it turns Christian identity into one of passive ethnic belonging. Consider, for example, the enthusiastic young Sunday School volunteer who urged Orthodox children to ‘go to church’, in opposition to their apathetic parents. While lay church leaders like her and the other Sunday School volunteers believed that Christian belonging required regular attendance and participation, they were fighting a much more dominant approach that defined Orthodoxy more closely with ‘look[ing] Arab’. Such in-fighting naturally affects the church’s ability to involve itself in other activities, including hospitality to refugees. After all, if so much robust effort is required to simply bring members to church each Sunday, how much energy is left to serve the stranger?

Second, and even more pertinently, the grounding of the Orthodox church in place can render welcome to outsiders more difficult. On the one hand, the Orthodox congregation welcomed fellow Orthodox families from Syria into their church from 2012. Although technically foreign in national citizenship, these newcomers participated in the church, including receiving communion. By emphasizing the power of the Eucharist in assisting these refugees, the church also reinforces itself as an institution grounded in the Jordanian context; they were hosts to their fellow Arab Orthodox Christians. This reflects a particular Orthodox ecclesiology, in which every church – every local congregation residing in a given place – represents authentically the unified church in its sacred entirety through the Eucharist, liturgy, and respect for canon law. As Hammerli describes it, this situation reflects normal Orthodox ecclesiology, because ‘[Orthodox churches]’ unity is also expressed in their mutual recognition of and respect for territorial jurisdiction’.³⁸¹ In this way, the Orthodox church reinforced its position as a host to guests within Jordan by offering of pastoral and spiritual care. Nonetheless, this approach stops short of the congregation in Marka, where the Latin church tried to remedy the refugee sense of ‘placelessness’ by creating ‘one Christian community’ based on shared belief in Christ, participation in church services, and mutual partaking of communion. For Arab Orthodox Christians who understood Christian fellowship, at least in part, as belonging to those who

³⁸⁰ Maria Hammerli, ‘Orthodox Church(es) Stepping Out’, 52.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

‘[look]ed Arab’ and came from Jordan, such a welcome to outsiders could be theologically challenging. Perhaps this is partly why the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem was so insistent that the refugees go home, even as war still raged in Syria in 2015:

This is our prayer also for the displaced community, that after their exile here and elsewhere, they may at last be able to return to their homes and re-build their lives in their communities, where in many cases they and their families have lived for generations.³⁸²

If the people must be in a particular place to belong to the church, then the first interest of Jordanian Orthodox Christians is to help their fellow Orthodox Christians return home to Syria, rather than working to create a new ‘place’ for them in Jordan.

Thirdly, this approach instigates particular anxiety within a community that currently claims such large numbers of ‘diaspora’ members.³⁸³ Goussous demonstrates these concerns well, as she alludes to the different debates occurring within her community, as well as her own fears about ongoing emigration from Jordan:

This is a historical moment, and someday what Jordanian Christians have done will show. It is not because physically we are here. It is because of what we do. What is most important is to live our Christian witness, and the people will ask who helped so much when they see Christian living. I do not want to be like a Christian living in the US because they marry in the church but don't do anything. It is a serious thing to be a Christian here, where Jesus walked, taught, healed. I will not carry the name of a Christian without accepting this responsibility. We are the salt and the people who are working very hard to keep the name of Christ.

This quote demonstrates a double concern: first, that Orthodox Christians would assume that simply living in the Holy Land is enough and feel no obligation to act upon their faith, and second, that in emigrating to the United States, Orthodox Christians would lose their sense of obligation to Christianity as well as to the Arab world. She sees these two forms of identity – place and faith – connecting within Orthodoxy. Goussous also highlights the importance she

³⁸² Theophilus III, ‘Remarks at the “Christmas Experience” at the Armenian Catholic Church in Amman to Benefit the Displaced Community.’ 16 December 2015, accessed December 20, 2017. <http://www.jp-newsgate.net/en/2015/12/12/18868>

³⁸³ Fiona McCallum Guiney, ‘Middle Eastern Christianity outside the Middle East’ in *The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East*, ed. Mitri Raheb & Mark A. Lamport (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland, 2021), 559.

attaches to sacred geography, an issue explored at greater length in the next section of this chapter.

The ‘Orthodox Issue’

A similar problem that hampers the Orthodox ability to respond to refugees, and indeed, their own pastoral needs on the ground, is known within Arab politics as the ‘Orthodox Issue’. This is a longstanding conflict within the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which includes Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. This conflict between the all-Arab laity and the all-Greek Patriarchal leadership concerns the importance of pastoral care and institutions in the area. The Greek leadership, it seems, sees their responsibility as being exclusively one of administering the Christian holy sites and ensuring access for foreign pilgrims, while the Arab laity desire them to administer a seminary and provide leadership within local and pastoral problems. As Anthony O’Mahony writes, ‘The Patriarchate’s *raison d’être* is above all the exercise of Orthodox rights in the Holy Places’, but not necessarily the rights or pastoral care of Palestinian and Jordanian laity. This concern has always been a combustive factor in the Orthodox Issue, and scholars have reported that much of the conversion away from the Arab Orthodox Church over the last two centuries has resulted from it.

At least two centuries in the making, Anna Hager records that this ecclesiological conflict reached new heights in 2014.³⁸⁴ It was certainly foremost on the minds of many of my Orthodox interviewees in 2019. In fact, one group of Orthodox lay leaders explicitly linked the concerns about pastoral care with the possible decline of the Orthodox church in Jordan, which they sought to avoid and, in fact, which they said was a much more pressing issue for Jordanian Christians and Muslims alike than was the refugee phenomenon.³⁸⁵ I see in this debate an important negotiation of Arab hospitality, however. As Hager writes, ‘This insistence on an Arab identity is not only the result of a reaction to the perceived “Greek occupation” of the Patriarchate and a subtle reminder to Muslims that the Christians are the original inhabitants of the region. Rather, this reveals a deep attachment to the Arab identity’.³⁸⁶ Thus, the decision to focus Orthodox Jordanian energy on the Orthodox Issue is itself an effort to renegotiate Arab hospitality with respect to both Jordanian Muslims and other Christians.

³⁸⁴ Anna Hager, ‘The Orthodox Issue in Jordan: The Struggle for an Arab and Orthodox Identity.’ *Studies in World Christianity* 24, no.3 (2018): 212–233.

³⁸⁵ Radio Sawt Al-Kanissa, focus group with author, Amman, Jordan, 3 September 2019.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

Moreover, the Orthodox Issue makes the jurisdictional problem articulated by Hammerli even more serious for Orthodox Jordanians. For reasons that almost certainly reflect the Orthodox Issue, no congregations abroad have been established under the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Jordanian emigrants who wish to attend an Arabic-speaking, or at least Arab-conscious, Orthodox church would have to find a congregation based under the Patriarchate of Antioch in Syria. The Orthodox Issue and the centuries-old jurisdictional problems of worldwide Orthodoxy have effectively ensnared the Jordanian Orthodox community in an ecclesiological mess that simultaneously absorbs local energy and cuts them off almost entirely from international assistance.

In other words, the energy required to renegotiate Arab hospitality distracts Orthodox attention away from refugees. In 2014, the same year that ISIS invaded Iraq and displaced countless Iraqi Christian refugees to Jordan, and indeed, at the same time that Jordanian Melchite bishops were organizing international Catholic forces to advocate diplomatically for refugees, the most energetic of Jordanian Orthodox laity were orchestrating a series of protests against their own regional leadership. These protests centred on the desire for improved pastoral care in Jordan, in part as a means to stem the constant migration from Orthodoxy to Catholic and Protestant churches. In other words, the Orthodox Church in Jordan had little energy left to deal with refugees. Whether rightly or wrongly, they were more concerned with seeking resolution to their own internal problems. Unlike the Eastern Catholic bishops of Jordan, who, as I demonstrated in Chapter Five, marshalled enough diplomatic and humanitarian resources through their transnational religious networks to effectively challenge the Jordanian government and help refugees, the Jordanian Orthodox have repeatedly relied on the Hashemite Muslims to achieve a modicum of representation within their own regional hierarchy. As Hager writes, ‘The extent of the estrangement [between the Jordanian laity and Greek leadership] shows the deep attachment of the community in Jordan to a Christian identity that is both Greek Orthodox and Arab’.³⁸⁷

In summary, Orthodox Christians in Jordan seek to employ Arab hospitality as an offensive rhetorical weapon against the threats identified in Chapters Two and Four of this study. Their efforts to better entrench themselves in Jordan, along with the isolation and distraction caused by the multiple jurisdiction problem and Orthodox Issue, absorbs most of

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

their energy. While this is Jordan's largest church, they devote comparatively less energy to refugees than other churches as a result.

2. Reclaiming sacred geography

As I demonstrated in Chapter Three of this study, sacred geography is in some ways the most ambivalent of the intra-Christian traditions, and it has often become both a site and source of conflict among Christians of different backgrounds. While Orthodox Christians are not alone in being interested in the holy sites, especially Jerusalem, they have marshalled this interest toward their approach to refugees in a unique way. In this section, I argue that Jordanian Orthodox Christians understand their response to refugees in part as an opportunity to reclaim the sacred geography of the Holy Land. I demonstrate the ways that sacred geography is deployed first, against the growing tensions within intra-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations and second, in engagements with refugees. These latter engagements, it is important to note, are not led by clergy or other church leadership, but rather, they are at the initiative of individuals within the congregation who act through the Christian institutions that further tie them to the area's sacred geography.

Sacred geography as a response to intra-Christian and Christian-Muslim tensions

An encounter with an Orthodox priest in Amman illustrates the developments around sacred geography that I explore in this section. As soon as I entered the office for our appointment, the elderly priest began by speaking rather angrily. 'I was just in Paris for a conference, and there's something I have to say first as an Orthodox priest regarding Trump and Jerusalem', he said.³⁸⁸ He alluded to a recent decision by then-US President Donald Trump to move the United States Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, then expanded to broader concerns about the justice of the Palestinian cause over and against that of Israeli Jews and their Christian Zionists, with whom he assumed I was in sympathy. 'This is our position, and if you want to hear about the Christians in the Middle East, this is what I'm telling you', he said when I tried to ask a question. 'If you're for Christians, then you have to be against this business with Trump'. Having listened for several minutes and beginning to hear certain phrases repeated, I tried to redirect the discussion to issues concerning Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan. He said, 'We know the truth, and we are Palestinian and sons of Palestine, and we lived peacefully with the Jews until

³⁸⁸ Unnamed Orthodox priest, interview by author, Amman, Jordan, 20 February 2018. Arabic – translation by author.

this...Muslims believe in God and have faith and respect the Bible and all of that, but the Jews don't'.

He had spoken for some time while I occasionally nodded and took notes, before I attempted to return the conversation to the topic of Jordanian churches and refugees. He quickly said that the refugees had all left and proceeded with a somewhat querulous statement about the long history of Christianity in the Middle East and the Holy Land, and how he traced his roots back to Abraham's presence in Iraq. Thinking that perhaps I needed to be more specific, I asked for his position on the Iraqi Christian refugees who had fled ISIS. He responded angrily:

They have churches and the Latins take care of them, but who is behind ISIS? Israel! Don't ask about the Christians. They're happy. They're in the camps, they receive money, they work, and the Latins take care of them. . . Don't worry about them. Worry about yourself. Read the Bible and be afraid for yourself.³⁸⁹

Although this heated discussion was not what I, as a researcher newly arrived in Jordan, had expected at the time, these statements offer a window into the complex perspective of many Orthodox Christians who remained committed to life in Jordan. Furthermore, as I engaged more with Orthodox Christians in Jordan, I found that his views were not unique. Although he expressed disinterest in the particular plight of the Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Jordan, and even in the broader threat of ISIS, these statements and position do constitute a response to the long-term refugee crisis in Jordan, articulated through the tradition of sacred geography. This approach can be understood in several ways. First, the priest wanted above all to discuss the importance of Jerusalem and its defence. When I tried to change the subject, he responded by reemphasizing his ties to the Middle East, as a Christian. This was an appeal to sacred geography and an assertion that the holy sites themselves were no more significant than the people living around them.

Second, the priest was angry because of actions taken by certain Western Christians in the Holy Land. As I demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, the precise implications of sacred geography are a contentious issue, with Western and Middle Eastern Christians often disagreeing about the terms of access. At the same time, the refugee crisis has prompted a massive increase in foreign influence on Jordan's land, economy, and society, which has generated tensions between Jordanian churches and Western churches. This priest saw me as

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

representing the latter party, and he expressed his displeasure at what he saw as a political alliance between Western Christian Zionist supporters and Jewish Israeli forces, or ‘this business with Trump and Jerusalem’. He started the interview with this position before I asked questions, thus demonstrating his desire that the Middle Eastern churches should set the agenda for Western church involvement in the region. He added that any foreigner who was ‘for Christians’ must side with Palestinian Christians against the state of Israel. In other words, the people living near the holy sites should make decisions about their use, rather than foreign Christians using their Christian identity to establish their ownership and control over sacred geography.

Third, the priest described (foreign) Christian Zionism and the state of Israel as the antagonists in a conflict against Palestinian and other Arabs, whether Christian or Muslim. His framing of the alliances surrounding this conflict over sacred geography is significant: Christian and Muslim Arabs against Christian and Jewish Israelis and Zionists. My experience with the Orthodox priest highlighted a longstanding impression of intra-Christian conflict surrounding Jerusalem. The priest’s pre-emptive declarations to me demonstrated the extent to which this wound remains fresh. He was not only using Jerusalem – the epicentre of sacred geography – to establish his superior position relative to non-Orthodox Christians, but also to rhetorically shore up relations with Middle Eastern Muslims.

The Orthodox priest stated that clarity around the ownership of Jerusalem was a decisive issue for Middle Eastern Christians, an issue that anyone who claimed alliance with them must support. Jerusalem is not the only focus of this Orthodox reclamation, however. Orthodox Christians have pragmatically begun to emphasise the holy sites that lie within the Jordanian borders as well. As Saleh Hamarneh, also an Orthodox Christian, adds, ‘The Jordan River, the place of Jesus’ baptism, has borne witness to the Christian nature of this land’. In response to the same question about refugees, Goussous described a recent Christmas event at the Jordan River Baptism Site, where she represented the Orthodox Church alongside Jordan’s king and other Jordanian Christian leaders. She spoke with frustration of the way that international Christians failed to appreciate the significance of such meetings, stating, ‘We reassured [the king] of our support for his custodianship over the holy places. This is our role and our contribution’. This statement – alongside the complaint about foreign Christian ignorance – again represents a dual reclamation of Orthodox belonging in the Holy Land, a deployment of sacred geography against any questions from either Muslims or foreign Christians. This is because Jordanian nationalism is itself tied to the holy sites just as firmly as that of Palestine. As I mentioned in Chapter One of this study, the Jordanian royal family – the Hashemites – are not native to the East Bank of the

Jordan River. Rather, they are a family of Arab princes who maintain royal power on the basis of both prophetic ancestry and an erstwhile custodianship over the Islamic holy sites in Mecca and Medina. They secured Jordanian legitimacy by presenting themselves as heirs to an ancient tradition of Arab princes who governed the holy sites in and around Jerusalem for the benefit of all three Abrahamic traditions. In the Pan-Arab fervour of the early twentieth century, they won the loyalty of local Arab tribes, but they maintained their legitimacy after the crushing defeat of 1967 by securing from Israel the right to continue administering the holy sites across the Holy Land on behalf of Muslims and Christians.³⁹⁰

Thus, the royal ‘custodianship’ that these Christian leaders were supporting at the Jordan River Baptism Site was an essential element within Hashemite sovereignty over Jordan, and their support was an important political move that both solidified Hashemite rule over Jordan and also obligated this Islamic monarchy to protect Christians against unfriendly Muslim forces in the region. Furthermore, by continuing to affirm their support for an Arab Muslim king³⁹¹ in his guardianship over the holy sites in and around Jerusalem, these Christian leaders were recognizing him as the authentic heir to a centuries-old tradition, a system of (relatively) pluralistic governance over the holy sites that Christianity and Islam share. This is why Goussous expressed frustration with the ignorance of Western Christians of the Jordanian Christian ‘contribution’. These foreign Christians, she believed, did not acknowledge that Christian pilgrims could access the holy sites only because Jordanian Christians continued to insist on the historic privileges of this tradition.

The importance of Islam within Jordanian Arab hospitality is undeniable, and Orthodox Christians must respond to the many, largely worrying, developments within Islamic thought and politics in recent decades. Of these, Kenneth Cragg writes, ‘There is little or nothing Christian

³⁹⁰ This point is among the central arguments of the following work: Katz, *Jordanian Jerusalem*.

³⁹¹ In a similar vein, I suggest that the intensification of the Orthodox Issue is an important part of the Jordanian Orthodox response to refugees. Like their ‘Phoenician’ and ‘Assyrian’ cousins in Lebanon and Iraq, they have sought an identity that can tie them firmly to the land where they live. In their case, however, they have done so by increasing their attention to and involvement with local holy sites, especially Jerusalem and the Baptism Site. Since the Greek leadership of their church stands in the way of this engagement, their arguments with their own church leaders have become more emphatic, as they seek to prove their loyalty to the uncertain Arab neighbours and government. As Joseph Maila argues, one political strategy adopted by Jordanian Christians during times of tension is to remain close to the Hashemite government. During times of tension, the Christians avow particular loyalty to the Hashemites, the heirs to the king who protected the Armenians after the massacres in Turkey, and the particular advocates for a Pan-Arab Levantine state that would have granted Arab Christians equal participation alongside Muslims. In this way, such fierce expressions of praise and longevity for the king represent both political support for a Pan-Arab project of Christian-Muslim unity, and an effort to strengthen ties with a ruler presumed to support that project against growing Islamist opposition to Christians around the region. (Maila, ‘The Arab Christians’, 42-44).

Arab elements, where they exist, can do about that situation except await (if as nonemigrants they do) its uncertain issue. A vital question mark of their well-being is outside their control'.³⁹² Betts, however, points to sacred geography as offering possible paths toward navigating dual loyalties among global Christianity and Arab Islam. 'The Christian Arab, in recent years increasingly aware of his unique heritage of Christianity in its earliest Apostolic form, has resisted the intellectual forces operating either to deny his faith a proper role in the modern world or to neutralize its Eastern character through the adoption of Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions. In identifying with Eastern forms of his faith, the Arab Christian has affirmed his intention to remain in the Arab World and to become a more integral part of its every level of national life'.³⁹³ Sacred geography offers the Orthodox Christians a proactive response to Islamic forces outside of their control because they have the power to legitimize the Hashemite custodianship over the holy sites.

Reclaiming sacred geography in response to refugees

Still, the question may be asked, what has Jerusalem to do with refugees? The priest and Goussous were not describing their positions on Jordanian sovereignty or Israeli politics so that I could write papers about Orthodox political engagement. Rather, their attempts to reclaim sacred geography constituted a rhetorical response to the questions I raised about refugees. In part, this approach responded to the growing tensions within Christian-Muslim and intra-Christian relations in Jordan, as I have just described. I believe, however, that this approach also applies directly to Orthodox pastoral responses to Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Within the Middle Eastern Christian understanding of sacred geography, Christians from elsewhere can assist local Christians in establishing robust Christian institutions in the Holy Land. These institutions remain rooted to the land itself and serve both the passing generations of local Christians in the area and the foreign Christians who require such services during their pilgrimages. Such institutions become an essential asset to Christians whose residence in the Holy Land makes them vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the area's changing politics, including refugees. For this reason, I argue that Orthodox Christians – as members of a given congregation – further reclaim sacred geography in response to refugees by appealing to and offering the assistance of Christian institutions.

³⁹² Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (London: Mowbray, 1992), 280.

³⁹³ Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, 221-222.

One instance of institutional assistance to refugees may be seen through the Orthodox School system. In an interview, a member of the Orthodox school board who attended this congregation explained that both Syrian and Iraqi refugee children had applied to enter the Ashrafieh Orthodox school, an institution already subsidized to one-third its normal cost because of the neighbourhood's poverty. The board decided to pay the entire tuition cost for the refugee children. 'We did not discriminate [between Christians and Muslims], but it was mostly the Christians because these were the people who were expelled the most', he said. 'They came to the school and applied, and because of the situation we helped them'. Such assistance is notable in that, first, it utilizes and strengthens the existing institutions of Jordan's Orthodox community, always a hallmark of sacred geography, as well as neighbourly hospitality. These refugee children joined an existing school system and presumably contributed accordingly, as guests to their hosting Orthodox institution. Second, the Orthodox school board did not separate the refugees from the Jordanian schoolchildren by advertising 'free' spots to refugees or building a temporary tent school in the churchyard. The refugee children simply applied to the school normally, and they received their tuition free of charge from that point. Such a form of assistance is quiet and discreet; the other schoolchildren would have no way of knowing about this aid and singling out the refugee children. Importantly, the school leader described this assistance as coming 'because of the situation', rather than 'because they were refugees'. These schoolchildren were helped because they found themselves in a difficult 'situation', not because they had permanently become beggars in perpetual need of alms. This action reflected the hope of the living stones discourse within sacred geography, that even people who found themselves in a difficult 'situation' could receive needed assistance through participating in church institutions and – someday – they could cease to require such help. Indeed, given that the Orthodox schools in particular were a private enterprise, operated and financed entirely by Palestinians who would have arrived in Jordan as refugees in 1948, one can see the fruits of this cycle at work. Those who once were refugees have literally become the benefactors of other refugees, decades later, because they once received help from church institutions.

Even within this interview, evidence of the 'estrangement' Hager described as a result of the Orthodox Issue became apparent. After the school board member described the assistance offered, his wife objected to his mentioning the school, because she said that this assistance came from a Christian organization, rather than the church itself. She questioned whether this assistance could be understood as part of the church's ministry to refugees. Her husband suggested that this assistance simply reflected another means for the church to operate in the

world, saying, ‘Well, the churches did their thing, and we did ours’.³⁹⁴ In this sense, the assistance that the Orthodox Schools provided to refugees was also an expression of Arab hospitality, because Orthodox Christians differentiated between the assistance offered by the Arab-originated institutions versus the Greek church organization.

For their part, Orthodox Christians were often critical of Christian refugees who failed to respect the tradition of sacred geography by refusing to settle. Goussous described her frustration with Christian refugees who failed to meet her expectations in this respect. ‘All Iraqis are in a waiting mode. They want to keep receiving food baskets and for us to celebrate Christmas with them... But they are not productive’.³⁹⁵ She did not object to the church offering food baskets and holiday feasts, but she deplored the all-but ubiquitous Iraqi Christian desire to emigrate to the West, frustrated by what she saw as an abandonment of the Middle Eastern Christian heritage that is grounded in place.

The fear of emigration forms the backdrop of this critique of Iraqi Christians. If the ‘living stones’ depart the region, who will maintain the institutions that give evidence of a Christian presence in the region? The Jordanian Orthodox Christians understand their presence as a vital gift to Christians around the world. As Goussous explained:

The international Christian community must start waking up and helping or they will not have a nativity and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre will become a museum or a mosque maybe, but that cannot happen because this is the Holy Land. We are angry, and we look sadly at all the Arab Christians who are leaving, and if they leave, they will forget that they are Arab, and their children will become like Western Christians who do not know or commit to their faith.³⁹⁶

Again, these Orthodox Christians do not express fears about emigration only because their own churches would decline, but because they believe that Middle Eastern Christianity offers something essential to the worldwide Christian communion.³⁹⁷ As Hammerli notes, this distinctive heritage is grounded within Orthodox ecclesiology in ‘territoriality’. This is one reason why Goussous fears the results of emigration so much; Orthodox Christians cannot simply

³⁹⁴ Family dinner, conversation with author.

³⁹⁵ Goussous, interview.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Dyron B. Daugherty, ‘Ignoring the East: Correcting a Serious Flaw in World Christianity Scholarship’ in *Religion on the Move! New Dynamics of Christian Expansion in a Globalizing World*, edited by Afe Adogame and Shobana Shankar (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 41.

move elsewhere without losing something of a spirituality grounded in territory. These Orthodox Christians want to renegotiate their relationship with the Western churches in order to better preserve this territory in Jordan and continue offering their contribution as 'living stones'.

In their direct assistance to refugees more broadly, the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem claimed that his church's 'modest' contributions were disproportionately valuable to refugees precisely because of their institutions on the ground. Unlike the foreign organizations that flew aid workers across the globe and set up tents in which to serve refugees, the Orthodox Church in Jordan was richly endowed with the stable, brick-and-mortar institutions of the region's 'living stones'. In this way, they argued, they could distribute aid directly to the needy without paying for foreign bureaucracy and administration. Furthermore, the church expressed willingness to work alongside any organization because 'ours is a spiritual and humanitarian mission and not a political one'. Such a statement subtly accused foreign organizations of exploiting the refugees' current need to establish themselves in the region and – once again – grab a slice of undeserved political power over the Holy Land.

In summary, Orthodox Christians in Jordan seek to reclaim their rights to sacred geography in response to refugees. They work to strengthen their position in Jordan against any threats from Middle Eastern Muslims or foreign Christians. They do so in part by emphasising the importance of their Christian institutions, which form the essential building blocks of the 'living stones' discourse. They assist refugees in and through these institutions, and they defend them against possible incursions from emigration-happy refugees or foreign powers who seek to establish political or religious sovereignty over the Holy Land.

Conclusion

The Arab Orthodox approach is a path toward a Christian future through its past. Its greatest strength lies in the use of Arab hospitality and sacred geography to assert the inherent belonging of the Christian tradition in the Middle East. Given the extreme minority of Christianity in present-day Jordan, however, it is risky because it requires the Muslim majority to respect the area's history and their position within it. The Hashemites could someday lose the power to protect the Christians, or they might simply adopt a different strategy toward legitimacy that did not require the cooperation of the holy sites' Christian guardians. If the Hashemites ever proved unwilling or unable to protect Jordan's Christian community, their membership and institutions would likely suffer a similar fate to Mosul's Christians.

In that sense, the Arab Orthodox Christians face the greatest threat; their position is more precarious than that of Jordan's other Christians. Catholic or Anglican Christians, for example, could emigrate without losing their spiritual heritage; Catholic and Anglican churches function in other parts of the world without threatening their own ecclesiology. The Orthodox Christians, by contrast, must rely on fellow Arabs of all faiths to continue believing that their history is valuable. This makes their continuing presence in the Middle East an essential part of their identity.

At the same time, I also see in the Orthodox approach a number of problems that similarly distract or trouble churches around the world. Jordanian Orthodox Christians are preoccupied by the pervasive jurisdictional problems that trouble the global Orthodox communion, as well as their own, more localized struggle for local autonomy and hierarchical attention as native Christians living in the Holy Land. These problems weaken their response, not only to the refugees that flooded into Jordan between 2011 and 2019, but also to the broader declines in Christian-Muslim and intra-Christian relations that accompanied them. For many Orthodox Christians, all of these problems together appear so debilitating that caring for the strangers around them appears impossible. It is important to note the way that unresolved problems within church ecclesiology can undermine the church's overall mission. Neither the jurisdictional problems of the global Orthodox communion nor the Orthodox Issue are new problems; they have nothing to do with refugees or wars in Syria. Rather, these problems are literally centuries in the making, and unfortunately for the Orthodox laity I interviewed, they lie outside the control of individual congregations in Amman. Similarly, in another context, one might see a congregation that neglects the needy around them because of fears that a temporary building will soon receive a foreclosure notice, or an overly transient inter-city church that cannot staff its youth education programs. Ecclesiological problems, we may observe, may not seem to demand the same attention as a refugee 'crisis', but their neglect may ultimately threaten refugees.

In this Orthodox church's response to refugees, notwithstanding their important pastoral and institutional contributions, a sense of fear emerges. Orthodox Christians are not necessarily afraid of the refugees themselves, but rather of the displacement that they represent. They are worried because they see in the phenomenon of forced displacement a loss of their own identity. This concern with past possession and glory can become an obsession that hampers not only their ability to respond generously to the refugees in need, but also to defend their own members and institutions against the threat of incursion from Islam or other Christians. But what is

important to remember is that this obsession is itself a response to problems that are completely outside the control of Jordanian Orthodox Christians. Both the multiple jurisdiction phenomenon and the Orthodox Issue have plagued them for well over a century, but they rely on their regional and global leaders to resolve them. There is a telling example of the systematic disfunction that results when a global ecclesiastical system becomes paralyzed from the top down. Because such seemingly arcane ecclesiological problems remain unresolved, because the Orthodox hierarchs who bear a responsibility for them refuse to act, the Jordanian laity becomes increasingly enmired in brooding anxiety over their own decline, unable to do more than struggle for the survival of a chronically unsatisfactory status quo.

7. 'We in the Middle East know about hospitality': Anglicans in Ashrafieh and the Pan-Arab Rapprochement

The Bible study session that Tuesday evening was quite ordinary. The priest who led the discussion stopped to illustrate with a simple story about the power of everyday good deeds. Because the story included an anecdote about an American priest serving sandwiches to those in need, however, he felt it necessary to explain to his audience certain elements of foreign cuisine. 'What you have to understand is that Americans love sandwiches', he told the mostly Arab group. 'It's not like it is among the Arabs, where we have a variety of dishes: *maqluba*, *mansef*, *kibbeh*... In the West, it's all sandwiches'. With that gustatory indictment, he turned to me for confirmation that Americans do indeed love sandwiches.

As he indicated with a friendly smile, this oversimplification of an entire civilization's menu was not intended to insult me as an American, but rather, he sought to delineate the parameters of his distinctive approach to both refugees and a vision for Christianity's future in Jordan. This talk of sandwiches pointed to a particular understanding not only of a Pan-Arab heritage, but also of a Pan-Arab promise for the present and future. The contrast between a rich and varied Arab menu and a perceived American sandwich obsession was part of a broader argument that Jordan's Anglican leadership sought to articulate for a community that wondered whether their troubled region could still offer something meaningful to them and the modern world. In other words, I suggest, this approach depended on the promise of a reinvigorated Pan-Arabism and neighbourly hospitality.

In this chapter, I argue that St Paul's Anglican Church in Ashrafieh responded to refugees by revisiting the traditions of Pan-Arabism and neighbourly hospitality. From the lived experience of this small church emerges a unique but dramatic model for neighbourly hospitality in action. At the same time, the ideals of Pan-Arabism were being renegotiated to craft a particular kind of 'unity amid diversity'³⁹⁸ in Ashrafieh. I present this argument through interviews and participant observation drawn from my time as a guest member of this congregation. I also present evidence from my fieldwork about the presence of opposition from within the congregation, which illustrates the active role of renegotiation that is part of this approach, and indeed, part of the struggle to reimagine Christian life in Jordan more broadly. I conclude by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of this church's approach overall.

³⁹⁸ Corbon, 'The Churches of the Middle East', 105.

1. Living neighbourly hospitality

Neighbourly hospitality is arguably the most important of the six traditions that I have articulated in this study. As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, neighbourly hospitality offers a path toward rebuilding damaged relationships, and in the case of refugees, it is a distinctive, contextually specific approach to welcoming the stranger. It is difficult to conceptualize with precision because it remains a lived and living practice intimately connected with its context, in which offering welcome is part of everyday life. In this section, I argue that the Anglican church in Ashrafieh constitutes a living model for neighbourly hospitality in action. I showcase the actions associated with this tradition and suggest ways that this practice, in turn, transformed this congregation.

Transforming a community through hospitality

What is often called a ‘Syrian refugee crisis’ was just hitting Jordan in full force in 2013 when Reverend George Al-Kopti and his wife, Mary – both theologically trained and partners in congregational leadership – arrived in Ashrafieh.³⁹⁹ Perhaps because Al-Kopti had grown up near Amman, his bishop had tasked him to leave his post in Beirut and revitalize a dwindling congregation in Amman’s old downtown area. St Paul’s parish had once represented the Anglicans in a predominantly Christian centre of Amman. Indeed, two other churches remain visible from St Paul’s: the Syriac Orthodox Church and the country’s only Armenian Orthodox Church, where the Armenian Christian refugees of an earlier era had settled. From the 1980s, however, many Armenians had emigrated, and wealthy Christians largely relocated to west Amman. By 2013, Ashrafieh was home to some of Amman’s poorest, and its status as a centre for Christian life had dissipated.

Their move to Ashrafieh had initially discouraged the Al-Koptis, with the couple wondering how to prevail against small numbers and widespread apathy in their new congregation. In time, however, Mary discovered through her Syrian contacts that the Syriac Orthodox Church near them was hosting eighty families who had fled the ongoing war. Many were living inside the church itself and largely dependent on the goodwill of those around them. Because of Ashrafieh’s past status as a Christian centre, Christian refugees in particular flocked to the area. Al-Kopti explained that in Middle Eastern societies, ‘The Christian feels safe living

³⁹⁹ Al-Kopti, interview.

next to the church and feels responsible for the church'. Al-Kopti said he found church classrooms housing ten people each, in 'misery'.

The response of the Al-Koptis and a growing share of their congregation to this situation illustrates what I have called 'neighbourly hospitality' in a nod to the importance of proximity and the essentiality of the 'neighbour' as a figure within Christian charity. For their part, laity usually called it 'helping' or 'friendliness', although Al-Kopti spoke of '*karamat ad-dheyafa*', the virtue of hosting others, which he understood as both a Christian responsibility and an Arab birth right.⁴⁰⁰ Their challenge in doing so, however, was a complete lack of resources. The bishop had sent the Al-Koptis to a church whose own existence was threatened by poverty, emigration, and apathy among the local congregants in hopes that they could return it to functionality, not open up a shelter for needy refugees. One might have forgiven them for thinking that their internal needs prevented them from engaging with the problems next-door. They began to meet with the refugees, however, offering prayer and pastoral support. Once they gained a sense of the refugees' needs, they launched a series of programmes at St Paul's and issued invitations. A weekly Bible Study group offered spiritual nourishment and social outings to Christian refugees. A youth group was established to help mentor vulnerable adolescents, and the Bible Society helped sponsor a regular children's activity.

They determined that women were suffering particularly in these circumstances, and so a regular women's meeting was established. Each meeting featured an invited speaker, including a gynaecologist, a beautician, and a family doctor. Importantly, the women who attended would vote on the next meeting's theme. Al-Kopti explained the church's reasoning for this particular emphasis: 'We started with women because we realized that strengthening and supporting women is strengthening the whole family. If she becomes a committed Christian, that affects the home'. The decision to focus such attention on women may be understood in light of the way that neighbourly hospitality, as I outlined in Chapter Four, seeks to retain and strengthen family institutions amid migration. These women were not receiving special attention solely to alleviate their present distress, but also with an aim toward 'strengthening the whole family'. These women received care and support with the expectation that, as mothers and wives, they could care for self-sustaining family units that might survive this time of crisis.

Of course, some of their creativity in helping others came in response to the congregation's own poverty. Only after one-and-a-half years of this work did the Anglican

⁴⁰⁰ In Arabic, this is *كرامة الضيافة*.

Patriarchate begin to send money for food parcels to Ashrafieh. Through personal contact, other partnerships also helped in time, however; Operation Mercy set up a day clinic in the church basement, British donors contributed through Friends of the Holy Land, and personal contacts from the Al-Koptis' past travels brought money or sent donations. Although such assistance expanded what they could offer those in need, Al-Kopti was cautious. He observed that the increase of residents had almost tripled rent prices in this formerly low-cost area, and poor Jordanians were beginning to blame the newcomers. He worried that if St Paul's gave monetary or food assistance to refugees, the poor Jordanians in the area would become more resentful. 'We tell donors that we don't do anything for refugees only', he explained. 'A lot of things we do for refugees, but we never announce that they are only for refugees'.

Al-Kopti indicated that this approach represented an intentional rejection of practices elsewhere in Jordan, and he believed that it offered something valuable to the refugees as well. He spoke with emotion as he described tiny donations for church repairs coming from some of the refugees who were themselves receiving assistance. In one story, an Iraqi woman donated just four Jordanian dinars, enough to pay for one-third of a new chair. Al-Kopti tried to dissuade her until she told him that she did it 'for God's house', for which he applauded her devotion. Such an appreciation for – even a celebration of – the contributions of refugees who actively participated in the life of the church is, of course, a hallmark of neighbourly hospitality, a point referenced regularly in the workings of St Paul's. Moreover, it is a clear reference to the notion of brokerage within aid. In this understanding of neighbourly hospitality, both the Iraqi woman and Al-Kopti – and everyone else at St Paul's – were simply benefitting from what came from God. While Al-Kopti, in extending hospitality to the refugees next door, was temporarily playing the role of broker, he yielded his position to the earnest Iraqi woman who wanted to demonstrate her gratitude – not to him – but to the God who provided for them all. 'Refugees in the parish, we try our best to make them feel that they are part of the community', the priest told me in an interview. 'Our philosophy is, "I was a stranger, and you took me in." Not in the backyard, not in the basement, not in a tent, we welcome them in'.⁴⁰¹ In mentioning a tent, this priest referenced some of the ways that others in Jordan were choosing to receive refugees, including the tent settlements financed by international humanitarian organizations.⁴⁰² He contrasted such 'backyard' assistance with his own church's decision to welcome not only the presence, but also

⁴⁰¹ Al-Kopti, interview.

⁴⁰² A frequent topic in these conversations was the infamous Camp Zaatari, a tent settlement in Jordan's northern desert that was built in 2012 for Syrian refugees. Refugees arriving at the Jordanian border were escorted to the camp by Jordanian soldiers, and a fence with armed guards kept them in.

the active participation, of the refugees at St Paul's. The particular character of this assistance could also be described as neighbourly hospitality, a practice of which this priest in particular regularly expressed pride.

This is, again, to be expected within the region's framework for accommodating refugees. As Chatty writes, 'The granting of hospitality was seen not only as a public good but also an act that enhanced the host's reputation'.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, the priest identified the practice as being particular to the region, indicating a sense of pride in the Arab heritage that was a hallmark of Pan-Arabism. During my time as a guest member at St Paul's Anglican Church in Ashrafieh, I found that Reverend George Al-Kopti was relentless in propagating and persuading those around him of this approach. He grounded every such statement in Pan-Arab, Middle Eastern Christian heritage of the region, insisting that care for each other and for those in need had always been part of this identity. When he first introduced me formally in front of the congregation, for example, he explained that I had come to Jordan to learn about hospitality, 'because we in the Middle East know about hospitality'.⁴⁰⁴ I learned that he was not referring only to the 'variety of dishes' that Arabs have traditionally offered their guests, but rather he pointed toward a living tradition of neighbourly hospitality grounded in both a Pan-Arab heritage and Christian faith.

Of course, there was likely another, very practical reason for this intra-parish unity among the Anglicans: their size. With an estimated 3,800 members, they constituted a tiny fraction of the already-tiny Jordanian Christian community.⁴⁰⁵ Their numbers in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were comparably small. Moreover, they were also relatively new, a community whose age in the country was counted in decades, while the Catholic and especially the Orthodox churches could boast centuries and millennia in the region. Certainly, the Anglicans could not assert themselves through Arab hospitality in the manner of the Orthodox Christians. Their enthusiastic outreach to both other churches and each other was an effort to

⁴⁰³ Chatty, *Syria*, 216.

⁴⁰⁴ Bible study meeting, observations by author, St Paul's Anglican Church, Amman, Jordan, 23 July 2019, Arabic – translation by author.

In a Bible study session later that same evening, the priest again mentioned my research in connection with the congregation's study of the Gospel of Matthew 9-10. Commenting on Matthew 9:10-13 in particular, he noted the human tendency to exclude people who have something wrong with them, but he insisted that a Christian community must learn to bring in those who arrive with problems or needs. This concept, he noted, is what (this author) is trying to research.

⁴⁰⁵ Jordan is home to an estimated 3,800 Anglican Christians. Protestant denominations, as a whole, represent roughly nine percent of Jordan's Christians. See: "Jordan," in Johnson and Zurlo (eds.) *World Christian Encyclopaedia*.

turn this weakness into strength, however. The congregation at St Paul's swelled in size, bolstered not only by fifty Syrian families, and later roughly forty Iraqi families, who participated fully in the life of the church, but also by local Christians who were drawn to such activity.

Embracing refugees as host and guest

One such family was that of Cecilia and Bashara,⁴⁰⁶ a local Syriac Orthodox and Latin Christian, respectively, who told me they had joined the Anglicans out of admiration for the transformational work occurring at St Paul's. Cecilia told me how they had opened their small home to the use of the refugees living inside local churches. In addition to many invitations for homecooked meals, they offered regular use of their home's bathroom facilities and washroom. Particularly in the desert kingdom of Jordan, such a simple act of hospitality should not be underestimated. In addition to the obvious inconvenience of inviting near strangers in and out of one's bathroom, this couple had to consider their own losses. In Jordan, water is the scarcest commodity, and even wealthy homes are subject to a rationing system. Each residence receives water from an individual tank, filled weekly by a water truck. If the water runs out before the week does, then the household's need to wash dishes or even flush the toilet must wait. Additionally, the complex water politics of the country have temporarily halted the water trucks on occasion, meaning prudent households would hesitate to finish their water ration even in a week's time. This couple did not count such costs, however, pointing instead to their opportunity to share God's mutual blessings.

The extraordinary thing about this exchange was not the content itself, but rather the context in which I had heard about it. I had seen this couple at least weekly for several months. I had met with them formally, in their home, for conversation and food on several occasions and had publicly and privately solicited stories and interviews about hospitality and the refugee situation. In all that time, no such stories or sentiments had been seen by them as worth mentioning. In this case, I had casually remarked that I would be leaving Jordan soon, and then thanked them for their friendship during this time. I commented on how much I was enjoying my time with them. Bashara said with feeling, 'This is a rare opportunity not to be repeated'. From here, the conversation shifted, as Cecilia explained how much she loved interacting with foreigners generally. 'You see, I am a foreigner here. I am a Syrian, married to a Jordanian, so I

⁴⁰⁶ Cecilia and Bashara, conversation with author, Amman, Jordan, 17 September 2019, Arabic – translation by author. Their names have been changed to pseudonyms protect their identity.

understand. And my husband and I are of one mind on this issue. We love getting to know foreigners'.⁴⁰⁷

She then pointed out the window, where, across the street, was St Ephraim's Syriac Orthodox Church. Five years ago, she explained, there had been forty families living in the church. The social hall of St Paul's Anglican Church, just up the street, was likewise home to many families in need at this time, first Syrian and then Iraqi. She told us with enthusiasm how these families had been allowed into their home, many times a day, to use the bathroom and even shower. Cecilia and Bashara's hospitality to Syrian refugees exemplified the broker system at work. In explaining her actions, Cecilia told me that if you take care of others, God will take care of you. She noted briefly that there are some rich people who never help others, but she waved this away, suggesting that there are always such people. Cecilia pointed out, however, that as a foreigner herself, she understands the experience of the stranger and actively seeks opportunities to welcome such outsiders, a practice I observed in her warm friendship toward myself and many of the Iraqi and Egyptian members at St Paul's.

Cecilia's experiences find resonance in the work of Christine Pohl, who draws from the literature of both the Bible and Christians shortly thereafter. Recovering hospitality, Pohl argues, lies in extending it, especially to the outcast. Such an extension outside one's own circle is rarely risk-free, socially or politically. It requires a special 'sensitivity' to such need, perhaps born of personal experience, for it 'comes from our ability to put ourselves in their position, and from remembering our own experiences of vulnerability and dependence', as Pohl writes.⁴⁰⁸ This argument suggests that extending hospitality, perhaps, is less about the tragic narratives told by those in need, and more about the stories hosts tell themselves and their children. In other words, a host community that chooses to practice hospitality finds their own identity transformed by their response to migration crisis. Such a transformation leads to not just seeing, but believing, that their need is one's own, perhaps because of a tragic past unique to one's own particularity and essential to one's experience of Christ.

What is most remarkable about this story is the difficulty I had in hearing it. Although they had repeatedly been told that I was searching for stories of hospitality, it was only after many friendly encounters at church, and even frequent meals in their home, that Cecilia and Bashara shared this story with me. Even then, my excited follow-up questions cooled their

⁴⁰⁷ Cecilia and Bashara, conversation with author.

⁴⁰⁸ Pohl, *Making Room*, 65.

enthusiasm for the topic, and they turned quickly to their delight at making friends with a stranger such as myself. I attribute their shyness to the discretion inherent within neighbourly hospitality, but I wonder how many similar episodes occurred quietly, without attracting my attention.

Knowing this, I was surprised one evening by seemingly harsh comments from Cecilia. I had been invited, along with the church's priest and his wife, to an evening meal after the mid-week Bible Study session, when Cecilia began to complain about an event at the church the previous Sunday. An Iraqi family who had attended the church since fleeing the war in Iraq had hosted a farewell party after the morning church service. The party had included a breakfast buffet, but several items had run out before the crowd had eaten their fill. Cecilia was scandalized, and she blamed the Iraqi family personally for this problem. As he often did, the priest tried to mitigate the complaint with a smile and a laugh, and he shared his mother's counsel about the virtues of leaving church with a satisfied soul and a hungry belly.⁴⁰⁹

This complex exchange could not be a sign that Mary and Cecilia, two Syrian women who had personally spearheaded the welcome to refugees at St Paul's, resented the foreigners or their hospitality. What motivated this behaviour? Research by Andrew Shryock suggests that such post-party complaints are in fact among the norms of Arab hospitality in Jordan.⁴¹⁰ As a tradition that both builds upon and signifies respect and mutual protection, Arab hospitality is conducted to communicate important messages about the identity of both the host and the guest. As Shryock explains, 'Hospitality is a field of ritualized exchange in which performance animates and responds to social critique'.⁴¹¹ At the same time, Jordanian Bedouin informants told Shryock that when extending hospitality, usually through offering food, "The host must fear the guest", one man told me. "When he sits [and shares your food], he is company. When he stands [and leaves your house], he is a poet".⁴¹² Within this understanding, the host bears the responsibility to satisfy, or preferably exceed, the guests' expectations, in the hope that departing guests will describe their generosity, consideration, and apparent wealth to the surrounding community rather than gossiping about the host's stinginess or lack of planning. In that sense, by gossiping about the Sunday breakfast at her dinner party on Tuesday, Cecilia and Mary played

⁴⁰⁹ Cecilia and Bashara, conversation with author.

⁴¹⁰ Shryock, 'The New Jordanian Hospitality: House, Host, and Guest in the Culture of Public Display', 35-62.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 36.

their own roles within the practice of Arab hospitality. Cecilia transformed from guest to poet, vocally expressing her disgust with the hospitality this family had offered.

Their active participation in the rituals of Arab hospitality revealed not only concerns about social norms, but also it demonstrated something more important about their attitude – and the approach of St Paul’s – toward the Iraqi refugees at the church. Cecilia demonstrated her belief that this foreign, refugee family truly belonged to their congregation precisely by engaging in post-party ‘poetry’, as though the church breakfast had been a formal act of hospitality toward the Jordanian church members. By endowing the Iraqi refugees with the responsibility to be good hosts, the church community signalled their complete inclusion. If church members had politely ignored the flaws in the farewell breakfast with the conciliatory excuse, ‘Well, they’re going through a hard time’, they would not have been demonstrating compassion, but exclusion. The act of holding these refugees to the same standards they expected from one another was a sign of how completely the church had integrated the newcomers.

This approach contrasts with the impersonal approaches that, Al-Kopti had complained, failed so utterly to ‘welcome them in’. In such an approach, the vulnerability of the Iraqi ‘refugees’, for example, would place them in a separate category from the poor Jordanians at St Paul’s. This has not been the custom of the Levant, however, and Dawn Chatty describes how Iraqi migrations to Syria and Jordan in recent decades have exposed this differing approach: ‘Iraqi exiles and their hosts have largely rejected the contemporary Western notion of the separation of the stranger or asylum seeker from the rest of society’.⁴¹³ Instead, the now-large and diverse congregation at St Paul’s had indeed been transformed through neighbourly hospitality, growing in size and changing in character. This may be seen even in the priest’s response. While Al-Kopti, as the congregation’s spiritual leader, felt obliged to urge forbearance, he did so as a matter of interpersonal virtue in preserving relations at church. In abstaining from a patronizing comment such as, ‘That was the best they could do as refugees’, he also demonstrated his conviction that these and other Iraqi refugees belonged at St Paul’s completely, and their departure would leave a gap.

In this section, I have characterized St Paul’s Anglican Church in Ashrafieh as a living model for neighbourly hospitality. Tasked with revitalizing a dying congregation, the Al-Koptis instead extended neighbourly hospitality to the refugees around them. Their leadership inspired similar acts within this poor neighbourhood, and the once-dwindling congregation expanded

⁴¹³ Chatty, *Syria*, 215-216.

dramatically as a result. As I have noted, the congregation of St Paul's welcomed the refugees to participate fully in their church, drawing on both their own experiences of migration and displacement and the networks accessible to them to do so. As Chatty observed, 'These acts [of hospitality to Iraqi refugees] have a resonance and clarity with the historical context of the late Ottoman era . . . [as] migration, forced and voluntary, characterized the region, creating widespread and large-scale networks of families, lineages, and tribes'.⁴¹⁴ This latter point – that migration both requires and creates new networks and lineages – is explored in the next section, as I present St Paul's renegotiation of a new Pan-Arabism.

2. Renegotiating Pan-Arabism

The family ties and networks created and sustained through neighbourly hospitality were an important part of how the Anglican congregation at St Paul's responded to refugees and engaged with one another, as I argued previously. But in order to treat these Iraqi refugees as fellow church members with the potential to act as good hosts, the congregation at St Paul's drew from the ideals of Pan-Arabism, which I explained in Chapter One. Among other things, Pan-Arabism requires pride in a pan-regional Arab heritage. This Pan-Arab approach was not original to the church, but rather it represented a conscious decision to reimagine the framework of Pan-Arabism as part of their response to refugees. In this section, I argue that Pan-Arabism facilitated the Ashrafieh approach by offering resources for both inclusion through assimilation and creative negotiation between Arab and foreign strategies. I conclude by evaluating some aspects of this approach and note the ways that Pan-Arabism intertwines with neighbourly hospitality on the ground.

Debating Pan-Arabism as a path toward regional rapprochement

First, Pan-Arabism connects members of various nations in the Middle East through a shared pride in the greatness of an ongoing Arab civilization. As a group, the Anglicans in Jordan maintained a transnational unity that extended into every aspect of ecclesiastical life.⁴¹⁵ This ecclesiastical unity worked in parallel with familial ties as well.⁴¹⁶ I observed the priest greeting many of the other clergy or lay leaders serving in other congregations at a multi-church event

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 215-216.

⁴¹⁵ Even during my relatively brief sojourn at St Paul's, I observed a both a children's camp and young adult's retreat at the Schneller School in Zarqa, attended by Anglican members from across the country. Likewise, St Paul's Church hosted an all-Jordan women's meeting that attracted women and clergy from as far away as Salt. The Anglican priests who served in Amman attended a breakfast meeting every week to discuss church affairs, and other clergy or lay leaders attended where possible, sometimes from as far away as the West Bank.

⁴¹⁶ In Ashrafieh, the Al-Kopti's parents, sister, and nieces attended the congregation.

with great familiarity. He introduced several participants as his ‘cousins’, while others were known from childhood in the same congregation, and they all knew one another’s extended families as well. These family ties in and among ecclesiastical ties are not surprising, but they are worth noting. Mohanna Haddad observed that the particular nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century history of Jordanian Christianity meant that ecclesiastical boundaries developed around pre-existing family or tribal bonds, with, for example, a given tribe becoming angry with leaders of one church and converting instead to the Greek Catholic church. In more recent times, he argues, churches have ‘retribalized’ the Christians who were ‘detrribalized’ by the modernizing economy and migration to create ecclesiastical ties that overlay tribal loyalties.⁴¹⁷

In this Anglican case, however, the networks that had been created clearly exceeded the political expediency that Haddad described. The family ties I observed among the Anglicans, by contrast, had occurred almost exclusively among Christians of Palestinian origin, who had brought their Anglican loyalty with them to Jordan decades earlier. This fact suggests the existence of ‘widespread and large-scale networks of families, lineages, and tribes’ that strengthen and support Levantine communities through their experience of displacement.⁴¹⁸ The continuity of both extended family and ecclesiastical ties over periods of forced displacement and transnational migration was itself an element of Arab hospitality. A coalition of Jordan’s Anglican leaders told me that they initially assessed the needs of seven-hundred and fifty refugee families who were arriving in Jordan. They determined that they lacked the facilities to accommodate all their needs alone. Instead, they began working with Caritas and several Arabic-speaking Catholic churches in Amman. They paid for ten families’ accommodation, then collected money and donations for clothing, hygiene kits, and fans. At the same time, the church began a pastoral ministry to offer counselling – doctors and lawyers were invited to the church to give talks and answer the refugees’ questions – and entertainment, particularly at Christmas and Easter.⁴¹⁹ That this Anglican network was mobilizing on behalf of Iraqi and Syrian refugees amid their own crisis, without needing to stigmatize or separate them, represents a natural outflow of this Pan-Arab approach, renegotiated for the local scale of a church and its broader Anglican

⁴¹⁷ Haddad, “Detribalizing” and “Retribalizing”, 67-89. Haddad further claims, ‘The reasons why increasingly large numbers of Greek Orthodox switched their allegiance to the newer missionary churches had little to do with doctrinal or liturgical identities; rather, they were seen as institutions of socio-political opportunity in a society which was undergoing a rapid process of urbanization and detrribalization’ (73). This somewhat-simplistic assessment is worthy of further debate, but the author cites extensive surveys among the heads of Christian households across Jordan. Regardless of its authenticity, this belief plays a combustive role within intra-Christian debates in Jordan.

⁴¹⁸ Chatty, *Syria*, 215-216.

⁴¹⁹ Anglican breakfast meeting, focus group.

network. As Chatty notes, 'Notions of hospitality and refuge operated at the individual and community level – not by government decree'.⁴²⁰

Like the ideology of Pan-Arabism, the St Paul's approach was strengthened and nourished by the formation of extra-family ties as well. In the formative days of Pan-Arab thought, Hourani noted, transnational boundaries were traversed for the purpose of education, with Pan-Arab leaders from various Arab countries often tracing their ideological beginnings back to the same classrooms in Beirut, for example. In contrast to nineteenth-century Pan-Arabism, which at times celebrated the secular, the Anglican phenomenon might be understood as a sort of Christian Pan-Arabism, with these various leaders – now working apart in different communities – tracing their educational beginnings back to the same Sunday School classes and seminaries. Indeed, two of the priests I met had together attended the Near East School of Theology in Beirut; Al-Kopti had met his wife, Mary, at the same institution. Meanwhile, a slightly younger pair of priests also serving in Jordan had together attended the same seminary in the United States. Like the Pan-Arab scholars of the early twentieth century, they reminisced about the same teachers and experiences from their education. The shared experience of formative education doubtless contributed to their ability to manage multi-congregation events – a phenomenon I did not observe in the other two congregations discussed in this chapter – with such regularity.

This spirit of Pan-Arab unity and inclusion may have fermented in Protestant seminaries, but its expression at St Paul's expanded beyond that theological domain. This is illustrated by the church's theological position on the issue of communion. When I asked the priest in Ashrafieh during a private interview in his office whether I should receive communion, he said he had noticed my refusal to come forward but had not wished to inquire because such subjects can be sensitive. When I explained that I was not a baptized Anglican, he said that all baptized Christians should partake of communion. Rather than using this inclusive gesture to demonstrate the unity of the Ashrafieh community, however, he said briefly that he believed this was the official position of the Anglican Church in the Middle East.⁴²¹

I note that this is partly reflective of the Ashrafieh approach to diversity and inclusion within the congregation overall. Of the churches presented in the case studies of this study, the

⁴²⁰ Chatty, *Syria*, 216.

⁴²¹ Of course, ecclesial culture is partly responsible for this difference. The worldwide Anglican communion tends more toward theological openness in allowing believers to partake of communion than, for example, the Catholic or Orthodox churches.

Ashrafieh church boasted a more diverse congregation overall in terms of both national and ecclesial origin: Jordanians, Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqis, Germans, Americans, and British members all attended the Sunday and other meetings regularly. The only members of this congregation who described themselves as Anglican to me were the priest and a British employee of the worldwide Anglican church. The Iraqi refugees hailed from the Chaldean Catholic or Syriac Orthodox churches, a fact they shared regularly without embarrassment, while other members identified themselves as Greek Orthodox or Latin Catholic. Despite this diversity, such differences were rarely discussed in the Ashrafieh church, and never by church leadership. On the contrary, the need for all Christians to participate more actively in church ministries was a constant in nearly every interview I conducted and every sermon or Bible study I heard this priest give.

By contrast, the Marka church admitted the participation of Iraqi refugees inside the school and other church ministries, with frequent allusion to their experience of forced displacement. When Iraqis in Ashrafieh mentioned their experience with ISIS as a tragedy, the priest quickly pointed to the need for all Christians to witness of Christ, through martyrdom, if necessary, regardless of where they lived or what they experienced. In the Marka church, the priest referred to those who had fled Iraq in glowing terms such as ‘angels’ or ‘saints’. While the Marka church celebrated the unique contributions of the Iraqi refugees – through a graduation ceremony or an Aramaic recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, for example – the Ashrafieh church emphasized the importance of Christian participation without singling out a particular group as unduly needy or holy. This represents a clear difference between the approach that Chatty identifies as local cosmopolitanism in Marka, which allows Iraqis ‘to make themselves “at home” without assimilating or letting go of their Iraqi identity’,⁴²² and the reshaping, ‘Arabizing’ of Ashrafieh’s Pan-Arab approach. It could be described as the difference between incorporation with difference and unifying amid diversity.

Renegotiating ties with the West: Opposition to the Pan-Arab approach in Ashrafieh

The Pan-Arab approach and its practices were not embraced universally, however. Opposition from outside the church – especially from foreign churches and aid organizations – was the subject of Chapter Four of this thesis. This section addresses opposition from within the congregation itself, describing the ways that church members expressed concerns about the Pan-

⁴²² Chatty, *Syria*, 198.

Arab approach within the life of this congregation. These concerns centre around the implications of the church's relationship with Western churches in the Middle East and abroad.

First, the renegotiation of the relationship with Western churches was a debate internal to the community. As already demonstrated in Chapter Four, the clergy explicitly discouraged emigration to Western countries. This stance included the many Syrian and Iraqi refugees who lived in Ashrafieh, even though they could not legally work and were politically hampered from establishing new lives in Jordan. The Ashrafieh priest in particular frequently discouraged interest in the West, noting instead the richness and importance of the Middle Eastern heritage. Not everyone was convinced, however. The last of the Syrian Christians who had been actively involved in St Paul's emigrated just weeks before my arrival in 2018. While many Iraqi Christians participated regularly in all aspects of St Paul's ministry, and many expressed affection for the church and its leaders, they regularly told me that their plans for the future rested on emigration outside of the region. The experience of one young family of Chaldean Catholics from Mosul epitomized this feeling. Normally regular in attending both church services and English classes, they had expressed for weeks their hope of soon receiving a visa to Australia. Indeed, the family's father was vocal in predicting that betrayal and displacement by Arab Muslims would soon spread from Iraq to Jordan. They were absent without explanation one week, and when they returned, the family said they had missed church because they were enmired in despair. Their last application for asylum in a Western country – they had made several – had been denied. They said they did not know how to pray for help in this matter anymore, because the results of their asylum application proved that God did not want to help them emigrate.⁴²³ This comment may be understood as a negative corollary to the concept of brokerage I introduced in Chapter Four. In their view – and they were not alone – every good or bad occurrence was tied directly to God's will for them, and so the decisions of the Australian bureaucracy became an indication of divine action in their lives. Moreover, the way that this Iraqi family intertwined their faith in God with a desire to leave the Middle East forever was common among the Iraqis, even though it meant opposing the church leaders to whom they otherwise showed deference. This disagreement about the option of emigration created tensions within the community. The Tuesday night gossip about the Iraqi family who had emigrated to Australia is one obvious example. On another level, the Ashrafieh priest told me that he discovered that several refugees had joined their congregation because it was Anglican, wrongly thinking that membership with

⁴²³ Unnamed Iraqi, conversation with author.

the Anglican communion would ensure them a successful visa application to the United Kingdom.

Second, another source of opposition came from Jordanian church members who rejected the idea that their Arab heritage inside the Middle East was more valuable than what wealthier countries and Western churches could offer. This became clear to me when I was approached by several Jordanian mothers who wanted me to start an English class for the children, or to privately tutor their children in English. I had become aware, however, that they had already made this request to the priest, who had declined, and so I tried to refer the matter back to him. I privately alluded to the issue in a later conversation with the priest, who sighed sadly. He expressed the belief that the churches in Jordan were well-provided for and could potentially make important Christian contributions, but he suggested that many would rather rely on others instead.

While most of the mothers who made this request simply sighed and let the matter drop, one woman did not, and it became clear that she was willing to challenge this otherwise-popular priest. While her family's attendance at church was infrequent, she participated in a church outing to historical and Christian sites in northern Jordan. Those attending filled two hired coaches with church members of all ages who saw the trip as a holiday, although the visits to evidence of past cultural greatness and local holy sites also suggested a Pan-Arab pride in the lands and history of the Middle East. Throughout the day, however, this woman complained about the actions of one Iraqi refugee family, suggesting to any who would listen that 'the Iraqis' – as she called them⁴²⁴ – were making the whole group late, or shouted across the bus with complaints to the group's leaders. To me, she spoke in English, although I spoke Arabic out of recognition that few others on the trip spoke English. She requested many details about my background and purpose in Jordan, although most in the congregation had heard such things months ago. She commented repeatedly that I was from America, asking rather pointedly what my standard of living was there as opposed to Jordan, as she again questioned my purpose in being there. She next began to request a children's English class at the church. She said that the local school's English instruction lacked native English speakers, but this skill was vital for the

⁴²⁴ This family had been attending this church regularly for some time. They were a recognized part of this community, and most other church members called them and all the other Iraqi refugees by their names. Indeed, this was the only occasion on which I heard anyone at this church describe individuals by their nationality in this way. Even those foreign to Jordan usually introduced themselves as being from a particular city or region in Iraq, Syria, or Egypt, for example, without mentioning the difference in nationality until conversation had progressed.

children's future employment, adding that it was my duty to serve the children. After I repeatedly demurred, she returned to speaking in Arabic to others on the coach. Discovering that I and another Jordanian couple were to be dropped off before the coach reached the church,⁴²⁵ she turned to the couple beside me, asking them precisely where they lived and, despite their protests, shouting loudly to the priest and bus driver that an additional stop, about a quarter mile from the planned one, must be made for the couple. They ought not be inconvenienced for the sake of these foreigners, she said repeatedly in Arabic.

These incidents demonstrate the presence of opposition to the church's leadership and the Pan-Arab approach. The mothers who wanted English classes saw outside help as essential to ensure their children's futures, and the Iraqi refugees also believed they must escape the region. They saw hope coming through migration to the West, and not from their Arab heritage and history in the Middle East. Likewise, the mother who objected to 'the Iraqis' on the church's trip was not convinced by the Pan-Arab vision of unity across national boundaries. She sought instead to paint them as foreigners, and presumably she opposed the significant Iraqi refugee presence at the church more broadly. Likewise, she objected to my presence in her church's congregation. As an American foreigner, she saw my role as helping and offering service to the church, but she was vocal in her objection to my participation as a member of the congregation, and certainly to my receiving what looked to her like special treatment. She objected to the inclusive approach of St Pauls, which incorporated other Arabs and foreigners alike.

The objections raised by the Jordanian mothers, along with the slightly more subtle desires of the Iraqi refugees to emigrate, push against the ideal of Middle Eastern Christianity that other Anglicans hoped to promote. Those who raised objections were expressing real concerns about the ability of the Middle East to meet their needs. This phenomenon is not new, nor a result of the recent refugee crisis. As Joseph Maila argued in 1998:

The constant concern shown by the European consuls for the Christian minorities, attested in numerous diplomatic documents, as well as the number of times they intervened on their behalf . . . turned them into political patrons of Europe, and made them extremely dependent psychologically on the West.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ Since the Jordanian couple resided near us, and none of us lived near the church itself, the priest had offered to stop the bus on its route briefly to let all four of us disembark. This would not add to the bus's journey but would save the four of us nearly an hour of travel.

⁴²⁶ Maila, 'The Arab Christians', 40.

This dependence was demonstrated in part by the despair of the Iraqi family whose last hopes for emigration to the West had just been lost. It was expressed more pugnaciously by the Jordanian mother who insisted that I, as an American living in Jordan, had a duty to improve her children's education. The broad assumption of the several mothers that English skills were the path toward future success for their children also suggested that the West was where they put their faith. As I argued earlier in Chapter Two, this attitude contrasted directly with that of Pan-Arabism. During the *Nahda*, Arab Christian leaders from across the Levant had argued that all Arabs – Christians and Muslims alike – were the heirs to a great civilization that had once tutored Europe. Pan-Arab leaders such as Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883), for example, claimed that the Arab civilization would soon recover both a love of learning and a prominent place on the world stage.⁴²⁷ The debate between these two approaches – pride in the Arab world and appreciation for its heritage versus dependence on Western intervention – represented an ongoing negotiation in this church's approach to refugees, and to its own future.

Pan-Arabism and neighbourly hospitality intertwined

While I divide them for analytical purposes, in the Ashrafiyah congregation, the traditions of Pan-Arabism and neighbourly hospitality could be identified dually within a single action. I offer two illustrations: First, one illustration of this tight intertwining on the ground may be seen in the voucher assistance I described in Chapter Four. Disgusted by the deleterious effects of food boxes and photographed assistance on the Ashrafiyah community, Al-Kopti had instead moved toward a voucher system. On the one hand, this clearly represented a preference for a neighbourly hospitality approach, which dismisses efficiency in favour of preserving the dignity of those served. Indeed, Jaber, the priest of the Latin Church in Marka, had helped to introduce the voucher system to this context. He told me that it gave Iraqi refugee families a 'fun treat', because fathers could take their children out for a normal shopping trip.⁴²⁸ Such regard for the dignity of not only individuals, but also families – and preserving the traditional role of refugee fathers as the family providers – points toward the preservation of family institutions within neighbourly hospitality.

On the other hand, Al-Kopti's substitution of vouchers for food boxes also reflects Pan-Arabist methods. Historically, Pan-Arab thinkers relied on tactics that reinvented foreign innovations without completely rejecting them. Pan-Arab thinkers admired Western education,

⁴²⁷ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 100.

⁴²⁸ Jaber, interview.

institutions, technology, and politics, but they hoped to reappropriate them for use inside the region. They celebrated both the historic achievements of Arab societies and the modern innovations of Europe, and they hoped to build upon both in a regional Pan-Arab rapprochement. The now-common rejections of foreign influence or social practices as inherently colonial or un-Islamic are more recent developments within the Middle East's political milieu. The Ashrafiyah approach instead echoed the Pan-Arab thinkers of an earlier era by renegotiating, rather than rejecting, Western innovations within the Middle East. By transfiguring a foreign practice to fit the region's own approach of neighbourly hospitality, this Arab congregation celebrated two of the traditions that lay within their heritage.

A second illustration of these two traditions in concert might be seen in the way that St Paul's was transformed through helping refugees. Over time, likeminded Jordanians and others joined St Paul's Church, including many who admired the outreach to refugees and wished to contribute. 'Our church is becoming a mixture of people', Al-Kopti said. 'We even have a German coming'.⁴²⁹ Fifty Syrian families participated in the congregation for a time, including two Muslim families and one Yazidi family. The Syrians had all departed by 2019 and been replaced by an almost equal number of Iraqi families. Even the Jordanians rarely had an Anglican or even Protestant background. 'I don't usually ask about denomination because I don't want to put up a wall', Al-Kopti explained. 'If you're a Christian, I don't care. You are a dear brother or a dear sister'. Without doubting his sincerity, I wondered how sustainable this strategy – one might call it a 'functional ecumenism' – would be in the long-term. While Cecilia and Bashara told me cheerfully that they had no objection to attending a Protestant church, despite their Latin and Syriac Orthodox backgrounds, the Iraqi refugees were quick to declare their loyalty to a different church, even as they actively participated in St Paul's services. Likewise, some of the other Anglican clergy expressed greater reticence to welcome such participation from non-Protestant Christians. This potential problem is, however, also a pitfall of Pan-Arabism, which has declined in part due to ineffective struggling against the national sentiments of Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and so on. In any case, the decision to deal with diversity through emphasizing shared Christian belonging and Arabic language set the Anglicans apart from the Latins in Marka, who incorporated their newcomers while celebrating their difference.

Likewise, linguistic diversity offered further challenges, and Al-Kopti said he had become embroiled in several misunderstandings because of differences between the Iraqi and Jordanian colloquial dialects of Arabic. To combat this challenge, Al-Kopti told me he intentionally

⁴²⁹ Al-Kopti, interview.

preached in a simplified version of classical Arabic, in an effort to communicate clearly with the Jordanian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Syrian, and even Egyptian members of this diverse congregation. Neighbourly hospitality was transforming this community in tangible ways, as national, religious, and even linguistic diversity required fresh approaches. To deal with these challenges, the church drew on Christian notions of cosmopolitanism and brotherhood, of course, but also on the ideal of a shared Arab heritage and language that spans the entire region. This reliance upon Pan-Arab ideals enabled Al-Kopti to preach in a language understandable to all, for example, and they helped to persuade him and other Jordanians that partnership was possible, even with people who spoke a language they could not completely understand.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that St Paul's Anglican Church in Ashrafieh was transformed through conscious welcome to refugees. The transformation and overall approach of this church was inspired and informed by reference to the heritage of Jordanian Christianity, as church members sought to enliven the long tradition of neighbourly hospitality, which they share with other Arabs, and also drew from the ideals of Pan-Arabism in both adapting foreign resources to suit their needs and welcoming fellow Arabs from across borders. Their approach includes all three features of neighbourly hospitality: they offered assistance, despite internal needs, as brokers in the name of a gracious God; they invited the participation and celebrated the contributions of those they helped; and they took care to strengthen the family institution, even when their programmes targeted women or children.

Notably, in considering together the approaches of the Marka and the Ashrafieh church, several similarities emerge. Both congregations were situated in poor urban areas whose relatively low cost of living attracted many refugees. Both belonged to some of the largest, worldwide Christian church networks, the Catholic Church and the Anglican communion. While much of the history, funding, and top-level leadership of these churches is European, these have some of the longest Middle East histories and strongest intra-Christian reputations outside of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Despite this denominational particularity, both of these congregations allowed and encouraged Christians from all traditions to participate in the life of the congregation and even partake of communion. Likewise, in both of these congregations, church leaders consciously chose to continue engagement with refugees several years after the initial crisis period, and they creatively worked to confront both resistance to refugees from local Christians and misunderstanding and even opposition from foreign Christians. They rationalized these actions using their understanding of Gospel texts (such as the Parable of the Good

Samaritan and the need to prioritize Christian witness over worldly pursuits), Christian tradition more broadly, and the particular situation of Christians in the Middle East. As I described in detail in Chapter Four, their actions constitute a distinctive, Middle Eastern theological approach to welcoming refugees that demonstrates both solidarity with and respect for the dignity of the refugees, without threatening the delicate local dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations.

St Paul's Church also shared with the Marka church certain dangers relative to their relationship with foreign Christians. The reality of the Anglican position is that, like the Catholics, their churches originated in Europe and still maintain a rich and theologically important network of contacts in the West and worldwide. As a result, many of their funding and educational opportunities were intertwined with Western institutions, even without a refugee crisis. Additionally, these churches were themselves the product of foreign missionary efforts. While they might disagree with the particular method or timing of the current missionaries, they must maintain a working relationship with the foreign missionary enterprise as a whole. The Anglicans are working to do this while also, through their own denomination's history within the Middle East, drawing upon centuries-old models for cooperation and hospitality. Their twin risks are that they appear too foreign and Western for Jordanian Muslims and too Arab and Middle Eastern to continue attracting support from abroad. In other words, their reliance on foreign church networks places them in a potentially tenuous situation, should Christians elsewhere ever withdraw their support completely.

The way that this church exemplified the Middle Eastern tradition of neighbourly hospitality is essential to their stability, however, and deserved further comment. Their reliance on the tradition of neighbourly hospitality helped this poor and dwindling congregation to not only continue its work while resentment of refugees flourished elsewhere, but also to grow and flourish. By utilizing a tradition that is local to their area, they flouted many humanitarian practices that had become common in Jordan. Notably, they insisted that donors to their church recognize that their money would help Jordanians and refugees alike. It also meant that those they assisted were primarily, although not exclusively, Christian. Finally, they consistently referred to refugees in need as 'families' – a practice I have copied in this study – and assisted them in that context, rather than seeking to meet the needs of individuals as such. Any of these points may attract critique and deserve some further consideration before I conclude this chapter. Most importantly, I note that neighbourly hospitality is not the only way to help someone, but it is a unique way. It is distinguished not by who is assisted, but how. Is their dignity safeguarded? Are they invited to participate with their hosts? Are families kept together?

These are the requirements of neighbourly hospitality, and such assistance requires an intimacy that may, in fact, be unwelcome to recipients whose faith differs from their hosts. As Siddiqui notes in her own experience as a recipient of such hospitality from a fellow Muslim family:

That we were all Muslims, albeit from slightly different cultural backgrounds, made the whole experience easier. We ate food which we knew to be *ḥalāl*, we prayed in similar ways and this helped the daily rhythm of a shared home. It reduced any unnecessary awkwardness, and while we did not become close friends, there was an ease created by simple shared principles and views.⁴³⁰

While Siddiqui, like most who enjoin hospitality upon the believer, urges a certain indifference to the person's identity, a willingness to offer hospitality even to the stranger, she also acknowledges the comfort of receiving from someone who is like you. The very intimacy of hospitality, while offering a way to cross borders, can sometimes mean that guest and host alike would prefer to minimize the number of borders they must cross. In describing with gratitude the kindness of strangers who invited her family into their home during a time of need, Siddiqui concludes, 'It seems to me, then, that at one level religion does matter in how one practises hospitality, that shared beliefs about food laws and other rituals enable the practical aspects of hospitality, making it easier to give and receive.'⁴³¹ The very intimacy of neighbourly hospitality, the fact that it requires both host and guest to participate together in shared institutions, can make further compromise prohibitively difficult. Furthermore, since it relies so heavily upon shared institutions – in this case, a church institution predominated – the long-term vitality of the institution providing aid becomes paramount. For this reason, I suggest, certain compromises that might seem unacceptable to other aid approaches become a necessary part of neighbourly hospitality. In turn, the practice of neighbourly hospitality sustains the church itself in an important way that could lend promise to this particular vision for the future of Jordanian Christianity.

⁴³⁰ Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam*, 221-222.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 223.

Concluding Chapter

I began this study with the lament of an Iraqi woman living in the impoverished former Christian centre of Jordan's capital. She told me of the hope she received from the idea that she could, as a refugee, offer hospitality and share with others.⁴³² Her sentiments were shared by a fellow Iraqi refugee participating in the Anglican congregation at St Paul's, who added, 'This business about counting people in numbers is a great mistake. There might be fifty people, but each is a person. Everyone has a story'.⁴³³ In a way, this study sought to explore that statement: both the idea that a refugee's dignity and need for place are harmed by the assumption that she or he has nothing to contribute to a new society, but also that the Jordanian host community 'has a story' that helps determine how they respond to refugees – and combat damage to their own position – in the long-term. My analysis took George Sabra's framework for the two types of Christians in the region as a starting point.⁴³⁴ In Part One of this study, I examined not only the current state of Jordanian Christian relations with local Muslims and Western Christians, but also I delved into the remembered history upon which those relationships were built. In Part Two, I demonstrated how this remembered history and relationships became the foundation for how they creatively reasserted, renegotiated, and reimagined their continuing 'story' alongside refugees. I suggest that this history is woven so tightly into the area's approach to migration that the fate of Jordan's Christians is impossible to untangle entirely from that of its refugees. When the Jordanian government and the international humanitarian regime – including both Christian and secular organizations – tried to alter the traditional response to Syrian and Iraqi refugees after 2011, tensions rippled throughout every aspect of Jordanian Christian life. For this reason, the story of how Jordanian Christians responded to refugees is also the story of why an Iraqi woman tired of hearing that she had nothing to give.

Middle Eastern Christian leadership – whether church-based or lay – is still searching for effective, broad-ranging responses to these and other related challenges. Many have continued to articulate the future of Christian-Muslim engagement – and the region's Christian presence more broadly – by appealing to historic narratives that offer a diminishing appeal to most of the region's inhabitants. This forces congregations on the ground to wrestle, alone or within their local networks, with the basic challenges to their ongoing presence in the region. Indeed, Joshua

⁴³² St Paul's Anglican Church, focus group.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Sabra, 'Two Ways of Being a Christian', 43.

Ralston concluded that the future of Middle Eastern Christianity rests on the answers to some of the earliest questions of Christian-Muslim coexistence:

What does it mean to be a Christian in Damascus or Jerusalem or Egypt in light of these radical social and political changes? . . . What are the biblical, liturgical, theological, and ritual resources within our tradition to exist, worship, and thrive here as we have for centuries? How do we engage with our Muslim neighbours?⁴³⁵

This study has sought to document and join this struggle to envision a future for the Middle East's Christians, both as a host community for refugees and within World Christianity. I have shown that under these difficult circumstances, and with answers to such questions remaining elusive, congregations on the ground provide dynamic and living models for engaging with these longstanding debates. I have identified a few of their 'biblical, liturgical, theological, and ritual resources' in this study: Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, Pan-Arabism, catholicity, sacred geography, and neighbourly hospitality. I have shown that living communities are creatively reimagining these traditions in opposition to others' claims that they have nothing to give. While each of the three approaches I described bears its share of strengths and weaknesses that merit further debate, their proactive attempt to engage with real challenges amid this vacuum of leadership deserves consideration. That these approaches are not always understood – or even recognized – by outsiders is evidence of the radical contextualization of these efforts.

In this study, I have argued that the historic relations that tie the Jordanian host community together are essential to how they respond to refugees. Furthermore, I have illustrated three ways that Christian congregations have creatively reformulated their relations with Muslims, other Christians, and refugees alike with reference to their heritage within the Middle East. Many of their reactive worries and proactive strategies are also, I believe, common among churches around the world, as is the essential understanding that a host community can only ever respond to refugees – in the long-term – by reemphasizing or revising the traditions that lie within their history. In this concluding chapter of the study, I first summarize these findings in greater detail, including a comparative analysis of the relative merits and shortfalls of the different approaches identified in Chapters Five through Seven. Next, I describe in greater detail the implications of this study. Since this project is interdisciplinary in method, I address both World Christianity – including scholars interested in Christian-Muslim relations and theology more broadly – as well as migration and refugee studies. Last, I finish with tangible

⁴³⁵ Ralston, 'Islam and Christianity', 160-161.

considerations and recommendations for interested Christian organizations and churches that engage with the Middle East, refugees, and hospitality more broadly.

Summary of the chapters

This study has investigated the response of Christians to the migration situation in Jordan since 2011. Importantly, since my research on the ground occurred in 2018 and 2019, I am reflecting not only on the immediate actions and reactions of a host community that admits large numbers of refugees, but also on the long-term effects of such a change on the institutions and relationships that define the host community itself. I have argued that Jordanian Christians were forced to respond not only to the arrival of large numbers of refugees, but also to the way that the refugee phenomenon weakened their own position by straining the socio-political traditions upon which the Christian minority and migrants both rely. I have documented the response of Jordanian Christians to both these issues and demonstrated that they do so in a holistic manner that seeks to strengthen or even renegotiate these historic traditions for the gain of refugees and interfaith relations alike. For this reason, I organized the chapters within Part One of this study to reflect the two essential relationships that, according to Sabra, help determine the Middle Eastern Christian outlook: Chapters One and Two present relations with Arab Muslims, while Chapters Three and Four explore relations with other Christians.

Chapter One presented a focused history of Jordanian Christian-Muslim relations. I uncovered the link between Jordan's famous interfaith coexistence and its longstanding toleration for migration and refugees. In doing so, I introduced three traditions that form the building blocks of this dynamic on the ground: Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, and Pan-Arabism. In Chapter Two, however, I offered the results of fieldwork in Jordan to explain why – in response to questions about refugees and hospitality – Jordanian Christians so frequently responded with concerns about Jordanian Muslims. While Jordan's commitment to interfaith coexistence appeared stronger than that of Syria or Iraq at the time, I learned that reliance upon many of the same traditions within Christian-Muslim relations, as well as certain Jordanian policies that commodify rather than embrace refugees, were undermining the dynamic of Christian-Muslim relations in Jordan. In response, many worried Jordanian Christians were turning hopefully to their longstanding ties with foreign Christian networks. In Chapter Three, I presented a selective history of intra-Christian relations in the region to demonstrate how the collective memory of Middle Eastern Christians has created the ongoing expectations that influence their relations with Western Christians. These may be understood as catholicity and sacred geography. Furthermore, I also described how the concept of neighbourly hospitality

emerged from my fieldwork in Jordan. While I believe this to be a local practice with deep roots in the region's shared Abrahamic tradition, it also became an opportunity for historic partnership among Christians from the Middle East, Europe, and North America. In Chapter Four, however, I reported signs of growing tension along each of these traditions, arguing that foreign aid practices among many Christian networks were effectively undermining the historic intra-Christian relationship in ways that threatened Jordanian Christian institutions. I also highlighted the promise of neighbourly hospitality as a contextually grounded approach to assisting refugees that can also strengthen key institutions and relationships with the Jordanian host community.

I devoted Part Two of this study to exploring the ways that different segments of Jordan's Christian community articulated both the challenges and opportunities of long-term migration. I have argued that Jordanian Christians responded to refugees by reimagining and renegotiating six traditions from their heritage: Arab hospitality, local cosmopolitanism, Pan-Arabism, neighbourly hospitality, sacred geography, and catholicity. I frame this analysis using the traditions and heritage of Jordanian Christianity that I have already established in this study. Mariz Tadros suggests that the future of Middle Eastern Christianity depends largely on the ability of lay Christians to preserve and utilize their heritage. As they have done before, Tadros writes, Christian communities draw upon their histories to reimagine their futures: 'The preservation of the spiritual, cultural and social living heritage of Christians draws on the repertoire of stories, practices and historical narratives of what it is to be a Christian'.⁴³⁶ Such a heritage is, again, precisely what I have endeavoured to articulate in this study, and their creative deployment of these resources is the focus of Chapters Five through Seven of this study.

In Chapters Five to Seven, I presented three individual churches as case studies that exemplify these various traditions in turn, demonstrating that some traditions have simply been reemphasized, while others have been redrawn to reflect changing dynamics in Jordan and across the Middle East. Representing three different denominations, or church families, these churches each offer a different approach not only to responding to the long-term refugee crisis, but also to the challenges identified in Chapters Two and Four of this thesis. They have not simply responded to refugees; they have also been transformed by their presence in important ways. I argue that these approaches constitute creative paths toward Christian-Muslim and host/refugee coexistence in Jordan.

⁴³⁶ Mariz Tadros, 'The Future of Christianity in North Africa and West Asia' (441-452) in *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia* ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Mariz Tadros, and Todd M. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 451.

First, I consider the Latin congregation in Marka that I analysed in Chapter Five. I argued that the Latin Catholic Church of St Mary has consciously chosen to welcome and incorporate Iraqi refugees in a manner that reaffirms and renegotiates the longstanding practice of local cosmopolitanism for a changing context. I demonstrated that this congregation renewed the vision of local cosmopolitanism by utilizing Western support through the tradition of catholicity. The Latin Church in Marka displayed great openness to foreign Christians, both as individuals and within aid organizations. Camera-crews regularly observed and interrupted even the children's classroom activities, which in turn were funded and assisted by private Christian initiative. Disagreements among church leaders and Western aid organizations were not permitted to derail either the church's efforts or the cordial working relationships that had been cultivated for years already. At the same time, the church's leadership made frequent visits to Western countries to secure funding, visit family, and build a rich network of international contacts. The many Iraqi refugees who attended the church studied English and computer programming, all with encouragement to emigrate permanently to a Western country in the near future. Simultaneously, careful attention to the dignity of the refugees being served and to the feelings of poor Jordanians – including by celebrating different contributions in way that reflects local cosmopolitanism – helped to make this approach viable as a long-term strategy.

Second, I offered a case study of an Eastern Orthodox Church in Amman in Chapter Six. I argued that this church responded to refugees and growing instability in Jordan by asserting themselves as hosts within a framework of Arab hospitality and claiming their essential significance to shared Christian claims to sacred geography in the region. In contrast to the Marka congregation, most Orthodox Christians maintained a cautious distance from foreign Christians. No foreign-funded or even foreign-influenced activities operated within the church. Even when the Patriarchate of Jerusalem formally partnered with Western aid organizations, tensions were frequent and cooperative relationships were few.⁴³⁷ Surprisingly, emigration and visits to the West were frequent, but these seemed mostly to increase the Orthodox sense of alarm and suspicion against the aid organizations who had arrived in large numbers since 2011. In fact, the association between these Western groups and the refugees became so strong that many Orthodox developed a strong reaction against hospitality to Arab refugees. Their desire to assert themselves as native hosts who could choose whether or not to tolerate Jordanian

⁴³⁷ This reality affected the way that I performed field research in Amman. On a personal level, I was surprised when longstanding friends in the congregation diminished or halted our contact, and my husband was repeatedly asked to prove that he was truly an American Orthodox Christian. Despite several efforts and the help of friends, I was granted only one interview with an Orthodox priest.

Muslims, foreign Christians, and Arab refugees suggests a real concern that their unique contributions were disrespected by all these groups. Furthermore, Orthodox appeals to sacred geography reflect centuries-old, but still-unresolved, tensions between Eastern and Western Christianity that will likely continue to burden any regional interventions by Europeans and North Americans – whether Christian or secular – with suspicions about legitimacy and motive.

Third, Chapter Seven presented a case study of St Paul's Anglican Church in Ashrafieh. I argued that this church represents a living model of neighbourly hospitality that justifies an ethic of diverse assimilation through a Christian retelling of Pan-Arab ideals. In some respects, this model might be seen as a middle way between the approaches of the Latins in Marka and the Orthodox church. In Ashrafieh, a diverse congregation welcomed Arabs from across the Middle East, as well as several American and British members. In this congregation, many Jordanians were friendly and open to relationships with foreigners, both Arab and Western alike. The church sponsored its own English class for adult members, and they had done so before my arrival. Christian groups from the West often presented cultural, instructional, or medical classes and performances either at the church or within its purview. The leadership was proud to maintain its Anglican identity and cooperated regularly with foreign representatives of it. This hospitality was not offered without discretion, however. Foreigners needed a personal or institutional introduction to enter the life of the church. While the church's leadership had travelled extensively, they discouraged emigration to the West. Likewise, Western aid groups received a sceptical response if their ideals and methods differed from the church's.

To conclude, each of these churches exemplifies a different approach not only to refugees, but also to the particular history and situation of Christianity in Jordan. In choosing to emphasize certain aspects of their heritage while renegotiating others, these churches are themselves transformed, and their future options change as well. Each approach relies differently on institutions within the region and outside it, and each prioritizes their ongoing relationships with Jordanian Muslims, refugees, the Hashemite government, Western churches, and fellow Middle Eastern Christians in different ways.

Case studies in dialogue

It should go without saying that all six of the traditions I introduced in Chapters One to Four might sometimes be observed within all three of these congregations. All three draw, after all, from the same broad and living tradition of Jordanian Christianity. Access to Jerusalem is not unimportant to the Anglicans, for instance, the Latin and Orthodox Christians recognized and

employed neighbourly hospitality, and so forth. I selected two for each congregation based on the strongest influences I observed, and on the overriding impressions left by my participation with each. From the genial relations among Christians of different traditions in Marka, I experienced catholicity in a new and unexpected way. Among the Orthodox, I came to understand what it meant to value and benefit from holy places. In Ashrafieh, I saw hospitality – neighbourly hospitality – in action as a living practice. Likewise, among the Anglicans, I gained a sense of the ways that the Pan-Arabism idealism I had studied in books had once held the power to move entire societies. The Orthodox Christians demonstrated the potential of Arab hospitality as an offensive rhetorical weapon. The Latin Christians of Marka demonstrated the possibilities of incorporation with difference, rather than assimilation, as a strategy for coping with the diversity offered by hospitality. What is more important than the way that each congregation exemplified certain traditions, however, is the way that each expanded upon them. From a creative engagement with their own traditions, I perceive not only a model for Middle Eastern Christianity, but also a reality with tangible implications for churches around the world. In this section, I briefly consider all three case studies in conversation with one another as representing distinctive models for both the Christian presence in the Middle East and a church's response to refugees more broadly.

The case of Marka demonstrates the need for churches engaging with refugees to pool resources across ecclesiastical – and even transnational – borders. The congregation of Marka demonstrated remarkable spiritual and social creativity and resilience in the face of overwhelming need, but they could never have sustained so many refugees alone. Any attempt to do so risked the destruction of the original community. Financial need was not the only consideration, however. In order to intercede with the Jordanian government on behalf of Iraqi refugees, the Catholic bishops of Jordan sought diplomatic help from various transnational channels, including the Italian Council of Bishops and the Vatican ambassador, as well as representatives from Caritas already active in the region. Even after this diplomatic success, Catholic congregations across the country both shared the collective load of hundreds of refugees and appealed to every transnational source they could for support. To have acted without such broad-ranging support could have been futile or even damaging to delicate church-state relations. Of equal importance to this model was the way that Latin Christians in Marka engaged strategically with their many sources of support. Grateful but uncritical acceptance of all that outsider funders could offer might have overwhelmed the Jordanians and Iraqis alike. Leaders at this church were savvy enough, however, to turn this potential liability into a strength, as clean and uniformed refugees advertised the Marka approach positively to foreign visitors in every

movement, perhaps with moderate inconvenience, but no compromise to their dignity. The Latin congregation in Marka was a church that effectively drew from many wells without being swallowed up by a foreign fountain. Dealing productively with external support is essential to any congregation wishing to serve newcomers in the long term. In that sense, they exemplified creative use of both local cosmopolitanism and catholicity.

In one sense, of course, the Marka approach is the most dependent on foreign aid, which funded the Iraqi school, along with refugee employment and accommodation programmes. Such a dependency raises questions about internal sustainability, first and foremost, but also about the broader Jordanian complaints concerning global humanitarian aid. This is reflected by the awkward marriage of local cosmopolitanism – a multicultural practice with a specific trajectory within the Levant – with catholicity, which made them reliant on relations with churches outside the Levant. This was somewhat ironic, given the concerns that many other Christians expressed about the effects of migration and foreign interference on their own institutions, including missionary efforts to draw refugees and others away from the traditional churches. The Latin Christians in Marka, by contrast, welcomed foreign contributions from a myriad of sources, maintaining personal contact with everyone from private Canadian Christian donors who gave money to the school, Iraqi Christian networks in the United States, and professional aid groups who yielded to the demands of these Marka Christians. Almost uniquely, the influx of foreign resources that came from largely Christian sources enabled the success of the Marka approach, even as it threatened to overwhelm many of Jordan's other Christian institutions. In some ways, this constituted a dangerous marriage, as they were trying to create long-term resources and institutions with short-term, crisis-motivated funding. It required them to urge the refugees to emigrate, not necessarily because they did not welcome their presence, but because their own resources for serving them were so unstable. This is a controversial, although not uncommon, position within Middle Eastern Christianity and in any church that might wish to emulate their example of hospitality.⁴³⁸

The Marka Christians succeeded in managing this mixed blessing more effectively than most by turning their entire church complex into a kind of advertisement for their approach. That strategy came at the cost of comfort for many members of this church, as it required a

⁴³⁸ I have commented elsewhere on the controversial nature of the emigration debate among Jordanian Christians. Lucy Schouten, 'Why Church Leaders Discourage Christians from Leaving Jordan: An Anti-Emigration Perspective', *Exchange* (Leiden, Netherlands) 49, no.3-4, (2020): 339–57, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1572543X-12341573>.

‘discipline’ that was not always convenient and might have scared some local Jordanians away. More importantly, it tied the church to the shaky fortunes of international interest, which could vanish overnight if – and when – foreign Christians shifted toward the next global crisis. Would that spell the end of the Marka Christians and their hospitality toward refugees? On the whole, I think not. There is a chance that Jordanian politics would respond to such an occurrence with an isolationist turn. If that happened, Jordanian society would be forced to reckon, first and foremost, with the people living in their midst. Other, intra-regional, funding sources for impoverished refugees might then appear. Better yet, the attitudes and policies that currently entrap refugees within a state of total dependence might loosen, giving them a fighting chance to contribute more broadly to Jordanian society and thus create a new and more sustainable life in the region. Would the Marka approach prove able to adapt to such a reality? Their biggest challenge would be to strengthen their own and the refugees’ relations with local Muslims. Having done so, however, the Iraqi refugees who, for the most part, fled a status of relative prosperity, could likely compete in the Jordanian milieu without undue difficulty. By prioritizing the contributions of newcomers through local cosmopolitanism, and by dealing constructively with diversity through a reinvigorated sense of catholicity, the Marka approach offers a strategy for helping refugees with truly long-term possibilities.

By contrast, the Orthodox approach does not rely on foreign funding. Although they receive some donations, these are used for the kind of far-flung aid work that does little to the life of the church itself. Their Christmas and Easter baskets, their generous scholarships to refugee children at Orthodox schools, and their general strategy of quiet giving to the needy within their circles is self-sustaining. Importantly, however, emigration of Jordanians and refugees from such congregations was still a constant threat to the long-term presence of this church. While leaders did not advocate for emigration in the same way as the Marka church, neither did they present a compelling enough response to Jordan’s various problems to make emigration less appealing. One could argue that such a response is beyond the resources of a single church to combat, that it would require a broader national or regional change, but it remains a concern nonetheless. Furthermore, the apathy of many Orthodox Christians toward the situation generally, and this church’s extreme reliance on Hashemite goodwill, given the government’s failure – thus far – to reassure the nation’s Christians in the wake of ISIS, all raise questions about its long-term viability.

In considering together the approaches of the Marka and the Ashrafieh church, several similarities emerge. Both congregations were situated in poor urban areas whose relatively low

cost of living attracted many refugees. Both belonged to some of the largest worldwide Christian church networks: the Catholic Church and the Anglican communion. While much of the history, funding, and top-level leadership of these churches is European, these have some of the longest Middle East histories and strongest intra-Christian reputations outside of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Despite this denominational particularity, both congregations allowed and encouraged Christians from all traditions to participate in the life of the community and even partake of communion. Likewise, in both congregations, church leaders consciously chose to continue engagement with refugees several years after the initial crisis period, and they creatively worked to confront both resistance to refugees from local Christians and misunderstanding from foreign Christians. As I described in detail in Chapter Four, their actions constitute a distinctive, Middle Eastern theological approach to welcoming refugees that demonstrates both solidarity with and respect for the dignity of refugees.

The concept of neighbourly hospitality is one of the unique contributions of this study. It makes the Ashrafieh model for assisting refugees tremendously resilient to outside circumstance. Furthermore, I believe that the Ashrafieh approach to neighbourly hospitality offers a model to churches around the world that wish to strengthen their own responses to the needy and strangers among them. This is truly one sense in which Middle Eastern Christians have something important and unique to offer Christians around the world. I have demonstrated already its deep roots within Christianity's oldest and most broadly applicable traditions, but also my concern that few studies of hospitality offer sufficient practical detail to make its application possible. In that sense, this study has sought to offer a living model for an ancient and occasionally forgotten practice.

Implications for scholarship

In the first four chapters of this study, I endeavoured to describe the Jordanian Christian identity in terms of how historic resources affect present-day possibilities. This is one way to identify, in a scholarly way, the continuing influence of a living tradition within Middle Eastern Christianity. I anticipate this finding would have value to other scholars seeking to understand Jordan from a World Christianity perspective; indeed, I expect that elements of this analysis would be relevant to studies of Christianity in Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and perhaps beyond.

I suggest this study offers further implications to World Christianity beyond the Middle East, however. Andrew F. Walls has written forcefully of the processes that – in perception

though not in actuality – identified Christianity entirely with European history and traditions. He writes that for much for the second millennium:

Christianity was overwhelmingly a Western religion and indubitably the religion of the West, so much so that for centuries the term “Christendom” – which is simply another word for Christianity – was equated with Europe. Europe *was* Christianity, Christianity territorially expressed. . . . Christianity has moved within a century or so from being a Western religion and the religion of the West to becoming a principally non-Western religion.⁴³⁹

One of the major aims of any study within World Christianity is, therefore, to correct this false perception within scholarly and Christian understandings.⁴⁴⁰ While this aim is often achieved by explorations of authentic Christian expression among recently established churches, this study has instead sought Christian authenticity from its most ancient domains. From this exploration, I have recovered a form of hospitality which, in modern scholarship, might appear to demarcate a ‘spiritual geography’ exclusive to Islam,⁴⁴¹ and my deployment of scholarly resources has largely reflected that reality. What I have discovered through fieldwork, however, is that the practice of neighbourly hospitality – including its theological grounding in divine beneficence and the God/human relationship – is as essentially Christian, if not more so, than it is Islamic. If this practice appears ‘Middle Eastern’ or ‘Arab’ to Christians from other climes, that is only because it has been well-preserved within the living traditions of the world’s most ancient Christianity.

I do not intend this study to provide scholarly reflections for World Christianity alone, however. Speaking to a migration studies perspective, I note that it was necessary for me to clarify the relevant historical traditions of the Jordanian host community before identifying continuity and change with the local and global response to refugees since 2011. Likewise, I argue that it is impossible to understand the long-term ramifications of a migration crisis on a host community without a detailed knowledge of that community’s identity, or rather, the

⁴³⁹ Andrew F. Walls, *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2017) 50.

⁴⁴⁰ Recent collections that cover the issue of migration within World Christianity include the following: Afe Adogame, Raimundo C. Barreto, and Wanderley Pereira da Rosa, eds. *Migration and Public Discourse in World Christianity*. World Christianity and Public Religion Series (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2019). Peter C. Phan, ed. *Christian Theology in the Age of Migration: Implications for World Christianity* (London: Lexington Books, 2020).

Susanna Snyder, Joshua Ralston, and Agnes M. Brazal, eds. *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁴⁴¹ Isotalo, ‘Fear Palestinization’, 68.

relationships that ground it within a society and define its resources. I further argue that this prerequisite will prove crucial for any host community thus affected. While the immediate aftermath of a large-scale forced displacement demands the greatest share of human drama, and migration and refugee studies as growing fields have laudably devoted tremendous attention to the coping resources of Arab migrants in new contexts,⁴⁴² it is the traditions of the host community – and the way that they creatively reimagine, undermine, or stultify those traditions in their ongoing life with migrants – that determines how both fare in the long-term. The long-term survival of the host communities, such as Jordan, that will almost certainly continue to host the vast majority of the world’s refugees,⁴⁴³ deserves and requires greater attention from any organization that claims an interest in migrant welfare.

Theological and practical implications of neighbourly hospitality

It may be useful to recall an insight from the Eastern Catholic leader, Father Bassam Shahatit, gained through years of observing and orchestrating the response to a refugee crisis on his native soil: ‘When we enter into competition [with other Christians] we lose force’.⁴⁴⁴ The humanitarian response to refugees in Jordan was a competitive setting, and the critiques I recounted from Jordanian Christians reflect that reality, even though many dislike it. This study has aimed to document the perspective of a host community – Jordanian Christians – not a professional humanitarian response, but I did conduct formal interviews with many of the loosely Christian organizations they criticized. One told me frankly that emigration of refugees and Christians generally – which I have demonstrated to be an essential and contentious issue among Jordanians and refugees alike – had never come up in leadership discussions. Another – who had

⁴⁴² Relevant studies include the following:

Andreas Schmoller, ed., *Middle Eastern Christians and Europe: Historical Legacies and Present Challenges* (Vienna: Lit, 2018).

Naures Atto, *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora: Identity Discourses among the Assyrians/Syriac Elites in the European Diaspora* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011).

Lise Paulsen Galal, Alistair Hunter, Fiona McCallum, Sara Lei Sparre, and Marta Woźniak-Bobińska, ‘Middle Eastern Christian Spaces in Europe: Multi-sited and Super-diverse’, *Journal of Religion in Europe* 9 (2016): 1-25.

Fiona McCallum, ‘Shared Religion but Still Marginalized Other: Middle Eastern Christians’ Encounters with Political Secularism in the United Kingdom’, *Journal of Church and State* 61/2 (2019): 242-261.

Alistair Hunter, ‘Staking a Claim to Land, Faith and Family: Burial Location Preferences of Middle Eastern Christian Migrants’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37 no.2 (2016): 179-194.

Yvonne Haddad and Joshua Donovan, ‘Good Copt, Bad Copt: Competing Narratives on Coptic Identity in Egypt and the United States’, *Studies in World Christianity* 19 no.3 (2013): 208-232.

Sargon Donabed, ‘Neither “Syriac-speaking” nor “Syrian Orthodox Christians”: Harput Assyrians in the United States as a Model for Ethnic Self-Categorization and Expression’, in *Syriac in its Multi-Cultural Context*, ed. Herman Teule, et al. (Louvain: Peeters, 2017), 361-371.

⁴⁴³ ‘Global Trends’, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7>.

⁴⁴⁴ Shahatit, interview.

at least thought about the issue – spoke disparagingly of all things Jordanian and explained how its own programs aimed to inculcate American customs and media to the refugees who would soon emigrate. This was a serious decision, in view of the numerical likelihood that most refugees are likely to remain in the Middle East for life. Representatives of a third group – whose operatives came and went on eighteen-month stints, spoke no Arabic, and received all their direction from an office in the United States – expressed surprise to hear that Jordanian churches were involved with refugees in any way. When I mentioned the parameters of the response I have described in this study, one suggested that their approach was superior to that of the Jordanian churches because it assisted without reference to the refugee’s faith.⁴⁴⁵ Indeed, they expressed surprise that Jordanian churches could see any difference between Christians and Muslim refugees, or that Christian refugees might demonstrate agency in preferentially seeking help from an Arabic-speaking church. None of these groups, I conclude, were trying to damage a centuries-old intra-Christian relationship, since they saw no such relationship as existing. This third group in particular expressed displeasure with Jordanian Christian requests for partnership because, quite simply, they did not believe that such a partnership had historical or theological validity.

By contrast, however, an American representative from another organization that was engaged in a deeper relationship with a Jordanian Protestant church noted these challenges:

The Westerner has one set of expectations and methods in his/her head (often quite task-focused and linear) and the Jordanian has quite another (often quite relational and circular). The Jordanian may get ten minutes into a conversation about the refugee's cousins back in Syria and the Westerner will be banging his head against the wall saying, “Hey, we only got twenty minutes left for this visit, and we haven't even begun filling out this form that we gotta fill out.” In terms of hospitality the Jordanian might be slowly sipping his coffee and saying “God bless your hands” whereas the Westerner has already downed the cup (and the coffee grounds!) without even saying thank you.⁴⁴⁶

This rather more reflective response to the challenge of giving meaningful assistance to others from foreign soil highlights the highly contextual nature of neighbourly hospitality. Again, partnership with local institutions can mitigate the pitfalls caused by lack of contextualized

⁴⁴⁵ This issue has received scholarly debate, especially in ongoing considerations of the secular framework. See: Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, *Faith, Secularism & Humanitarian Response* (New York: Palgrave, 2015).

⁴⁴⁶ Morris, email to author, 4 August 2020. This individual has been assigned a pseudonym because he asked to be identified solely as an American who has worked with Arab churches in Jordan on refugee aid and other projects.

expertise, but it is harder and slower. I argue, however, that it could serve as a useful corrective to many of the difficulties for Jordanian Christians that I described in this study. Refugees have been coming to Jordan for years and have largely reinforced the functioning of the social order in which they found support. Yet what has happened since at least 2011 has helped to erode the long-term viability of Jordan's pluralistic character. This is not to argue that the approach has no value, but rather to express concern that it is doing real damage to the very social fabric on which these refugees will likely depend for years after these organizations have parachuted off to the next exotic setting deemed a 'crisis' by the headlines back home.

In pointing toward the real potential for harm associated with the mainstream humanitarian approach in Jordan, I hope mainly to emphasize the seriousness with which anyone should consider work performed in the name of Christianity in an unfamiliar context. I would not wish to deny that the war in Syria, the tragic breakdown of law and order in Iraq, and the continuing disfunction of Arab politics are all real and contributing problems for refugees and Jordanians alike, albeit problems lying well outside the scope of this study.

Christian-Muslim studies

Having considered the interventions of outsiders to the issues under study, I next turn to actions of non-Christian actors within the region, and especially to the implications of this study for considerations of Christian-Muslim relations. The regionwide threat of a radical Islamic eruption – raised in its most dramatic form by ISIS – unsettles Christians in Jordan even as it displaces them in Iraq or murders them in Egypt. While Egyptian and Iraqi politics are outside their control, and with the full recognition that any government must answer to even the most extreme among its population, it is troubling to see how little the Hashemites have managed to reassure Jordanian Christians. Theological treatises, published in Washington, DC, are not without value, but they seem to have had little effect on Jordanians of either faith. If the Hashemites care about maintaining the slice of worldwide Christian-Muslim relations that does lie firmly within their power, as they have publicly declared repeatedly in the *Amman Message* or *A Common Word* invitation, then one would hope that reassuring measures to sustain the longstanding harmony of Jordanian Christian-Muslim relations could be created.

Of course, certain measures have already been taken. The protests of popular support for Jordanian churches that followed the 2017 Palm Sunday church bombings in Egypt were a

laudable grassroots effort.⁴⁴⁷ Likewise, high-level interfaith engagements, often centred around a Christian holiday or Jordan's own initiative of a World Interfaith Harmony Week have their place and should certainly continue. It is difficult, however, to see significant value in the security checks and metal detectors set up by Jordanian police outside churches at Christmas and Easter services. Comments about such measures were common during my interviews and conversations in early 2018; they appeared mostly to excite already frayed nerves.

In summary, this study establishes fruitful areas of inquiry for those interested in Christian-Muslim relations, whether within World Christianity, theology, Migration Studies, or another discipline. The concerns I raised about Jordan's Christian-Muslim dynamic may attract controversy, although they are far from unique within the region. Unfortunately, the real difficulties that many Muslims have faced in Europe and North America have long been used to justify the ever-declining state of Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle East. To those who would critique my conclusions on such grounds – and thus ignore the red herring to which they appeal – I clarify my concerns as follows: I do not believe that the widespread economic, political, and social problems that afflict all levels of society in the Middle East are dangerous solely, or even disproportionately, to its Christians. What is clear, however, is that societies within the region are increasingly turning to a particular interpretation of Islam as both a present balm for real suffering and as the starting point for social participation in the future. This excludes Christians from these wider dialogues within their societies, leaving them trapped within the same problems that are breeding desperation among their Muslim neighbours. Furthermore, when these shared problems reach a crisis point – as they have already done, since 2011, in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt – the region's Christians have become the targets of violent recrimination for the problems from which they themselves are suffering. Rather than cooperating as equal – or even subordinate⁴⁴⁸ – partners in resolving such setbacks, Christians are led to believe that Christian-Muslim coexistence is now impossible. Surely advocates for Muslim participation in Western contexts would not wish to promote such an ideal? In any case, both Christians and Muslims in the region, who are heirs to a rich tradition of Arab hospitality across

⁴⁴⁷ Suzanna Goussous, 'Muslim youth take initiative to guard churches as Easter celebrated', *Jordan Times*, 15 April 2017. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/muslim-youth-take-initiative-guard-churches-easter-celebrated>

⁴⁴⁸ This point is not to advocate for unequal civic participation on the basis of faith, but rather, I simply wish to acknowledge that this has been the region's socio-political reality for most of the last millennium.

faiths,⁴⁴⁹ deserve better than the heedless attempt to stifle constructive dialogue by inserting context-specific debates into unrelated spheres.

Considerations for churches

I have sought to delineate the implications of my findings for scholars from several areas of study. At the same time, I have always been conscious that this analysis emerged from the lived reality and pragmatic concerns of individual church congregations. With such churches in mind, I next offer several considerations that I believe to be relevant not only to their specific Jordanian context, but also to churches around the region and world.

Dealing with the diversity that hospitality brings

One interesting commonality among the two approaches that engaged most enthusiastically with refugees – the Latins in Marka and the Anglicans in Ashrafieh – is the extent to which catholicity and unity among Christians became paramount. Church leaders articulated intra-Christian unity in slightly different ways within their congregations. This would be expected from church leaders drawing from two different theological traditions of Roman Catholicism and Anglican Protestantism, and, as I noted in Chapters Five and Seven, it also reflects two different sets of needs and resources. In both cases, however, refugees from various churches sought and received real Christian fellowship and pastoral support from different church families, without yielding up their different ecclesiastical identities. The Latins arguably did a rather better job of accounting for and justifying the challenges that this situation provoked, but both congregations sought to unify Christian diversity by appealing to mutually similar Christian needs and principles and, in some ways even more importantly, by focusing their activities and energy on the promise of a shared Christian future in their local context. When I had the opportunity to question some of these Iraqi refugees about this situation, they neither evaded discussions of real denominational difference nor denied the availability of more denominationally suitable churches in Jordan. Rather, they pointed to the specific approach and activities of their chosen church as a draw, while reemphasizing the importance of their opportunity for Christian worship, pastoral support, and fellowship. I wonder, in part, whether this finding could point toward a unique characteristic of Iraqi Christianity, perhaps arising from the extreme difficulty of the historic Christian situation in that ancient context. This, however, is an investigation for other scholars.

⁴⁴⁹ One of the foremost scholars to bring this historical reality to modern attention is Sidney F. Griffith. See: Griffith, *Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*.

What I wish to highlight in this study is the efficaciousness – or perhaps necessity – of a functional ecumenism in the practice of Christian hospitality toward those in great need.

Is this necessity occasioned only by the extreme minority of the Christian situation in Iraq and Jordan? This is one possible explanation, but it is worth noting that such ecumenism is not universal among Jordanians. Indeed, as I demonstrated in Chapter Six, many Orthodox Christians closed denominational ranks in response to these same problems. I suspect that a deeper principle is at work here. I observe that the congregations that were able to engage deeply with hospitality toward refugees relied on place as an organizing principle, rather than personal or tribal theological belief and differentiation. I demure; this should not be read as an unqualified rejection of Christianity's denominational status quo. After all, Jordanian Catholics summoned the resources to change the Jordanian government policy toward refugees precisely by marshalling the transnational diplomatic and financial resources found within the world's largest Christian network. Likewise, the separate theological traditions represented within these three case studies – and more than these three exist, of course – offer rich resources for Christian ecclesiology and life that may prove differently useful to the fulfilling of a church's mission to its context. What is clear, however, is that there is something efficacious in the, admittedly ad hoc, system of ecclesiastical differentiation practiced in the Anglican and Latin congregations I studied. They welcomed Christians within one body based on their shared geographic location at the time, with all the distinctive challenges and social characteristics that geographic similarity engenders. They were cautious, meanwhile, in admitting those outside their region into fellowship, and they welcomed transnational partnership only after ascertaining – through personal relationship – that their separate interests could coincide in a unity of faith. This enabled them to benefit from the potential of transnational Christian networks without compromising the integrity of their efforts or – as was demonstrated sadly in the Orthodox case study – by overburdening local congregations with international problems that sapped the energy needed to meet the strangers at their doorstep. Such an approach to the inevitabilities of Christian difference arguably has deep roots in the region and in the traditions of Christianity more broadly, and I suggest that even Christians under less intense duress may benefit from considering it.

Intra-Christian cooperation in aid work

The Orthodox model demonstrates the essential role of mutual contribution within the relationships that sustain a host community. Because these Orthodox Christians fear their contributions might be ignored by Jordanian Muslims and foreign Christians, they strive to assert

their importance in ways that sometimes negate the pro-refugee aims of foreign Christians in Jordan. This model also hints at the relative insignificance of financial resources within such community relationships. While funding from foreign groups and land grants from the Hashemite government constituted part of the reassurance that Orthodox Christians sought, they were far more concerned when these parties failed to acknowledge the significance of Jordan's historic and ongoing Christian presence. Of course, many of their anxieties originated in breakdowns within the worldwide Orthodox hierarchy, and the Orthodox model offers a cautionary note about the way that seemingly unrelated ecclesiastical problems can halt a church's mission to locals in need.

Another caution may be seen in the way that Christians cooperate with one another across transnational boundaries. Even well-meaning Christian organizations that intervene in the region with missionary, humanitarian, or peacebuilding aims may do little more than exacerbate centuries-old tensions with Arab Christians and Muslims alike if they fail to recognize the claims and complications of sacred geography. Fortunately, historical tradition also offers a promising path forward through strengthening and building shared institutions that meet local needs and various Christian aims. Grounding humanitarian aid in pre-existing Christian institutions, or even partnering with locals on the ground, requires a much greater investment of time and money than parachuting aid professionals into a crisis. It is, however, the only approach that enables outsiders to assist those in need without damaging their long-term prospects in the region.

Hospitality and Christian-Muslim relations

While it was beyond the scope of this study to explore, I suggest that neighbourly hospitality may also have broad implications for interfaith dialogue and comparative theology.⁴⁵⁰ While different churches seek to meet different needs with their own resources, any church can: first, respect the dignity of those being served by remembering that God is the ultimate source of all resources; second, welcome others to participate in the life of the church; and third, respect the integrity of pre-existing social ties. I do believe that neighbourly hospitality is part of Christianity's long, lived tradition, but not exclusively so. This study is about the Christian response to refugees, but Ann

⁴⁵⁰ Scholarly works that consider this use of hospitality include the following:

Fadi Daou & Nayla Tabbara, *Divine Hospitality: A Christian-Muslim Conversation* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2017).

Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017).

Joshua Ralston, 'Bearing Witness: Reframing Christian-Muslim Encounter in Light of the Refugee Crisis', *Theology Today* (Ephrata, Pa.) 74, no.1 (2017): 22–35.

Christin-Wagner, for example, has documented instances among Jordanian Muslims of what, at a distance, looks precisely like neighbourly hospitality.⁴⁵¹ Secular and quasi-Christian organizations surely could practice neighbourly hospitality, although current humanitarian models would make it difficult. Neighbourly hospitality depends and varies greatly on its context; it looks different among Muslims in the village of Zaatari in rural Jordan than it does at an Anglican church in a rundown neighbourhood of downtown Amman. Moreover, it is a way of life, not a profession, and it requires deeper roots a given time and place than a one-year stint launched in a foreign context would generally permit. Of course, as I mentioned above, partnership can resolve many of these obstacles and pitfalls.

Churches that wish to engage pragmatically with Muslim refugees could safely follow the example of St Paul's Church in Ashrafieh: they first determined the needs of these refugees through extensive personal contact and prayer within the refugee's own home; they next offered what limited resources they could in the form of invitations to participate in the life of the church, albeit with effort to meet the needs they had identified; they refused to separate 'the refugees' from 'the members' of their church in either worship or activities; but they were not unduly disappointed when those of other faiths either embraced or quietly declined key aspects of Christian life.

Final thoughts

Despite these many challenges, most of which lie far outside their ability to influence, Jordanian Christians can and often do respond tangibly to their situation on the ground. In presenting three case studies – each a different model for Christian life stemming from a different ecclesiological tradition – I have illustrated the variety and promise of this response. Middle Eastern Christians have creatively reimagined their own traditions in tangible ways that suggest present engagement and future longevity. Many continue to do so in the face of disruption from erstwhile allies and a refugee crisis that threatens to displace their own role in Jordanian society. In this study, I have merely assigned terms to theological and social-political traditions that were centuries in the making, but I hope that these six concepts might serve to articulate the living tradition of Jordanian Christianity, now and in the future.

⁴⁵¹ Wagner provides analysis on the way that Syrian refugees received tangible, informal assistance from their Jordanian cousins in the village of Zaatari – in sight of, but not inside – the well-known humanitarian camp of the same name. Ann-Christin Wagner, 'Week 4: Refugee Economies and Mobile Labour', course lecture, University of Edinburgh, 11 October 2018.

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