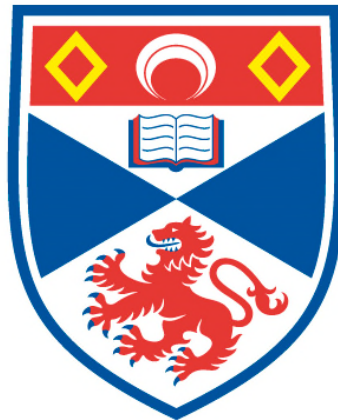


**HOPE UNEXPECTED:
AN ACCOUNT OF THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS'
ENCOUNTER WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES**

Marjorie G. Gourlay

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews**



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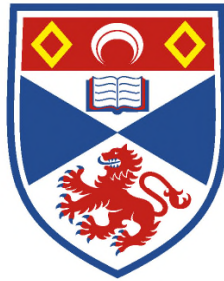
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Hope Unexpected:
An Account of the Lebanese Christians' Encounter
with Syrian Refugees

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University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews

25th September 2015

Abstract

This research explores the place of the Church in Lebanon and its response to the present Syrian refugee crisis. By means of interviews with a small number of Christian leaders in Beirut, this study narrates a current reality from a positive perspective and offers preliminary steps towards articulating a Christian response to the present political turmoil. Although historically and physically divided, the Lebanese churches are united in their readiness to respond with hospitality. In attending to basic human needs, offering water, food and shelter to those who until recently were considered enemies, Lebanese Christians have a powerful message of forgiveness and healing. Prompted by both Arab and Christian traditions, the Lebanese Christians are choosing hospitality and, in doing so, are finding unexpected hope. This study argues that the Lebanese Church as a whole can be seen as a positive contributor to the common good in both Lebanon and the Middle East, and as an example to western churches as they engage with the current migration crisis in Europe.

Note on Transliteration:

The Arabic transliteration used throughout is based on the system of the Oxford Journal of Arabic Studies, with some modifications. Arabic names or words will be written either in French or English spelling as they are most widely used, without diacritical markings. The prefix 'al-' will not be used after first mention or where it is not pronounced (for example Chadid instead of Shadeed, Hariri in place of Al-Hariri, and An-Nahar for Al-Nahar).

For
BEIRUT

بَلْ نَفْتَحُ أَيضاً فِي الضِّيقَاتِ عَالَمِينَ أَنَّ الضِّيقَ يُنْشِئُ صَبْرًا وَالصَّبْرُ تَرْكِيهٌ وَالتَّرْكِيهُ رَجَاءٌ
وَالرَّجَاءُ لَا يُخْزِي لَأَنَّ مُحَبَّةَ اللَّهِ قَدِ انْسَكَبَتْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا بِالرُّوحِ الْقُدُسِ الْمَعْطَى لَنَا.
رومية ٥: ٣-٥

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This research has emerged directly from my own experience and so it would not have been possible (or necessary) without the experiences, both joyful and painful, and the people, friends or otherwise, that shaped my time in Beirut. I am grateful to Prof. George Newlands, Dr. Richard Harvey and Rev. Colin Chapman for encouraging me to pursue further study; to my supervisor, Prof. Mario Aguilar, for his guidance and advice; to Church Mission Society for supporting me in this work and especially Catterline Community Church for their extraordinary love and generosity. I am also thankful to Sara Afshari, Dr. Deirdre McGovern and Rev. Dr. Nigel Peyton, Bishop of Brechin, for their encouragement and practical advice; to my mother and father for their patience; to Heather Tod for her knowledge of English and Alison Bell for her editor's eye. I am appreciative of all those in Beirut whose contributions were invaluable to this research and, most importantly, to the ladies of Ana Imra'a centre who welcomed me when I was a stranger and showed me true hospitality.

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Introduction

This research explores the place of the Church in Lebanon and its response to the present Syrian refugee crisis. By means of interviews with a small number of Christian leaders in Beirut, this study narrates a current reality from a positive perspective and offers preliminary steps towards articulating a Christian response to the present political turmoil. Although historically and physically divided, the Lebanese churches are united in their readiness to respond with hospitality. In attending to basic human needs, offering water, food and shelter to those who until recently were considered enemies, Lebanese Christians have a powerful message of forgiveness and healing. Prompted by both Arab and Christian traditions, the Lebanese Christians are choosing hospitality and, in doing so, are finding unexpected hope. This study argues that the Lebanese Church as a whole can be seen as a positive contributor to the common good in both Lebanon and the Middle East, and as an example to western churches as they engage with the current migration crisis in Europe.

The context

To describe Lebanon as either a successful, pluralistic, liberal society or as a conflict-ridden failed State is to simplify a very complex situation in which both of these aspects are to some degree true but neither absolute. Better described, perhaps, as a permanent balancing act, Lebanon navigates a precarious course between all the forces, internal and external, that continue to pull it in opposing directions. A long history of invasion, occupation, recurring conflict and war characterises the Middle

East and distinguishes it, to the outside observer, as a place of terror. Today there are daily reports on the violence in Egypt, Yemen, Iraq and Syria, which serve only to confirm the negative associations of that region. The Middle East has become synonymous with civil war, Islamic extremism, aggressive regimes and violent uprisings. In recent months more has been made of the plight of the Middle Eastern Christians in the media since the publication of explicit ISIS videos showing the execution of Coptic Christians in Egypt and the migration crisis in Europe. The recent BBC documentary “Kill the Christians” related stories of a rapidly declining Church in Palestine, Syria and Iraq.¹ It must be made clear, however, that the Christians are not the only people who are suffering and many Muslims are also living in fear for their lives but it is important the stories of the Christians are told in order to preserve their historical and contemporary significance in the region.²

Four years ago, as the Arab Spring was rising in North Africa, some Syrians stated that the same movement would never reach Damascus.³ In a sense they were right. Although the so-called Arab Spring prompted a wave of uprisings which did reach Syria, the Syrian ‘spring’ soon deteriorated into a brutal and complex war involving a multiplicity of militia groups supported by external forces which has, in some respects, spilled over to Lebanon and unsettled an already perilous political balance.⁴ It is now estimated that over one quarter of the resident population in

¹Broadcast on BBC 2, 16 April 2015

²Michel Nseir “Christians in the Middle East: Between the Risk of Existing and the Fear of Vanishing”
Public Lecture, Near East School of Theology, Beirut 12.2014

³Conversation, Near East School of Theology, Beirut 03.2011

⁴ FN.LB.31.05.15: xvii

Lebanon is Syrian.⁵ The pressures on the infrastructure are substantial, forcing the cost of housing to increase exponentially and contributing to a rise in crime with, consequently, curfews imposed in some areas. National security has deteriorated and there has been an increase in tensions and clashes between pro- and anti-Syrian groups, for example in the north of Lebanon and the suburbs of Beirut. In addition, there has been a presidential vacuum since March 2014 and, most recently, violent demonstrations sparked by the rubbish crisis which are threatening to upset a fragile peace.⁶

Lebanon does not have the capacity to support such a sudden increase in population nor to provide sufficiently for those who have arrived destitute. Furthermore, as a result of the turbulent history with neighbouring Syria and its entanglement in the Civil War(s) of 1975-1990, many Lebanese still harbour wounds caused by the Syrian State and are hostile towards the Syrian people.⁷ As Christians whose faith is based on forgiveness and peace, and as people of the Middle East with inherent traditions of hospitality and generosity, but also of vengeance and tribal loyalty, there is a tension between loyalty to their faith and loyalty to their people.

⁵“One in four people in Lebanon is a refugee.” Al Jazeera 29 Aug, 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/campaign-syria-refugee-abdul-halim-attar-150829184125802.html>

⁶In which the authorities are unable to agree on a new dumping ground, leading to streets filled with rubbish and the resulting “You Stink” campaign in July 2015 which has been followed by large-scale demonstrations and violent clashes of 23 August 2015. See <http://www.youstink.org>, An-Nahar and “Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon” July 2013,14

⁷“I’ve been raised in an atmosphere where we hated Syrians, we looked to them as the enemies.” FN.LB.24.03.15: 1.12

Offering hospitality to those they perceive as having betrayed them (in this case the Syrians) can generate a sense of betrayal, not only of their people but also of themselves as individuals. However, in choosing to love their neighbours by offering hospitality and forgiveness to the Syrians who have sought refuge in Lebanon, some Lebanese Christians are discovering, unexpectedly, that in this act of service they are finding hope and healing for their own wounds.⁸ Furthermore, the Lebanese churches are discovering an opportunity to show the Christian message of forgiveness, healing and hope to their neighbours in a way they have not previously been able.

On the premise that it is easier to find vice than virtue, this research endeavours to look beyond the disheartening stories of pain and suffering and instead seeks to find and understand this unexpected hope emerging from Christian hospitality. Many Christians in the region feel powerless and afraid but perhaps Lebanon could be the starting point from which hope could build up the Church in other parts of the Middle East. Perhaps the Lebanese churches could be encouraged by seeing this potential creative power of peace-making and forgiveness. One example of such courageous hope is ten-year old Maryam, a refugee from ISIS, who was interviewed on Sat-7 Television and whose powerful testimony of forgiveness made headline news on Al-Arabiya channel.⁹ Lebanese news agency, *An-Nahar*, even called for the video to be shown in schools in order to teach a message of humanity.¹⁰

The Lebanese Christians, although disunited structurally, are finding themselves

⁸FN. LB. 24.03.15:1.12 and FN.UK.27.05.15: 16.9

⁹ “Videos of Christians forgiving is go [sic] viral in the Arab world,”

<http://www.sat7uk.org/announcements/videos-of-christians-forgiving-is-go-viral-in-arab-world>

06.03.15

¹⁰ Christian ‘Forgiving ISIS videos go viral in Arab world,’ <http://beforeitsnews.com/christian-news/2015/03/christian-forgiving-isis-videos-go-viral-in-arab-world-2510382.html> 19.03.15

united in their desire to serve their neighbours at this time. There are of course mixed motives for this response, not all virtuous, but despite the fact that such service does involve pain and may cost them everything to do so, there are many churches going out of their way to offer hospitality.¹¹ One person interviewed for this research said “Jesus appeared to his disciples and said ‘peace be with you.’ He showed them his wounds and said ‘as the father sent me, I send you.’”¹² Many Lebanese Christians see it as their duty to love and serve the needy, even those who have been enemies, and even if it is painful.

Having lived and worked alongside the Lebanese churches, I write from a perspective somewhere between insider and outsider. I have had the privilege of sharing in some of the struggles which face the Lebanese at this time, have shared in their perplexity, their sorrow, and in their search for hope. In articulating the difficulties and also the glimpses of hope I have seen and heard in my observations, conversations and interviews, my wish is that this hope might have effects beyond Lebanon itself and that the wider church might look beyond the media’s portrayal of events to see the quiet strength of the Lebanese Christians.

In using the term “Lebanese Church” I attempt to see the Lebanese Christians as one people in order to obtain a wider perspective, although in practice these churches do not naturally hold together. For the purposes of this research, the terms Middle Eastern and Arab are used more or less interchangeably. I use the term “Arab Christian” although some Christians would object to the definition because, in chapter four, I suggest that the Lebanese churches are inspired by Arab traditions of

¹¹ Email (Dr.D) 31.08.15

¹² FN.LB.26.03.15: 3.5B

hospitality.¹³I use the term “refugee” very loosely to describe those fleeing from Syria into Lebanese territory based on Bretherton’s definition of refugees as “outside their country of origin and without the protection of their government.”¹⁴At the start of the Syrian war, wealthy Syrians transferred to Lebanon to secure employment and housing, bringing their belongings with them. Now the majority of Syrian refugees arrive with almost nothing and without the protection or aid of Lebanese friends and relatives. Many Christians fleeing Syria had family or friends in Lebanon or could find support through sister churches but the majority of Muslim refugees today do not have these advantages.

Methodology

This research addresses a present, lived experience in a field where there is a lack of literature that approaches the subject from a positive perspective. It was therefore necessary to conduct primary research in the form of semi-structured interviews. By interviewing a small number of church leaders who are actively

¹³ Jean Corbon, “The Middle East” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Vol. 3, 1968 - 2000* John Briggs, Oduyoye and Tsetsis (eds.) Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2000), 592; The Maronites in particular would object to the term “Arab Christian,” preferring to see themselves as Phoenician in origin instead of Arab which suggests shared heritage with the Muslims of Saudi Arabia. See Asher Kaufman, *Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920*, Middle East Studies Journal 37.1 (2001)The term “Middle Eastern” is no less contentious and is sometimes applied to the region extending from Morocco in the west to Afghanistan in the East.

¹⁴ Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness*, (Wiley-Blackwell: Chichester, 2010), 128. This therefore includes all those who have escaped war including those without UNHCR registration.

engaging with this complex scenario at the present time, and by investigating writings which relate to this experience, this study narrates and examines the current crisis from the perspective of the Lebanese Christians. The Lebanese Church or churches referred to throughout this research include all officially recognised Lebanese Christian denominations.

Although this study refers to the Lebanese Christians in general, it concentrates mainly on the Reformed churches. As a natural result of my own personal and professional connections in Beirut, most of the interviewees are from Lebanese Reformed churches, *injiliyyeh*, in Arabic (lit. Evangelical.)¹⁵ In the limited time available, arranging interviews with representatives of other denominations was challenging due in part to my own nationality, religious affiliation and also to the climate of suspicion and fear which is prevalent in Lebanon.¹⁶ Although some of the interviewees have spoken publicly on the subject of responding to the refugee crisis, they will remain anonymous throughout in order not to jeopardise their personal safety or confidence. This research does not seek to provide answers to the various questions which arise but only to narrate a present reality from a new perspective and to identify openings for further avenues of research.

Outline

Part one of this thesis establishes the context in which the Lebanese Church finds itself in today and seeks to understand the complexities of relating to Syrian

¹⁵Translated here as 'Reformed' to avoid confusion with the connotations associated with 'Evangelical' in an English-speaking context.

¹⁶See Chapter three.

refugees in the present political situation. Chapter one outlines key elements of Lebanese history which shape the present State and the Lebanese character. In agreement with scholars Tom Najem, David Gordon, Elizabeth Picard and William Harris, I argue that conflict is intrinsic to the country due in part to its geostrategic vulnerability but that, as Winslow observes, inherent in the Lebanese character is a spirit of resilience which gives them an ability to see hope in what seem to be hopeless circumstances. Chapter two explores the complex relationship between Lebanon and Syria, briefly tracing the changing dynamics since the establishment of the Lebanese State to the present day. The best available literature on the subject is Rola El-Husseini's *Pax Syrianaw* which explores Syrian hegemony in post-war Lebanon. Drawing on this and the works of other scholars such as Halim Shebaya and Are Knudsen, I address those aspects which most significantly influence Lebanese attitudes towards the Syrians, with the aim of identifying key challenges to responding to the arrival of refugees. Chapter three identifies the particular role of the Christians in recent Lebanese history. With reference to scholars Habib Badr and Anthony O'Mahony, and depending mainly on the works of Jean Corbon, I propose that the position of the Christians is unique and that they are well placed to have significant positive influence on the Lebanese state and the wider region.¹⁷ An analysis of this Christian hospitality which receives the perceived enemy and supplies their needs as an act of Christian love is offered in part two.

Part two focuses on the current encounter between Lebanese Christians and Syrian refugees and seeks to answer the question posed by Frans Bouwen which asks

¹⁷ Elizabeth Picard "The Dynamics of the Lebanese Christians: From the Paradigm of the '*āmiyyāt* to the Paradigm of *Hwayyek*" in Andrea Pacini (Ed.) *Christian Communities in the Middle East: The Challenge of the Future* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 221

how a Christian might engage in this political turmoil and yet face the future in hope.¹⁸ Chapter four presents the “horizontal” dimension of hospitality encounter as an act of humanitarian service to the other that is both Arab and Christian and is based on Henri Nouwen’s writing on the Christian choice to move from hostility to hospitality. First revealing the reasons for such hostility with reference to Lebanese Sociologist Samir Khalaf then briefly exploring both Arab and Christian traditions of hospitality as defined chiefly by Andrew Shyrock, Thomas Ogletree and Christine Pohl, I argue that the Lebanese Christians are acting in response to the primary “hospitality” of God. Chapter five recognises the difficulty of overcoming pain and suffering to offer hospitality to the other in Christian love. Returning to Samir Khalaf and drawing on the works of Sune Haugbolle on war and memory, I describe the extent of the wounds in Lebanese society and propose that in choosing to welcome their Syrian neighbours and show true Arab and Christian hospitality, the Lebanese are finding a new opportunity for healing of their own wounds in the “vertical” dimension of hospitality which is an encounter with God. The result of fieldwork for this research suggests that there are indications that this faithful response to the Syrian refugees is, in itself, a marker of hope and a possible point from which to bring hope to the wider Middle East.

¹⁸ Frans Bouwen, “The Churches in Jerusalem,” in *Ecumenism: Present Realities and Future Prospects* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 48

PART ONE

Chapter One

Phoenix from the Ashes

*“Strewn as it is with fire and dynamite
I said our land is being reborn.”* Fairouz¹⁹

This chapter establishes the historical context of Lebanon arguing that conflict is intrinsic to the country due, in part, to its “geostrategic vulnerability,” and that inherent to their character is a spirit of resilience which gives the Lebanese a strong survival instinct and an ability to find hope in what seem to be hopeless circumstances.²⁰ Some key features will be identified which make Lebanon vulnerable to conflict, emerging as a result of influences and pressures both from outside and from within. As a result of its geographical location, the country has been repeatedly conquered, occupied, influenced and destroyed by varying internal and external forces, and then has risen again in a new form, a phenomenon which continues to the present day.²¹ One positive result of this is that the convergence of thinking and norms originating in both East and West contribute to an atmosphere of readiness to embrace new influences and adapt them to the Lebanese environment. Lebanon has the potential of bridging differences and modelling unity in diversity which can be both a source of hope for the Middle East and an example to the

¹⁹ Song by Fairouz, *Bhibbak ya Libnan*, Translation mine.

²⁰ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3

²¹ Tom Najem, *The Politics of a Penetrated Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 20

West.²² As Rubin states:

“Although frustrating at times, the Lebanese experience has always been attached to freedom within diversity. If there is something that is lacking in the Middle East today it is precisely that freedom in its many forms and that diversity in its many manifestations. That is why the Lebanese experience must be reinforced and kept going - it might be the only ray of light coming out of this region.”²³

In the crossfire of history

Throughout history, Lebanon has fascinated and lured to her shores, for trade, adventure, pilgrimage, mission and battle, foreigners who have influenced and shaped the country over time and contributed to the cosmopolitan character of Beirut which continues to this day.²⁴ Conjuring images of enchanting oriental splendour, Lebanon was affectionately termed “the Paris of the Middle East.”²⁵ Lying at the intersection of three continents, on the shores of the Mediterranean, its mountains separating the Arabian deserts from the sea, Lebanon was a natural bridge between East and West, a

²² ‘West’ used throughout in the Lebanese understanding, i.e. Europe and the Americas.

²³ Barry Rubin, *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict and Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 33

²⁴ See Grant, Christina Phelps *The Syrian Desert: Caravans, Travel and Exploration* (London: A&C Black, 1937)

Linda Jones Hall, *Roman Berytus: Beirut in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 255

²⁵ “Dieu n’a pas donné à l’homme de rêver aussi beau qu’il a fait. J’avais rêvé Éden, je puis dire que je l’ai vu.” From de Lamartine *Voyage en Orient* (1832) quoted in Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon* (Beirut: Librairie de Liban, 1968), 3; Philip Mansel, *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* (London: Yale University Press, 2010), 311-324

gateway to both the Orient and Europe.²⁶ Located at the start of the silk route to Asia, it produced fine quality silk which was traded in Florence, Venice and France.²⁷ Lebanon was the land of the seafaring, merchant Phoenicians who travelled far and wide, developing the use of the night sky for navigation and, it is believed, circumnavigating Africa over a thousand years before the Portuguese.²⁸ They conquered and established cities all around the Mediterranean, taking their language and alphabet with them (until they were overtaken by the Greeks).²⁹ Lebanon's exotic sights and smells, the bustling souks, the grandeur of oriental palaces, and the charm of the people (their humour, resolve, community and rich culture) drew travellers from afar and captured the imagination of the West.³⁰

From the end of the nineteenth century Beirut suddenly became a buzzing capital, becoming the stage for freedom of speech, women's liberation, and an explosion of cultural expression which gave it a footing in world cinema, music and literature.³¹ Artists such as Fairouz and Gibran became influential across the Arab

²⁶ Dimitri Baramki, *Phoenicia and the Phoenicians* (Beirut: Khayats, 1961), 112 and William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars and Global Extensions* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1986), 59-60

²⁷ Rubin, *Lebanon*, 28

²⁸ Donald Harden, *The Phoenicians* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 172-3; Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 60 and Robert Brown (Jr.), *Researches into the Primitive Constellations of the Greeks, Phoenicians and Babylonians* Vol. 1 (London, Williams and Norgate, 1899), 4-18; Harden, *The Phoenicians*, 170 and Philip K. Hitti *A short History of Lebanon* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1965), 32

²⁹ Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 36; Harden, *The Phoenicians*, 64-88 and 116-122; Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 161

³⁰ E.g. See Stark, Freya *Letters from Syria* (London: John Murray, 1942)

³¹ Mansel, *Levant*, 296-210 See also Miriam Cooke *Women Write War: The Centring of the Beirut Decentrists* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1987)

world and beyond.³² Although there are still serious discrepancies between the rights and freedoms of men and women, Lebanese women have often found themselves in public roles having inherited authority from another member of the family and, in the 20th century that practice has continued in the government.³³ The Lebanese character is marked by an openness to external influences, readiness to explore new possibilities and a vivacity that makes the Lebanese live life at maximum intensity.³⁴ Picard says:

“The society was tolerant and hedonistic, cordial to the foreigner, curious to learn, indifferent to religious quarrels, excited by debates over ideas; pluralism and the anonymity of the cities were the guarantor of individual freedoms. Hence also its adaptability to circumstances, its ingenuity in solving problems, its flexibility in dealing with many and varied interlocutors.”³⁵

However, this country blessed with magnificent landscapes and a fertile coastal plain, home to a “spectrum” of religions and ethnicities, is also cursed with a long history of violence, war and destruction.³⁶ The very location that gave Lebanon this

³² Fairouz is played at 7.00am for fifteen minutes every morning across the Arab world and Gibran emigrated to New York and wrote in English.

³³For example regarding passports, marriage, custody of children etc. See “Women’s Place in Lebanon” http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/07/02/womans-place-lebanon_02.07.09 and “Gender Gap Report” http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf#page=20; Hitti, *Short History*, 137; Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana: Elite Politics in Postwar Syria* (Syracuse University Press: New York, 2012), 170

³⁴ Rubin, *Lebanon*, 28 and Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon*, 70

³⁵ Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon, A Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2002), 3

³⁶ Eli Fawaz, “What Makes Lebanon a Distinctive Country?” in Rubin, *Liberation*, 25. Described in 1340 by a German pilgrim Lebanon is a “mount full of the most delightful trees, fruits and herbage the heart of man can conceive” in Hitti, *Short History*, 137

richness, was to also make it vulnerable to internal disintegration and susceptible to attack from outside.³⁷ Over the course of history, the Lebanese region has been conquered and controlled by Roman, Greek, Byzantine, Persian, Abbasid, Fatimid, Ottoman and French authorities, the layered remains of which are to be found in the few excavated areas underneath Beirut.³⁸ In the twentieth century alone Lebanon has felt the aftershocks from the world wars in Europe, and suffered multiple conflicts since then; the Maronite-Druze clashes in 1958; the savage civil war(s) of 1975-90; then the Hezbollah- Israel war of 2006; internal battles of 2008, 2010, and continual internal conflicts and skirmishes which have most recently been provoked by the war in Syria.³⁹ Lebanon's historical role as refuge for oppressed minorities has continued to the present day offering a new home for Armenians, Palestinians, Iraqis, Kurds and now Syrians. These recurring foreign invasions and floods of refugees (and the varying ways in which they were absorbed) have aggravated internal tensions and rifts and left Lebanon susceptible to ruin, in turn varying from "low intensity conflict" to full blown warfare, and serving to "polarise the factions and deeper sources of hostility."⁴⁰ By the late twentieth century, Lebanon became a by-word for a

³⁷ Robin Fedden, *Syria and Lebanon* (London: William Clowes & sons, 1965), 5

³⁸ Hall, *Roman Berytus*, 66 (the location of the Garden of Forgiveness *Hadiqat as-Samah*, see chapter five.)

³⁹ Losing over a quarter of the population to starvation and disease. Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (New York, Cornell University Press, 1988), 36; Picard, *Lebanon*, 72 and Hitti, *Short History*, 231-2

⁴⁰ Armenians were granted citizenship and parliamentary seats due to Christian status. Mansel, *Levant*, 321. Palestinians have never been recognised or granted any kind of citizenship. Harris, *Faces*, 71 and David Gilmour *Lebanon: The Fractured Country* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983), 90; Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalisation of communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 15

crumbling nation, a place of destruction and smouldering remains.⁴¹ In the words of novelist Andrée Chadid:

“Their little land was seriously ill but no-one would admit it. Still sparkling under the balm of prosperity it concealed its fevers, its crises, its torpor. The contrasts were part of the magic.”⁴²

Brief historical overview

It is believed by some that Byblos is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, older even than Damascus which claims that title. The earliest known written reference to Lebanon featuring the Mount Lebanon cedar forests is found in the Epic of Gilgamesh, written perhaps as early as 2,900 BCE, but it is also mentioned repeatedly in the Hebrew Bible, the earliest references dating from the 8th Century BCE.⁴³ It is said that timber from the cedars of Lebanon was used in the construction of King Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, for pharaonic burials in Egypt, and was highly valued for shipbuilding far beyond Lebanon’s shores.⁴⁴ Some claim that among the few still standing today, there are some trees as old as 2000 years.⁴⁵ At the mouth of the *nahr el kalb* (Dog River) just north of Beirut, a natural rock

⁴¹ “*Libanisation*” appeared in Larousse as “the process of fragmentation of a country resulting from confrontation between different communities.” Mansel, *Levant*, 340

⁴² Andrée Chadid in Mansel, *Levant*, 322

⁴³ Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (London: Penguin, 2003), 2; N.K. Sandars, trans., *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (London: Penguin, 1972), 70, 83, 89; Sandars, *Gilgamesh*, introduction, 8; Hosea 14:5-7, Nahum 1:4 and the early Psalms

⁴⁴ Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 18

⁴⁵ Sources vary from 1000 to 3000 years. Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: war and Politics in a Fragmented Society* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7

formation bears the inscriptions where various invaders and leaders have made their mark, the oldest being Ramses II from the 13th century BCE.⁴⁶

Known as Phoenicia in ancient times, it gained its name from the Greek word meaning purple,⁴⁷ after the trade in purple cloth and dye which was extracted from the murex shell at Tyre.⁴⁸ It is interesting that the mythological bird, the phoenix, traces its origins to the same etymological root in reference to its purple feathers.⁴⁹ Furthermore, like the phoenix which burns itself on a funeral pyre and rises from the ashes into new life, repeating the cycle over time, Lebanon too has fallen to both natural disaster and civil conflict, burning up and rising again from its ashes- a parallel some Lebanese like to make.⁵⁰ The Phoenicians were a Semitic sea-faring people who excelled at nautical travel and also at business (as they still do to this day).⁵¹ Lying on the coast of difficult terrain, the Phoenicians were forced to take to the sea to travel to other coastal towns or to earn a livelihood and they established a thalassocracy over the Eastern Mediterranean for a period of about 450 years until the

⁴⁶ Hitti, *Short History*, 1 and Baramki, *Phoenicians*, 108

⁴⁷ “The colour of clotted blood” Hitti *Short History*, 15 and Barry Cunliffe, *Europe Between the Oceans: 9000BC-AD1000*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 63

⁴⁸ Hall, *Roman Berytus*, 229-236 and Harden, *Phoenicians*, 162

⁴⁹ Perhaps closest in description to the Egyptian *benu*, a purple bird of Egyptian mythology (versions vary.) R. Van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix: according to Classical and Early Christian Traditions* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1972), 51-66

⁵⁰ Earthquake, fire, famine, and disease, Hitti *Short History*, 133; Van Den Broek *Phoenix*, 51-66 and Carol Dagher. *Bring down the Walls: Lebanon's Postwar Challenge* (New York, St Martin's Press, 2000), 217

⁵¹ In 11,000BCE, Aegeans settled on shores of Mount Lebanon. Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 6-11; Baramki, *Phoenicia* 62-3 and Hitti, *Short History*, 32

fall of Carthage in 136 BCE.⁵² These are the skills which have allowed the Lebanese to successfully establish themselves all over the world, carrying with them ideas as well as goods.⁵³ With the development of trade routes across the land and towards the Euphrates valley into Asia, Beirut became an important port for commerce.⁵⁴ Since Roman times, the Lebanese have exported agricultural produce abroad (wine, olive oil, fruit, vegetables and wheat flour mainly to France and Italy).⁵⁵ Lebanon also established itself as producer of glassware and pottery and enjoyed prosperous cotton and textile industry due in part to its location on the silk route to Asia.⁵⁶ Still today, significant income is made from transit traffic in goods such as spices and pearls from Saudi Arabia, sugar and rice from India, gold and narcotics.⁵⁷

Lying not only at a geographical crossroads of the continents, Lebanon's situation in the region of origin of the three monotheistic religions has historically attracted pilgrims and missionaries of every sect including the crusaders who came originally at the request of the Maronites, to bolster their resistance to Islamisation.⁵⁸ The Maronites also assisted the Crusaders in their effort to "liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims."⁵⁹ In the mid-fifteenth century the Franciscans

⁵² Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 3,10, 26, 47, 112

⁵³ Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 113 and Hitti, *Short History*, 208

⁵⁴ E.g. The British Andromedary Post. See Grant, *Syrian Desert*, 235 and Hall, *Berytus* 255

⁵⁵ Stephen Helmsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 31 and Picard, *Lebanon*, 38; Hitti, *Short History*, 176 and Hall, *Berytus*, 31

⁵⁶ Baramki, *Phoenicia*, 63, 112 and Hall *Berytus*, 24-26

⁵⁷ See Hitti, *Short History*, 63, Hitti, *Short History*, 230 and Khalaf, *Civil*, 252

⁵⁸ Mansel, *Levant*, 6.

⁵⁹ Kamal Salibi *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconstructed* (I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.: London, 2003), 87-98 and Mahmoud Ayoub, "Lebanon Between Religious Faith and Political

established themselves in the Holy Lands to correct the “abuses and errors” of Maronite theology, considered heretical by the Vatican to allow communion with Rome.⁶⁰ Writing of Beirut in the seventeenth century, but articulating a truth that is equally valid today Philip Mansel says:

“The proximity of rival religions at a strategic crossroads inspired a mating game of seduction and exploitation still being played today. Using emotional language to mask self-interest, each religious group tried to seduce a foreign power; each foreign power searched for suitable local protégés. Outside interference was matched by inside desire for more of it.”⁶¹

In the 1830s, a change in Turkish policy in Mount Lebanon allowed greater freedom for Europeans and attracted them in higher numbers.⁶² One result of this was that the Reformed (Protestant) Church was established in Syria in 1938 by American and British missionaries, and, following a decree in 1867 which permitted missionaries to own property, the influence of the Reformed and Catholic missions grew in the late nineteenth century with an increase in new schools, colleges, as well as the first printing press in Zoqaq el-Blat, and the start of the first newspapers.⁶³ In

Ideology” in *Peace for Lebanon?: From War to Reconstruction* Deirdre Collings, (ed.) (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 242

⁶⁰ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*, 1986, 70 and Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 23

⁶¹ Mansel, *Levant*, 92

⁶² Hitti, *Short History*, 201

⁶³ The Reformed Lebanese Church was created by British Reformed churches and Scottish Presbyterians. El Hassan Bin Talal, *Christianity in the Arab World* (Amman: Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, 1994), 88 and Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 747 and Longrigg, *French Mandate*, 12 and Talal, 88;

October 1860, the British Syrian Mission opened schools for boys and girls in Beirut, Zahle, Baalbak, Hasbayya, Ein Zhaltaand Shimlan with education in English and Arabic. Even in the present day, much Lebanese education is given in French or English, a lasting result of the mission schools and Lebanon's outward looking nature.⁶⁴ The Syrian Protestant College (modern day American University of Beirut) was founded in 1866 just outside the old city walls and marked the peak of missionary educational activity of the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ Still drawing students from across the Arab world and further afield, Lebanese education continues to be very highly regarded throughout the Middle East, with AUB considered as the Oxbridge of the Levant.⁶⁶ Interestingly, it was these reformed communities who were drawn to Ras Beirut by the new university and were instrumental in populating the area, contributing to its urban identity and social character by its openness to western styles of life and Calvinist values.⁶⁷ The Reformed Churches of Lebanon and their

Hitti, *ShortHistory*, 201; Habib Badr "Evangelical Churches and Missions in the Middle East: Lebanon, Syria and Turkey" in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East* (Beirut: MECC, 2005), 717-8 and Jérôme Chahīne, "Christians and the Arab Renaissance" in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East* Habib Badr (Chief Ed.) Translated by George Sabra, et al. (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 2005), 802-3

⁶⁴Chahīne, *Christians*, 800-1 and Hitti, *ShortHistory*, 204-5

⁶⁵ Samir Khalaf, *Heart of Beirut: Reclaiming the Bourj*, (London: Saqi Books, 2006), 107-111 and Longrigg, *French Mandate*, 39; See H.L. Murre-van den Berg, "Migration of Middle Eastern Christians to Western Countries and Protestant Missionary Activities in the Middle East: A preliminary Inverstigation" in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* Vol. 54, (2002), 39-49

⁶⁶ Mansfield, *Middle East*, 203

⁶⁷ Samir Khalaf and Per Kongstad, *Hamra of Beirut: a Case of Rapid Urbanization*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1973), 108-111 (Although this is changing with increased Islamification of West Beirut. FN.LB.26.03.15 and FN.LB.29.03.15; xiii)

relationship with other sects will be explored further in chapter three.

During Ottoman rule, Syria was divided into three provinces (*iyalah/wilayat*), Aleppo, Damascus and Tripoli. Beirut and Sidon, were coastal towns belonging to the Damascus *sanjak* (further division) overseen by a Turkish governor (*Pasha*). The areas were divided by religious affiliation, *milleh*, known now as the Millet system, religion and nationality having been closely associated throughout history in the Middle East.⁶⁸ In 1864 the Mutasarrifate, a system of multiple communal representation or “confessionalism” (the foundation of the Lebanese political system today) was established in response to the sectarian violence which had been provoked by the Turks in 1841 and resulted in the brutal mountain massacres (*sanat al-haraka*) of 1860.⁶⁹ This allowed religious groups to be independently governed by their own laws for civil matters and an independent *sanjak* was created covering the Lebanese mountains and excluded Beirut, Tyre, Sidon, Tripoli and the Beqa’a valley.⁷⁰ Mount Lebanon was thereby granted autonomy under a Christian governor chosen by the Sultan, the first of which was Daoud Pasha.⁷¹ It could be said that this state of

⁶⁸ Hitti, *Short History*, 144, 146

⁶⁹ Youssef M. Choueiri, “Explaining Civil Wars in Lebanon” in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* (Ed. Youssef Choueiri) London: Stacey International, 2007), 25. Picard writes: “Although of all the Arab countries of the Near East, Lebanon is the most receptive to western values and the model of the modern state, it is paradoxically the one country that has clung most tightly to the Ottoman tradition of social and political division into communities.” Picard, *Lebanon*, 10; Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 160; Hitti, *Arabs*, 735; When Druze landlords attacked Maronite tenants leaving 11,000 dead and 4,000 injured in just four weeks. Mansfield, *Middle East*, 118 and Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim community and the Lebanese State 1840-1985* (London, Ithaca Press, 1986), 217 (See chapter 2)

⁷⁰ Mansfield, *Middle East*, 118 and Harris, *History* 160

⁷¹ Hitti, *Arabs*, 736

autonomy was the first step towards securing eventual independence and the formula of the contemporary political system, although it has been described as “class rule in sectarian guise” and has contributed to new forms of sectarian antagonism.⁷²

Twentieth Century

At the end of the nineteenth century, Beirut, having been a quiet town with a relatively small population grew rapidly in both size and importance with the development of its port area and new roads connecting the coast to Damascus.⁷³ Starting in Christian circles in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a period of cultural renaissance known as “the awakening” (*an-Nahda*). It was a time of “unbridled liberalism” with an unprecedented climate of open-mindedness and rebirth in art, science, politics, economics, literature, and philosophy.⁷⁴ Subsequent to the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, as Lebanon was emerging out of *an-Nahda*, a treaty was signed at San Remo in 1920 dividing the region into areas overseen by Britain and France.⁷⁵ Iraq and Transjordan were given to Britain; Lebanon and Syria to

⁷² Zamir, *Formation*, 9; “legitimis(ing) sectarian representation and foreign intervention in Lebanon and the area generally” B.J.Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*. London: Zed, 1985), 38

⁷³ Despite having a good harbour, Grant, *Syrian Desert* 107

⁷⁴ Samir Khalil Samir “The Christian Communities, Active Members of Arab Society throughout History” in *Christian Communities in the Middle East: The Challenge of the Future* Pacini, Andrea (Ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 88 and “The percolating of nationalistic ideas was just one of many aspects of the *Nahda*, a vast linguistic, cultural, religious, and scientific renaissance that spurred the intellectual elites in Egypt and in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the latter half of the nineteenth century.” Picard, *Lebanon* 23

⁷⁵ George Picot of France and Sir Mark Sykes of Britain divided the Middle East, into areas of direct and indirect (western) influence. Mansfield, *Middle East* 157 and Zamir, *Formation* 38-40

France, leading eventually to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and opening a new chapter of orientation and control in the form of the French Mandate.⁷⁶ Although the mandate recognised the principle of independence, it was a temporary solution that inevitably resulted in full independence. Syria was opposed to French occupation from the beginning but predominantly Christian Mount Lebanon initially favoured the mandate and pushed for a separate Greater Lebanon (*Le Grand Liban*) encompassing the Beqa'a valley and stretching from Tyre to Tripoli along the borders of the present State to expand agricultural land and coastal ports to benefit the economy.⁷⁷ It is argued by some that these borders correspond to traditional feudal which predate Ottoman rule.⁷⁸

In May 1926, *Le Grand Liban* was declared a republic under the cedar flag. A constitution was drafted in Paris with plans for a bicameral government and a president, specifying no state religion and no particular religion for head of state.⁷⁹ However, the “notoriously unreliable” census of 1932 suggested a clear Christian majority followed by Sunni and Shi'a respectively.⁸⁰ In a strategic effort to maintain a Christian majority in government, a 5:6 formula was created electing five Muslims for every six Christians in parliament but no provision was made for future demographic

⁷⁶ See Cleveland, Wm. L. and Martin Bunton *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Westview Press: Boulder, 2009), 218-223, 225-228; Longrigg *Mandate*, 109-147 and Hitti, *Short History* 217

⁷⁷ “Having enlarged Lebanon at Syria's expense, France based its policy in the two mandates on the strengthening and promotion of the traditionally Francophile Maronite Christian elements as against the Muslim Arab population.” Mansfield, *Middle East* 199

⁷⁸ Harris *Faces*, 62

⁷⁹ Mansfield, *Middle East*, 201

⁸⁰ For different versions of census see Kais M. Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State under the Mandate* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2003), 114ff

shifts.⁸¹

The National Pact (*mithaq al watani*) of 1943, an unwritten agreement reached by President Bishara El-Khoury and Prime Minister Riad El-Solh, came as a result of dissatisfaction with the limits of the mandate and agreed that Lebanon should maintain independence within the existing borders, following Arab foreign policy.⁸² This resulted in the end of French control and sought to reconcile the disparity between the social classes, recognising all individuals as equal.⁸³ Despite the census and the national pact, tradition has evolved to have a sectarian government or “confessional democracy” with a Maronite president, Sunni prime minister and Shiite speaker of parliament, known as the “three presidencies” or “Troika.”⁸⁴ The top civil leaders (of the army, courts, etc.,) represent the remainder of the confessions.⁸⁵

However, the full consequences of creating *Le Grand Liban* were not anticipated.⁸⁶ The new borders generated a shift of balance from a Christian Maronite

⁸¹ And 50:50 in government, Picard, *Lebanon*, 70

⁸² See Tom Najem, *The Politics of a Penetrated Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 12-14; Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism, and the State under the Mandate*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 207 and Picard, *Lebanon*, 67-73

⁸³ Hanna Ziadeh *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon*, (London: Hurst & Co., 2006), 118 and Mansfield, *Middle East*, 225

⁸⁴ Rubin, *Lebanon*, 29; Sofia Saadeh, “Greater Lebanon: the Formation of a Caste System?” in *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon* Choueiri, Youssef M. (Ed.) (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), 71 and Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana: Elite Politics in Postwar Syria* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 14

⁸⁵ For example the position of Minister of Defence is reserved for a Druze. Picard, *Lebanon*, 70 and Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon*, 118 See also Harris, *History*, 193 and for the origin of inter-communal consociationalism see Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*, 124

⁸⁶ Declared a republic under the cedar flag. Hitti, *Short History*, 220 It was a “most fateful French

majority population to a slight Muslim majority, exacerbated by both a declining birth rate of the Maronites and their higher tendency to emigrate.⁸⁷ This disparity was significantly increased with the influx of (chiefly Sunni) Palestinian refugees following the creation of Israel in 1948 termed, in Arabic, *al-Nakba* (the disaster) and the Six Day War of June 1967, *an-Naksah* (the setback).⁸⁸ Initially, as with the Armenians, Christian Palestinians and those with Lebanese heritage were granted citizenship in order to buttress the Lebanese Christian population but the vast majority were not given political recognition and continue to be ignored by the Lebanese State today.⁸⁹ Primarily, this attitude was a political statement in response to the plight of the Palestinians but was magnified by a fear of political power shift and the consequences that recognising them would have on Lebanese constitutional representation.⁹⁰ Recent estimates suggest that the population is now 14% in favour of the Muslims but the fragility of the State makes a further census too risky for national stability.⁹¹

During the 20th century, conflicting allegiances pulled the country in two

decision.” David C. Gordon, *Lebanon: The Fragmented Nation* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1980), 45. See also Zamir, *Formation*, 38-97.

⁸⁷ Harris, *Faces*, 86 and Tarek Mitri “Christians in the Arab East: An Interpretation of Contemporary History” in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East* Habib Badr (Chief Ed.) (English Edition. Trans. George Sabra, et al.) (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 2005), 851; See also Herman Teule, “Middle Eastern Christians and Migration: Some Reflections” in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* Vol. 54, (2002), 1-23

⁸⁸ Gordon, *Fragmented Nation*, 79; Cleveland and Burton, *A History*, 337

⁸⁹ Harris, *Faces*, 71 and Gilmour *Lebanon*, 90

⁹⁰ Gordon, *Fragmented Nation*, 49

⁹¹ 54% Muslim 40.5% Christian, CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print/country/countrypdf_le.pdf

opposing directions, between Arab Nationalism on the one hand (pulling Lebanon east towards Syria) and Lebanese nationalism, on the other (pulling west, towards the USA and France).⁹² The unique position of the Lebanese Christians placed them mainly in the middle between the two extremes. Historically and geographically Syrian, they were Arab by language and race (although some argued Phoenician heritage to dissociate themselves from Pan-Arabism), and to some extent by cultural expression.⁹³ However, with western education and a religion shared with the Europeans, this other loyalty was also to be preserved. The major factor among Christians opposing Arabism was the fear of becoming a vulnerable minority in an Islamic society and losing the distinctive Lebanese freedom.⁹⁴ A Lebanese nationalist reaction began to assert itself, starting in the American University of Beirut between Muslims and Christians developing a pride in the unique blend of Lebanese identities and cultures, reclaiming the Arabic language and striving for unity.⁹⁵

Estimates suggest that compared to the four million resident Lebanese, there are between eight and fourteen million Lebanese living in diaspora, primarily in Europe and the Americas.⁹⁶ With the Lebanese interaction with these diaspora communities, cross-cultural influences increased and contributed to further 'westernisation' for instance the arrival of American clothing stores and food chains, giving the Lebanese

⁹² These divergent ideologies will be explored further in chapter two.

⁹³ See Asher Kaufman, *Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920* Middle East Studies Journal 37.1 (2001)

⁹⁴ Edward Atiyah, *An Arab Tells His Story: A Study in Loyalties*, (London: John Murray, 1946), 153

⁹⁵ Edwin Bliss, *A Concise History of Missions*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 136

Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1965), 143-6

⁹⁶ Including children of mixed parentage but Lebanese fathers. Harris, *Faces*, 60

the feeling of being part of the modern world, but undermining traditional values.⁹⁷ This led to suspicion and cynicism and has caused the Lebanese at once to admire and despise the West both for their own dependency and for the West's not recognising them as equals.⁹⁸

In what became remembered as Lebanon's "Golden Age" (seventeen years of peace from 1958 to 1975), Beirut became "movie capital of the world" with one hundred and fifty cinemas, and a "nation of journalists" with over four hundred registered newspapers and periodicals in publication by the 1950s.⁹⁹ Even in the present day, this mercantile and opportunity-seeking mentality continues its expression in extreme exploitation of natural habitats and historic treasures to enhance economic growth but it is important to recognise that some developments of that peaceful period were positive, and were not in themselves causes for the civil war which interrupted it, as some have suggested.¹⁰⁰

By the 1970s, these conflicting pulls of East and West; together with an increasing dichotomy between class, economic status, religion and sect; the external pressures emanating from power struggles in the region and weak government; the creation of Israel ("the Zionist entity") and subsequent influx of refugees weakened

⁹⁷ A natural phenomenon resulting from globalisation which the British might call "Americanisation;" Atiyah, *Loyalties*, 188. Beirut has been termed Gay and Lesbian capital, Hedonistic Playground and Plastic Surgery Capital...etc. Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon Adrift: From Battleground to Playground* (London: Saqi Books, 2012), 116

⁹⁸ "(D)estroying the spirit of the Arab tradition, while putting in its place only the material framework of Western civilisation, and the result...was a growing moral confusion leading to cynicism." Atiyah, *Loyalties*, 186, 189 (Written in 1946, but describing Lebanon today.)

⁹⁹ Or "Guilded Age" Khalaf, *Civil*, 151 and 170

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-22, 203

the Lebanese society to such an extent that when external forces entered the Lebanese stage (PLO, Israel and Syria), the combination was enough to ignite civil war.¹⁰¹ Raging on from 1975 until the early 1990s leaving 170,000 dead and twice as many severely wounded, its causes still unresolved, the conflict drew to an end when the country had grown tired of fighting.¹⁰²

The Ta'if Agreement of October 1989 was implemented in 1990 as a means to restore peace and was accepted (along with what has been termed as “collective amnesia” for the wartime atrocities) enabling the Lebanese to return, as best as possible, to normal life.¹⁰³ However, the sectarian divisions which were exacerbated during the war became physical separations between predominantly Muslim and Christian areas, East and West Beirut developing almost as independent cities completely foreign to the residents of the other side.¹⁰⁴ Syria continued to hold its grip over Lebanon in the post-war years with three stages of domination: initial involvement in the war, intervention to change the course of fighting, and finally occupation of Lebanese territories until Syrian forces were expelled following the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri and the resulting Independence Intifada (lit. uprising)

¹⁰¹ Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife: student Preludes to the Civil War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 189; Wadi Haddad, *Lebanon: The Politics of Revolving Doors*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 34 and Odeh, *Dynamics*, 4 (also commonly referred to as “Down South” or “Disneyland”.); Gordon, *Fragmented Nation*, 90; Mansfield, *Middle East*, 280 and Picard, *Lebanon*, 186

¹⁰² Khalaf, *Civil*, 302

¹⁰³ Khalaf, *Civil*, 237; Cleveland and Burton, *A History*, 389-390 and Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*, 22

¹⁰⁴ Harris, *Faces*, 66 or “islands.” FN.LB.26.03.15; 8

(*Intifadat al-istiqlal*) in 2005.¹⁰⁵ These events fractured the government which split along pro- and anti-Syrian lines and became the March 8 and March 14 coalitions.¹⁰⁶ With conflict in 2006, 2008 and 2010, and recurring internal skirmishes, the Lebanese State is as fragile as ever. The investigation by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) of Hariri's assassination is increasing pressure on the fragile Lebanese state, suggesting as it does the shared culpability of Syria and Hezbollah.¹⁰⁷ The STL has become highly politicised and will have significant impact on the wider region.¹⁰⁸ There is also the very real threat of the neighbouring Syrian conflict gaining more ground in Lebanese territory and the risk of collapse under the burden of refugees.

Other significant trends

Mass emigration and “brain drain” of the young are trends which began in a wave after World War I and have continued since the late nineteenth century to the present day.¹⁰⁹ The result is that many politically moderate, educated Lebanese with

¹⁰⁵ Rubin, *Lebanon*, 32; See Are Knudsen and Michael Kerr (eds.) *Lebanon After the Cedar Revolution* (London: Hurst & Co., 2012)

¹⁰⁶ See chapter two.

¹⁰⁷ Are Knudsen, “Special Tribunal for Lebanon: Homage to Hariri?” *Lebanon After the Cedar Revolution* Knudson and Kerr (eds.) (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), 228-9 and Youssef Choueiri, “Explaining civil Wars in Lebanon” *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* (London, Stacey International, 2007), 33

¹⁰⁸ Marie-Joëlle Zahar, “Foreign Interventions, power Sharing and the dynamics of Conflict and Coexistence in Lebanon” in *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution* ed. Knudsen et al. (London: Hurst & Company, 2012), 77

¹⁰⁹ The population decreased by a quarter between 1900-1914, losing half a million Syrians to the Americas, West Africa and Australia. Hitti, *History*, 207 and Longrigg, *Mandate*, 12. See also

aspirations for building a stable society are forced to find employment beyond the Lebanese borders, supporting their families and the economy by pouring money in from outside.¹¹⁰ The Christian community is not immune to this trend and, perhaps with stronger connections to the West, many young Christians leave the country to seek education, employment or safety in Europe, Australia and the Americas.¹¹¹ Internally, Maronite and Shi'ite migrants who were internally displaced by conflict and the promise of economic opportunity in the capital have migrated to the "belt of misery" surrounding Beirut.¹¹² That, in turn, has contributed to a growing resentment felt by the working classes (mostly Shi'ite) towards more wealthy Sunnis and Christians.¹¹³ Hussein suggests that "the emergence of a new generation of disenchanted youth who have never known the horrors of war portend a possible regression into Christian extremism" as was seen in the Civil War.¹¹⁴

A chapter on Lebanon would not be complete without recognising what Samir

Bernard Sabella, "The emigration of Christian Arabs: Dimensions and Causes of the Phenomenon" *Christian communities in the Middle East: The challenge for the Future*, Andrea Pacini (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 127-154

¹¹⁰ Boutros Labaki "The Christian Communities and the Economic and Social Situation in Lebanon" *Christian communities in the Middle East: The challenge for the Future*, Andrea Pacini (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 246 and Tarek Mitri "Christians in the Arab East: An Interpretation of contemporary History" *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, Habib Badr et al. (eds.) (Beirut: MECC, 2005), 851-870

¹¹¹ E.g. FN.LB.27.03.15: ii; FN.UK.11.05.15:15

¹¹² Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 2005), 269

¹¹³ Harris, *Faces*, 66

¹¹⁴ With the Phalange, Tigers, Al-Tanzim, Guardians of the Cedars, and other armed groups. Khalaf 241; El-Husseini, *Pax*, 218

terms “the great shock” of the early 1970s which saw the emergence of the Islamic movement and increasing extremist ideologies which continue to the present. Today, most infamous is the so-called Islamic State (*Da'esh*) whose troops are entrenched along the Syria-Lebanese border and are a new source of fear for the Lebanese.¹¹⁵ The emergence of such movements in Lebanon is well explained by Kassir as a “crisis of faith in the political process (which) runs its course, until there is nothing left but religion to channel people’s frustrations and express their demands for change.”¹¹⁶

Sectarian division is deeply rooted in Lebanese mentality and penetrates all levels of society.¹¹⁷ Although superficially the Lebanese appear to be very well integrated, mixing both professionally and socially in public, high levels of fear and suspicion restrict freedom of movement and isolate individuals.¹¹⁸ Increasingly, the

¹¹⁵ “3,000 Islamist Fighters Entrenched along Lebanese Border,” Al-Nahar, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170278>, 06.03.15

¹¹⁶ Samir Kassir, *Being Arab*, trans. Will Hobson (London: Verso, 2006), 28

¹¹⁷ Giving Lebanon the reputation of being “A place of compromises and alliances” Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2005), 268; Written in 1858 but equally applicable today: “The Sunnites excommunicate the Shi’ites - both hate the Druze. The Maronites have no particular love for anybody, and in turn are disliked by all. The Greek Orthodox cannot endure the Greek Catholics - all despise the Jews. They can never form one united people and will therefore remain weak, incapable of self-government, and exposed to the invasions and oppressions of foreigners. Thus it has been, is now, and must continue to be - a people divided, meted out, and trodden down.” Thomson in Johnson, Michael “Managing Political Change in Lebanon: Challenges and Prospects” in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* Youssef Choueiri (Ed.) (Stacey International: London 2007), 162

¹¹⁸ Nigel Rapport’s description of social interactions in Yorkshire applies directly to the Lebanese. “(They) engage in interactions with other sects/traditions/alliances in ways (exchanging words and actions) that are so familiar...which help to fulfil one another’s expectations and succeed on keeping one another worlds apart.” Rapport, Nigel *Diverse world-views in an English village*, (Edinburgh

Lebanese tend to live in areas dominated by their sect, and, at the slightest sign of civil disturbance, they retreat to their family groups. Even if there is no trust in the family either, this loyalty is paramount, as demonstrated in the popular proverb: “My brother and I against my cousin. My cousin and I against the alien.”¹¹⁹ In the political field, these loyalties and allegiances continue with politicians dedicated, ultimately, to their own sect.¹²⁰ As Ziadeh states:

“The priority of the communal affiliation over citizenship, and the dislocation of the latter by the first in times of crisis, must be recognised as the core to any understanding of Lebanese history and society.”¹²¹

Sadly, Lebanon has disintegrated as a result of the endless cycles of conflict into multiple nation-fragments.¹²² No longer willing to “submerge their identities into (a) common Lebanese identity” the Lebanese have lost the willingness to work together to pursue unity.¹²³ Without a common understanding of the past, there can be no

University Press: Edinburgh, 1993), 177; Nasser Yassin “Sects and the City: Socio-Spatial Perceptions and Practices of Youth in Beirut” in Knudsen, Are and Michael Kerr (Eds.) *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution* (Hurst and Company: London, 2012), 217

¹¹⁹ Sandra Mackey, *A Mirror of the Arab World: Lebanon in Conflict*, (New York: W. W. Norton&Co), 88

¹²⁰ Shaké Geotcherian, “Minority – Majority – Plurality: A Lebanese-Armenian Perspective” *Theological Review* 35.1-2, (Beirut: Near East School of Theology, 2005), 39

¹²¹ Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon* (Hurst and Company: London, 2006), 20

¹²² “Pity the nation divided into fragments, each deeming itself a nation.” Khalil Gibran, *Garden of the Prophet* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 2009), 17

¹²³ Gordon, *Fragmented Nation*, 139

sense of political community or shared future and the increasing polarisation of Lebanese society is a serious obstacle to peace and security.¹²⁴ Since 2011, there have been demonstrations in favour of secularism but that is irreconcilable with the Islamic concept of nation (*umma*) which transcends geographical borders and is based on religious belonging.¹²⁵ Despite all this, it is simplistic to look on Lebanon as a failure. Rather, the rich history, wealth of experience and constant struggle to find compromise and co-existence (*'aysh al-mushtarak*) should be seen as admirable and must be supported.¹²⁶

Phoenix from the ashes

This chapter has endeavoured to demonstrate that Lebanon has invented and reinvented itself repeatedly throughout history, through cycles of conflict. An often-repeated expression in Lebanon is that “history repeats itself” (*it-tarikh yi3id nafso*) which is certainly true in its case.¹²⁷ Lying at the crossroads of three continents, this small but not insignificant country has been settled, conquered and changed by

¹²⁴ Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconstructed* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 216 and Sune Haughbolle, “‘History’ and ‘Memory’ in Lebanon Since 2005: Blind Spots, Emotional Archives and Historiographical Challenges” in *Lebanon; After the Cedar Revolution* Knudsen, Are and Michael Kerr (Eds.) (Hurst and Company, London 2012), 187

¹²⁵ Al-Fadl Shalaq, “Concepts of Nation and State with Special Reference to the Sunnis in Lebanon” *Sate and Society in Syria and Lebanon*, Choueiri, Youssef M. (Ed.) (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), 124; Shalaq, *Concepts*, 123

¹²⁶ Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*, 166

¹²⁷ See Sune Haughbolle *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010)

peoples and empires from both East and West since the beginning of history in recurrent violent upheavals, and, at the present time, is watching the neighbouring Syrian crisis with apprehension. As a result of its susceptibility to invasion and influence from outside its borders, together with weak government and riven with irreconcilable divisions, regional developments will have direct consequences on the Lebanese State.¹²⁸

Although Lebanon is vulnerable to conflict and may in fact appear ‘backward’ in its infrastructure and development, it can be argued that Lebanon is ahead of the West in its experience of diverse society and connectedness to the rest of the world, its experience of Islam and the struggle for co-existence of different confessional groups.¹²⁹ A small geographical territory where each group has political representation (*sihhat al-thamthil al-siyasi*),¹³⁰ Lebanon must continue its permanent balancing act and continual recreation of itself for the sake of the wider region, as Farha warns:

“If Lebanon fails and fragments anew...a critical example of Muslim-Christian co-existence will have disappeared, a loss which is sure to be felt far beyond the shores of this small country.”¹³¹

Originally mountain people with stubborn resilience and a desire to remain

¹²⁸Rubin, *Lebanon*, 125

¹²⁹ Familiar with Islam since its emergence in the mid ninth century. See Sidney H Griffith “Arabic Christian relations with Islam: Retrieving from History, Expanding the Canon” in *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East* Anthony O’Mahony and John Flannery (eds.) (Melisende: London, 2010), 263-290

¹³⁰ Zahar, *Foreign Interventions*, 65

¹³¹ Farha, *Beirut Spring*, 224

separate from the Arabian deserts, the Lebanese possess an adaptability and strength of character which have sustained them through the turmoil of the last century on their home soil or abroad. Just as the mythical phoenix which burns itself on a funeral pyre to die and be reborn from the ashes, Beirut, too, has repeatedly burned herself up from the inside, then been reborn, "a glory from ashes" (*majd min ramaden*).¹³² Although her re-births have not been without pain and struggle and her reincarnations not without serious defects, Lebanon is once again, for now, a phoenix from the ashes.

¹³² Fairouz, *Li Beirut*; Gilmour, *Fractured Country*, 3

Chapter Two

Pax Syriana

*“Our enemies did not cross our borders
they crept through our weaknesses like ants.” Qabbani¹³³*

The previous chapter endeavoured to identify the key features of the Lebanese context which make it vulnerable to conflict, emerging as a result of influences and pressures both from outside and from within. It could be argued that there is no ‘new’ conflict in Lebanon, but each new cycle of violence is precipitated by unresolved tensions and aggression which have been carried on even through generations.¹³⁴ This chapter aims to provide a more detailed historical account of the recent conflicts mentioned in chapter one, briefly tracing the post-colonial developments since 1943 and focusing on Syrian hegemony (*wisaya*) in Lebanon from establishment of the State to the present day. In particular, those aspects which most significantly influence the feelings of the Lebanese towards the Syrians will be addressed, with the aim of identifying key challenges to responding to the arrival of refugees. I will argue that the main enemies to stability and peace in Lebanon are those who act as agents

¹³³ Nizar Qabbani, “Footnotes to the Book of the Setback” in *Modern Poetry of the Arab World* Abdullah Al-Udhari (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.), 147

¹³⁴ See Alexandra Asseily, “Breaking the cycle of Violence in Lebanon” in Youssef Choueiri (Ed.) *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* (London: Stacey International), 89-120 for hereditary grievances.

for external players (in this case Syrian proxies in Lebanese territory).

Stages of hegemony

Due to the complexity of the civil war and the prominence of the Arab-Israeli problem, the western states were slow to recognise the significance of Lebanon's intrinsic ties with Syria, the magnitude of Syria's complicity in the Lebanese civil war and continuing dominion.¹³⁵ Syria is in fact a "crucial variable" in post-war Lebanon which must be recognised in order to understand the present situation.¹³⁶ Perhaps at the root of Syrian-Lebanese antagonism is the fact that Damascus has always fought for the return to a Greater Syria encompassing all that is now in Lebanese territory. Zamir states that:

"It is not surprising that from the moment it was established as an independent Christian state, Lebanon's existence has been challenged from within by its own Muslim population and from without by the Muslims of Syria."¹³⁷

Because the state borders were not natural (in that they did not follow clear geographical or ethnic boundaries), communities, families and religious groups were divided and separated from each other. Today, most Lebanese have private and professional connections with Syrians and, especially in the Muslim community; there is a tendency to lean towards Syria rather than the West when looking for external affiliation and support. Politically, this can be clearly seen by the governmental split

¹³⁵ William Harris, *Faces*, 49

¹³⁶ Rola El-Husseini *Pax*, 15

¹³⁷ Zamir, *Formation*, 3

between the March 8 and March 14 coalitions (see below) and Hezbollah in particular, the Shi'a "Party of God" which is supported by Syria and Iran and controls southern Lebanon.¹³⁸ Syria's role during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) can be divided into three distinct stages: influence ("an early attempt at mediation"), intervention ("an escalation to indirect intervention in the conflict") and final occupation ("direct military intervention").¹³⁹ Evolving over time, Syrian involvement in Lebanon eventually became a stranglehold over the political realm and contributed to the disintegration of the Lebanese State.

The period from 1990 to 2005, which ended with Syrian military withdrawal from Lebanon could be divided into further stages reflecting the changes in relationship with Syria and can elucidate Lebanon's contemporary struggles.¹⁴⁰ Firstly (1990 - 1998), President Hafiz al-Asad's strategic direction from Damascus of "an amorphous structure of relations" used Syrian intelligence in Beirut to secure his presence and supervision in Lebanese affairs.¹⁴¹ Secondly, an atmosphere of intimidation was cultivated, with Asad placing Lahoud (a Syrian proxy) as Lebanese President to guarantee a channel for decisions from Damascus, and using torture and extortion to maintain control over the Lebanese. Those who did not comply were simply made to disappear (1998 - 2002).¹⁴² The third stage could be described as full hegemony (2002 to 2005); a period in which resentment towards Syria under

¹³⁸ Cleveland and Burton, *A History*, 546-548

¹³⁹ David Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battlefield of the Middle East* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 112-115; See B.J. Odeh *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, (London: Zed, 1985), 173-188

¹⁴⁰ Michael Young *The Ghosts of Martyrs Square: An Eye-witness Account of Lebanon's Life Struggle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 74-78 and El-Husseini *Pax*, 18-19

¹⁴¹ Young, *Ghosts*, 69

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 70-74

Syrian domination steadily increased and culminated with the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri. Today, the war in Syria brings a new dynamic of Syrian-Lebanese relations and the Lebanese are once again reminded of old wounds as they face new challenges in responding to the overwhelming influx of refugees while standing firm against the rising pressures and threats coming from across the border.

Syria from Inside

In order to better understand the complexity of the Syrian-Lebanese relationship, it is essential to recognise some key aspects of the society which contribute to the composition of government and its leanings towards either East or West. Generally, the Maronites lean west and the Sunnis lean east meaning the external powers continue to have a hold, economically, politically, culturally and militarily.¹⁴³ Still relevant today, Hitti remarks:

“The Arab peoples at this time presented a seeming paradox: resisting with one arm European advances while with the other receiving and adopting ideas and techniques. The new acquisitions from Europe were utilised in the fight against Europeans. Of the numberless novel ideas imported from the West, nationalism and political democracy were undoubtedly the most powerful.”¹⁴⁴

As mentioned in chapter one, the Arab nationalist movement emerged during the *Nahda* and was encouraged by Christian intellectuals in their development of

¹⁴³ Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*, 124; Picard, *Lebanon*, 69

¹⁴⁴ Hitti, *Arabs*, 753

education, the press, and the revival of the Arabic language.¹⁴⁵ The intellectual awakening opened the way for a political awakening taking the form of a movement that grew out of resistance to western imperialism and led to the establishment of the Arab League of States in 1945.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps better understood as “Syrianism,” there was a “revival of old traditions and loyalties and a creation of new myths based on them” which served to create a sense of “ideological cohesion” and developed into a “Syrian particularism” in the case of Syrian-Lebanese relations.¹⁴⁷

An unforeseen result of the Christian allegiance with western powers was that the Muslims cultivated connections with the Arab league to strengthen their position against the Christians.¹⁴⁸ In the 1950s and 70s, Arabism expanded with the development of Nasserism and Ba’athism and has gained popularity mostly among the Sunnis although there are supporters from all sects.¹⁴⁹ Following the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in the 1990s, Islamic radicalism gradually displaced non-Christian expressions of Arabism, a tendency which has continued to the present and is evident in Syria today, even drawing in Muslim fighters from far beyond the region.¹⁵⁰ This is the latest expression of the Arab ideal of unity (*ijma’*), one of the four pillars of

¹⁴⁵ Hitti, *Arabs*, 755; Cleveland and Burton, *A History*, 234-237

¹⁴⁶ With seven independent members - Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (London: Penguin, 2003), 228; Hitti, *Arabs*, 755

¹⁴⁷ Rashid Khalidi in El-Husseini, *Pax*, 200, 205; Khoury, Philip S. *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945* (I. B. Tauris and Co. Ltd.: London, 1987) 5; Youssef Chaitani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The decline of Arab Nationalism and the State*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 4

¹⁴⁸ Zamir, *Formation*, 26

¹⁴⁹ Harris, *Faces*, 77

¹⁵⁰ Coming “from 83 countries” FN.LB.26.03.15: 5A

Islamic jurisprudence which counters the western notion of state.¹⁵¹

A counter movement emerged mainly among the Maronite community as a Maronite ideal, known as “Lebanism” or Lebanese nationalism, which would maintain their self-perception as a Christian minority in a Muslim region and earn their right to Lebanese territory as a Christian enclave. Taking the French revolution with its motto of “equality, fraternity and liberty” as a model, the Lebanese nationalist movement was predominantly Christian and was based on the myth that Lebanese Christians were ethnically Phoenician.¹⁵² This allowed them the freedom to separate themselves ideologically from the Arab sea and turn westwards.¹⁵³

The National Pact (*mithaq al watani*) of 1943 was limited in its vision and limited also by political constraints.¹⁵⁴ Among the elements of the agreement, it was accepted by both parties that Lebanon could be neither an exclusive homeland to the Christians nor to the Muslims; that the country was unique in its position between East and West and that rapprochement with Syria or France would not be sought were it likely to jeopardise independence.¹⁵⁵ To achieve more than it did, a complete abrogation of the confessional system would have to have occurred. Instead, the confessional status quo was re-affirmed and the pact has been criticized as having

¹⁵¹ See Al-Fadl Shalaq, “Concepts of Nation and State with Special Reference to the Sunnis in Lebanon” in Youssef M. Choueiri, (Ed.) *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon* (University of Exeter Press: Exeter, 1993), 122-4

¹⁵² Hitti, *History*, 214; Kaufman, *Phoenicianism*, 190

¹⁵³ Harris, *Faces*, 76

¹⁵⁴ Khalaf, *Civil*, 258-89

¹⁵⁵ Prime Minister Riad al-Isolh asserted: “Lebanon is a homeland (*watan*) with an Arab face that embraces the beneficial aspects of Western civilisation.” Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*, 14; Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*, 116 and Gordon, *Fragmented Nation*, 42

“consecrated confessionalism.”¹⁵⁶ Many educated young Lebanese are secular and opposed to religion because they have seen how destructive it can be.¹⁵⁷ Amin Maalouf shares this view saying: “Lebanon is addicted to confessionalism. It is subversive, a poison destroying the state, a drug to which the whole country is addicted.”¹⁵⁸

Lebanon’s political structure was based on the concept of so-called “consociational democracy” which has been described as “government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy” but the fifteen year civil war marked its failure as the state broke down under converging internal and external pressures.¹⁵⁹ The traditional elites were so deeply rooted that they were unable to make way for new recruits. Today, the major political players are still those who dominated the government thirty years ago and former militia leaders are now politicians.¹⁶⁰ The élites continue to maintain positions of power, supported by their external partners, and, with the exponential urbanisation that was an immediate result of the relative contemporary stability, the gap between rich and poor has become an irreparable chasm.¹⁶¹ Although there are differing views

¹⁵⁶Confessionalism refers to the system of religious identification which is defined at birth (inherited from the father and stated on identity cards giving rise to the “Identity Card Killings of the Civil War), dividing the Lebanese into semi-autonomous sects and originating with the Mutesarrifate, see Chapter 1); Najem, *Lebanon*, 14; Cleveland and Burton, *A History*, 332-337; and Odeh, *Politics*, 42

¹⁵⁷ Conversations with AUB students, 2012

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Mansel, *Levant*, 352

¹⁵⁹ Lijphart quoted in El-Husseini, *Pax*, 2; Abul-Husn, *Lebanese Conflict*, 138-140

¹⁶⁰ Most notably Aoun, Berri, Junblat and Geagea

¹⁶¹ In 1996, 25% of the population was below the poverty line. Johnson, *Class and Client*, 183. A study in 1961 suggested that 4% of the population took at third of nation income and in 1991, that 450 individuals held 55% of the Lebanese banking assets. Halim Barakat quoted in Harris, *Faces*, 64

on the success or otherwise of the National Pact, with some suggesting such pacts serve only to continue violence, it was central in shaping the Lebanese State. Farid el-Khazen states that “the 1943 National Pact was, and still is, an indispensable preliminary working paper without which the reshaping of Lebanon's future is impossible.”¹⁶² Both views are in some respects true and therefore illustrative of Lebanon’s permanent political balancing act between different forces.

Central to understanding the extent and effectiveness of Syrian control in Lebanon is the system of patron-client relationships which form the basis of power structures in Middle Eastern society.¹⁶³ Run by *qabadays* (strong men) and *zu’ama’* (political bosses) from their *salons*, these are systems which depend on allegiance and loyalty (for example electoral votes, usually secured by intimidation) and guarantee protection of favours to the clients as summarised by Cammett:

“Clientelist relationships are contingent on both the delivery of favors to clients and the ability of the patron to monitor the actions of clients to ensure their compliance with the terms of the exchange.”¹⁶⁴

Particularly in societies where the State is weak, these clientelist structures are

¹⁶² George Naccache famously saying: “Deux négations ne font pas une nation.” Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*, 112; Ahmad Beydoun, “Movements of the Past and Deadlocks of the Present” in Youssef Choueiri *Breaking the Cycle*, 15; Farid El-Khazen, *The Communal Pact of National Identities: The Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1991), 68

¹⁶³ See Lutf Abul-Husn, *The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward* (Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder, 1998), 132-134; Johnson, *Class and Client* 47-50; Gordon, *Fragmented Nation*, 101; Najem, *Lebanon*, 15-17; Picard, *Lebanon*, 49-60;

¹⁶⁴ Melani Cammett *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon* (London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 21-22, 62

often all that is available to the poor for securing services and, in turn, undermine the efforts of the state to improve security and eradicate corruption.¹⁶⁵ Cammet says “(t)hese arrangements bring with them inherent inequalities, create conditions of widespread social insecurity, and perhaps even undercut the possibility of constructing larger national political communities.”¹⁶⁶ Not only functioning locally, this system of patron-client relationship extends far beyond the Lebanese borders as can be seen historically and in the present day with the different sects seeking protection and favours from the West (as in the case of the Eastern churches) or Syria (as in the Muslim communities).¹⁶⁷

In order for such relations and systems to be established, however, there must be two parties and the Lebanese can therefore not only be described as victims but also as perpetrators by their invitation of outside allies to act in Lebanese territory.¹⁶⁸ Poet Ma’ruf al-Rusafi aptly describes the duplicity of politicians as “Dogs owned by foreigners, yet towards their own people they act like lions.”¹⁶⁹ This “blurring of boundaries” between inside and outside players and sources of conflict are partially tied up with these allegiances based on patron-client relations and mean that the enemies to Lebanese security and stability have sometimes “crept through the

¹⁶⁵ Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*, 28

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37

¹⁶⁷ See 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 Middle: The Challenge of the Future* East Andrea Pacini ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 96

¹⁶⁸ Zahar, *Foreign Interventions*, 66-9

¹⁶⁹ In M. M. Badawi, trans., *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 59

weaknesses” of the state in the form of Syrian client traitors.¹⁷⁰ In the case of Syria, Khalaf explains, “displaying their military powers over lesser and more compliant groups also allowed them to extend or reinforce their patronage over alternate client groups” as will be shown below.¹⁷¹

Syria from outside

It is not within the scope of this study to fully explore the civil war but key points relating to the relationship between Syria and Lebanon will be highlighted. The Civil War could be described in many ways - as religious, political, military or international.¹⁷² Often simplified as Christian versus Muslim, Left versus Right, these simplistic myths do not take into account the complexities and deep-rooted origins of the conflicts, nor the extent of historical grievances.¹⁷³ It is important to recognise that what has become known as the Civil War was, in fact, a complicated combination of what have been categorised as acts of violence, turf battles, proxy wars, inter communal wars and state wars.¹⁷⁴ The sectarian tensions, exogenous pressures and the weakness of the Lebanese State which led to its collapse in 1975 all continue today.

Initially brief humanitarian aid, Syrian involvement thereafter preferred devious and manipulative intimidation techniques to maintain dominance, first by

¹⁷⁰ Khalaf, *Civil*, 15; Qabbani, “Footnotes to the Book of the Setback”

¹⁷¹ Khalaf, *Civil*, 13

¹⁷² Mansel, *Levant*, 333

¹⁷³ See Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife: student Preludes to the Civil War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977)

¹⁷⁴ Winslow, *War and Politics*, 218

remote control, then directly with military force.¹⁷⁵ Syria's primary concern regarding the civil war in Lebanon was to maintain peace at any cost for its own political interests, preventing any side from achieving victory and containing any revolutionary developments.¹⁷⁶ Several unsettling factors gave Damascus reasoning to supervise Beirut.¹⁷⁷ Under the pretence that Syrian influence was a stabilising factor which would prevent the Lebanese from reverting to internecine violence, Damascus was able to penetrate Lebanese politics, to ensure a front against Israel and to assist in the struggling Syrian economy, for example the lucrative drugs trade of the Syrian Military in the Beqa'a valley.¹⁷⁸ In December 1975, rumours of President Hafiz al-Asad's possible intention to change allegiance sparked the Black Saturday revenge frenzy in which the Phalange (Maronite militia) indiscriminately massacred hundreds to avenge the deaths of four Maronites.¹⁷⁹ Although Damascus had already been sponsoring Sa'iqa (the Palestinian wing of the Syrian led Ba'ath party) to fortify their

¹⁷⁵In response to a request from Lebanon for fire engines during the Battle of Kantari in 1975. John Bulloch, *Death of a Country: The Civil War in Lebanon*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1977), 19

¹⁷⁶ See Harris "Syria in Lebanon" Middle East Research and Information Project 15.134, 1985

¹⁷⁷ "For Damascus, an unsupervised Beirut means an open door for Palestinian, Israeli, Islamic, Western and Arab regime influences, all disquieting. Such an open door would put at risk the Syrian strategic hold on the Biqa' and northern Lebanon, vital to the prestige and security of the Asad regime." Harris, *Faces*, 49

¹⁷⁸ Harris, *History*, 235; Haddad, *Lebanon: Revolving Doors*, 146 and El-Husseini, *Pax*, 216; "The Central Intelligence Agency and the drug Enforcement Agency estimated that Syrian military was making between \$300million and \$1.4 billion from trafficking cannabis and opium in the Beqa'a valley." Middle East Forum, <http://www.meforum.org/769/syria-after-lebanon-hooked-on-lebanon>

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon: Christian Warlords, Israeli Adventurers and American Bunglers*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983), 85 and Harris, *History*, 236

stand against Israel, had been sending under-cover Syrians since early 1976, and had negotiated a deal with President Frangieh to adjust the National Pact to even the balance of power between Christians and Muslims, Syria only officially entered the Civil War in mid-1976, sending forces to the Beq'aa in April and invading the coastal regions in June.¹⁸⁰ It soon became clear, however, that a Palestinian victory would mean a Leftist Lebanon and, at a three-hour speech on 20th July, Asad condemned the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and turned towards the Maronites in order to maintain a moderate government which could be influenced and controlled by Damascus.¹⁸¹ Syria consequently swung in favour of the Christian Right in order to perpetuate the myth of “no victor, no vanquished” (*la ghalib la maghlub*), maintaining its “patronizing relationship with all its client groups in Lebanon.”¹⁸² Following the Riyadh Arab League Summit of 1976, where Asad gained the support of the Saudis, the Syrian occupation army took over, establishing a 500 metre wide corridor “green line” separating the predominantly Christian East and Muslim West Beirut, taking control of strategic corners of the city and ending the first phase of civil war with complete domination.¹⁸³

In what became known as the second phase of the war, the PLO repaired its relations with Damascus and the Christians became increasingly discontented with Asad.¹⁸⁴ The Palestinians turned their attention once again to Israel which led to the

¹⁸⁰ Bulloch, *Death*, 88, 113; Harris, *History*, 237

¹⁸¹ Harris, *History*, 238

¹⁸² Bulloch, *Death*, 5; Michael Kerr, “The Philosophy of Lebanese Power-Sharing” in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon*, Youssef Choueiri, ed., (London: Stacey International, 2007), 5 and Khalaf, *civil*, 53

¹⁸³ Bulloch, *Death*, 184; Harris, *History*, 240; Gilmour, *Fractured Country*, 145

¹⁸⁴ Harris, *History*, 240

devastating Operation Litani of 1978 in which Israel's victory indicated a power which was seen by some Maronites as the support they needed in resisting Syria.¹⁸⁵ By the early 1980s, under the leadership of Bashir Gemayel, the Lebanese forces were in good relations with Israel, whose presence provoked several major confrontations between Israel and Syria on Lebanese soil.¹⁸⁶ After the assassination of Gemayel in 1982, Israel responded forcefully and, with the protection of the Christian militia, entered the Palestinian refugee camps, Sabra and Chatilla, in a brutal massacre.¹⁸⁷ The following international pressure forced the Israelis to withdraw to Southern Lebanon. Under the new leadership of Bashir's brother Amin Gemayel, a (mostly American) multinational force landed in West Beirut to protect the Palestinians and facilitate the rebuilding of the state but Syria jeopardised any programme which did not recognise Asad's authority.¹⁸⁸ It was in 1982 that Rafiq Hariri appeared on the political stage as a mediator between Gemayel and Syria.¹⁸⁹ When the Israelis were forced to withdraw to the Shouf region, Syria seized the chance to reassert its power, and, when the Americans and Israelis had withdrawn, Syria returned to its original vision of a moderate Lebanon without PLO and so forced Yassir Arafat out of the country.¹⁹⁰ In early 1985, Hezbollah (meaning "Party of God") emerged as a strong Islamist militia with the sole purpose of resisting Israel.¹⁹¹ Syria, during this period, was simultaneously providing weapons to Amal, its main Muslim ally, and supporting

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 241

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 242-5

¹⁸⁷ See *Waltz with Bashir* for contentious Israeli perspective.

¹⁸⁸ Harris, *History*, 245

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 246

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 247

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 259

the Progressive Socialist Party and Hezbollah in order to restrain Amal.¹⁹² As a precursor for the Ta'if agreement in 1989, the leaders of these three parties (Berri, Hubaiqa and Junblat) signed the Tripartite Agreement in Damascus in December 1985 which sought “privileged relations” between Lebanon and Syria, and called for political reform, a rebalance of government between Muslims and Christians, and Syrian authority over matters of foreign policy and defence.¹⁹³ This was forcefully rejected by the Christians until 1989.

In 1989, an attempt at political reconciliation was made at Ta'if in Saudi Arabia, with the endorsement of the Saudis and Americans and, after three arduous weeks of negotiations, a “charter of national reconciliation” was finally drafted on the 22nd October, and became known as the Ta'if Agreement or Accord.¹⁹⁴ The period leading up to Ta'if was tense and precarious due not only to fifteen years of civil war but also to five further factors identified by Khalaf: the political impasse between two competing governments); repeated upheavals in presidential succession; reawakened fears of partition; rising fear of Syria's intensifying hold over Lebanon and fears for the marginalised Christian community.¹⁹⁵ Another major factor not to be overlooked was the role of international players on the Lebanese stage, one example of which was Saddam Hussein's shipment of heavy artillery to acting Lebanese Army Commander Aoun's army and the Lebanese forces in retaliation for Syria's support of Iran in the

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 249

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 249

¹⁹⁴ See El Hussein, *Pax*, 12-15

¹⁹⁵ One cabinet headed by Sunni Salim Al-Hoss in West Beirut, the other by Maronite Michel Aoun in Ba'abda. Khalaf, *Civil*, 292; Khalaf, *Civil*, 291-2. Fears voiced today echo this with many saying that present situation feels worse. Conversation, Beirut 2013

Iraq-Iran war of 1980-1988.¹⁹⁶ In January 1989, Aoun was given additional support by the six-state, Kuwait lead Arab committee set up to counter Syria's sovereignty in Lebanon and in March 1989 Aoun declared a "War of Liberation" which aimed to remove Syrian forces and stir international support but instead provoked intensifying violence for a further six months.¹⁹⁷ As ever in Lebanese history, no event stands alone and everything is interconnected.

The Ta'if document essentially addresses four main points: domestic reform, return of state sovereignty over Lebanese territory, liberation of the south from Israeli occupation and Lebanese-Syrian relations.¹⁹⁸ The domestic reform entailed a redistribution of power within the cabinet in order to seek more balanced confessional representation and reduced presidential powers.¹⁹⁹ Following Ta'if, ten Christians and nineteen Muslims were added to the parliament but Reformed Evangelical (*njiliyyeh*) representation remained unchanged with one seat.²⁰⁰ The question of sovereignty primarily intended to maintain a balance between the three central powers, or "Troika," and sought to recover state authority and disband all militias and

¹⁹⁶ Harris, *History*, 254

¹⁹⁷ Harris, *History*, 254; Khalaf, *Civil*, 294

¹⁹⁸ Fida Nasrallah, "The Treaty of Brotherhood, Co-operation and Co-ordination: an Assessment" in *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), 105 and "Taif Agreement," [http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20\(English%20Version\)%20.pdf](http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20(English%20Version)%20.pdf)

¹⁹⁹ Khalaf, *Civil*, 294

²⁰⁰ Picard, *Lebanon*, 70

paramilitary organisations within six months.²⁰¹ It also established the rights of all internally displaced Lebanese to return home. Calling for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops, the document simply urged the implementation of UNSCR425 (1978).²⁰² Concerning relations with Syria, the document addressed the matter in two ways, first stating that “Syrian forces shall thankfully assist the forces of the legitimate Lebanese government to spread the authority of the State of Lebanon within a set period of no more than 2 years,” after which the Syrian and Lebanese governments would decide to deploy the Syrian forces in the Beqa’a region.²⁰³ Second, the final article of the accord describes the “special relationship” between the two countries, based on “the roots of blood relationships, history, and joint fraternal interests” and closes the accord with the patronising statement that:

“Lebanon should not allow itself to become a pathway or a base for any force, state, or organization seeking to undermine its security or Syria's security. Syria, which is eager for Lebanon's security, independence, and unity and for harmony among its citizens, should not permit any act that poses a threat to Lebanon's security, independence, and sovereignty.”²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Tradition evolved to have a Maronite President, Sunni Prime Minister and Shi’a Speaker of Parliament. El-Husseini, *Pax*, 14; Although there was no indication of how to absorb militants back into peaceful society. Khalaf, *Civil*, 295

²⁰² Israel finally withdrew in 2000; the declaration calls for the establishment of UNIFIL, (UN Interim Forces in Lebanon) still in place today: “UNSCR425”:

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/425%281978%29

²⁰³ Article 2 of Ta’if Agreement:

[http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20\(English%20Version\)%20.pdf.art.2:D](http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20(English%20Version)%20.pdf.art.2:D)

²⁰⁴ Article 4 of Ta’if :

<http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement>

The Ta'if agreement was seen by some as of “immense historical significance” and accredited with both bringing the civil war to a close and paving the way for reconstruction of the state, the “Second Republic.”²⁰⁵ However, the implementation of the agreement was deficient, lacked integrity, exacerbated sectarian divisions and allowed Syria to maintain its firm grip over Lebanon.²⁰⁶ The document made sweeping statements with no detail of how they may be achieved, meaning that Ta'if could only be the first step in a long political process. In reality, post-war practices have not changed and still depend on patron-client relationships and the leadership of *zu'ama*.²⁰⁷ At the time, the Tai'f agreement was immediately rejected by Aoun and criticised by Hezbollah, Amal, the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and Palestinians.²⁰⁸ When the accord was approved, René Mouawad was elected president of the Lebanese National Accord Government but was assassinated seventeen days later in a car bomb attack by unknown assailants.²⁰⁹ He was succeeded by Elias Hrawi, a Syrian candidate, and was not recognised by Aoun who immediately dissolved parliament (on the 4th Nov 1989) throwing into question the validity of the Accord process.²¹⁰ The alliance between Aoun and Geagea's Lebanese Forces started to disintegrate with Aoun's vision for an integral Greater Lebanon with full sovereignty clashing with Geagea's plan for a federal system with strong Christian

[nt%20\(English%20Version\)%20.pdf.art.4](#)

²⁰⁵ Khalaf, *Civil*, 289; Zahar, *Foreign Interventions*, 567; Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 105

²⁰⁶ Syria was a “major architect” of Ta'if, Khalaf, *Civil*, 54 (and 300-202 for full criticism).

²⁰⁷ El-Husseini, *Pax*, 215

²⁰⁸ Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 106

²⁰⁹ Khalaf, *Civil*, 296 and Husseini, *Pax*, 27-8

²¹⁰ Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 106

enclave. Further fighting was sparked in what Khalaf calls “a showdown over the leadership of the Christian community.”²¹¹

A surprising consequence of the success of the Lebanese Forces was that Syria stepped in briefly to support Aoun, perhaps their greatest critic.²¹² The Gulf crisis which started with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (2nd August 1990) also had unintended consequences on Lebanese situation.²¹³ Iraq’s Lebanese allies (Aoun and the PLO) hoped the crisis would weaken international support for Ta’if but, recognising this possibility, the pro-Ta’if parties reconvened (21st August 1990) to amend the agreement and concluded with American sanction for the removal of Aoun by shelling Ba’abda palace (13 Oct 1990) leaving him to flee and seek exile in France. Syria then seized Ba’abda and proceeded to exploit Ta’if for its own purposes, reinforcing its manipulation and control over a “war-weary and fragmented country.”²¹⁴ Consequently, the Ta’if accord became fully ‘Syrianised,’ with the support of Saudi Arabia and the USA. Damascus ensured the disbanding of militias, (except Hezbollah because of its role in opposing Israel) declaring armistice and imposing “normalisation.”²¹⁵ Salim al-Hoss was dismissed and replaced with Syrian client, Omar Karame (24th December), brother of assassinated Rashid whose “Government of National Reconciliation’ was widely criticised for its pro-Syrian imbalance.²¹⁶

Resulting from the Gulf war victory of the pro-Ta’if coalition (America, Saudi

²¹¹ Khalaf, *Civil*, 297

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 107 and Khalaf, *Civil*, 298

²¹⁴ Khalaf, *Civil*, 302

²¹⁵ Harris, *History*, 259; Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 107

²¹⁶ Harris, *History*, 258; Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 108

Arabia, Egypt and Syria), Lebanese-Syrian “privileged relations” were formalised on 22nd May 1991 with the signing of the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination.²¹⁷ The treaty established the Supreme Council (composed of the two presidents, prime ministers, deputy prime ministers and speakers of parliament) which effectively authorised direct Syrian dominance and control over the country (in return for a promise to maintain internal stability) and legitimised “unequal relations.”²¹⁸ This became the *status quo* until the Independence Intifada (*intifadat al-istiqlal*) in 2005 (which became known by some as the Cedar Revolution and was perhaps an early version of the “Arab Spring”) raising serious fears among some Lebanese.²¹⁹ With the signing of a Defence and Security Pact between Syria and Lebanon in September “banning any activity or organisation in all military, security, political, and information fields that might...cause threats to the other country,” and the nullification of the Tripartite Arab High Commission, Damascus retained strict command over the Lebanese, particularly those critical of the Syrian regime.²²⁰ It was a matter of some concern that the new arrangement so closely paralleled the old

²¹⁷ “All Lebanon’s policies, therefore, will henceforth be conducted in harmony with Syria. Syria, a one-party socialist state, is obligated in the pact to respect Lebanon’s liberal political system and capitalist economy. The treaty, in effect, formalises the situation which exists on the ground thereby resulting in the *de jure* satellisation of Lebanon by Syria.” Quoted in Nasrallah 108 (See also Husseini, *Pax*, 16)

²¹⁸ Atallah BouMelhab in El-Husseini, *Pax*, 17

²¹⁹ Misleading phrase coined by US State Dept, to avoid negative connotations of ‘Intifada’. Michael Farha, “Beirut Spring to Regional Winter?” and Halim Shebaya, “Intifada 2005: a Look Backwards and a Look Forward” both in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil wars in Lebanon* Youssef Choueiri ed. (London: Stacey International, 2007), 227 and 266; Kerr, *Philosophy (introduction)*, 4; Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 109; Hirst, *Beware*, 307-9

²²⁰ Quotation taken from Harris, *History*, 259; Khalaf, *Civil*, 302 and Nasrallah, *Treaty*, 109

Lebanon.²²¹ Khalaf states that to this day:

“Lebanon remains hostage to circumstances that render the inveterate inside-outside dialectics all the more vulnerable. It does not take much for Syria to manoeuvre any of its key proxies to destabilise the internal security and thereby justify its continued presence in Lebanon.”²²²

From 1990, Syria continues to hold firm sovereignty over Lebanon from Damascus by ‘divide and rule’ strategy which fed into sectarian rivalry and promoted a Greater Syria as solution to a failing Greater Lebanon.²²³ Appointed Prime Minister in 2000, replacing Salim al-Hoss, billionaire business-man Rafiq Hariri accepted a division of responsibilities between the Lebanese government and Syria. Hariri took on the massive reconstruction programme of downtown Beirut and worked towards improving Lebanon’s post-war economy while Syria dealt with matters of defence and security.²²⁴ It was unfortunate that many young, skilled professionals were forced to find employment abroad during this period, and the rebuilding of the city brought an influx of cheap Syrian labourers whose presence caused resentment among many Lebanese.²²⁵ Damascus maintained its control over Lebanese matters in the form of military intervention and subtle control over the media for the next fifteen years.²²⁶ Israel’s withdrawal in 2000 removed a key justification for Syrian presence in

²²¹ Michael Johnson, “Managing Political Change in Lebanon: Challenges and Prospects” in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* Youssef Choueiri ed. (London: Stacey International, 2007), 139

²²² Khalaf, *Civil*, 55

²²³ Harris, *History*, 257

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 260

²²⁵ Harris, *History*, 261

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 263

Lebanon but also coincided with the ascendance of Bashar al-Asad to the Syrian presidency. Hariri was initially supported by Damascus but eventually challenged the Syrian presence in Lebanon which led to a collision with Asad and culminated with his resignation and assassination in 2005.

Under Syria's domination, the Christians were the first to feel existential threat.²²⁷ With Christian political parties undermined and several key figures arrested, tortured, threatened and imprisoned, they were humiliated and marginalised.²²⁸ This period following Ta'if became known as *al-ihbat al-masihi* (the despair of the Christians) and affected the whole of the Christian population.²²⁹ With Bashar al-Asad directing Syrian politics, relations between the two countries became worse, dividing Lebanon into Syrian clients (including the Syrian Socialist National Party, (SSNP), Ba'ath and Faranjiya faction, Nabih Berri and the Amal bloc), Syrian allies (most notably the Hariri bloc, despite its connections to the West) and Syrian opponents (although few were represented in parliament).²³⁰ To clarify, Syrian clients are those who have entered into patronage with Syria through receiving Syrian sponsorship, and allies are independent Lebanese bodies which act in partnership and allegiance with Syria. Syria supplied Hezbollah with weapons because the Asad regime required a strong Hezbollah to ensure control over Hariri and his allies in the West.²³¹ In effect, Lebanon was held hostage to Syria.²³² Among the Christian community there was increasing resistance to Syrian hegemony but with a lack of

²²⁷ Zahar, *Foreign Interventions*, 70

²²⁸ "Those who oppose Syrian occupation or intervention pay ultimate price." Rubin, *Lebanon*, 32

²²⁹ Shebaya, *Intifada*, 257-8 and Khalaf, *Civil*, 54

²³⁰ Harris, *History*, 256

²³¹ Thereby opening an entry into the region for Iran; Harris, *History*, 265

²³² Roger Scruton, *a Land Held Hostage: Lebanon and The West*, (London: Clarendon Press, 1987), 79

leadership and the Druze leader Junblat moving to the opposition, Syria acted without consulting Hariri and summoned him to Damascus to be threatened into submission.²³³ However, Hariri was instrumental in creating an opposition coalition which included his Future Movement, Junblat's Progressive Socialist Party, the Qurnet Shehwan Christian bloc and Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement. Hariri's aim had been to topple the Syria-controlled government at the Spring 2005 elections but he was assassinated by an unknown group calling themselves "Support and Jihad in Syria and Lebanon" on the 14th February 2005, an event which shook the nation and brought in a new political era of Syrian-Lebanese relations.²³⁴ Thousands attended his funeral, first a silent procession then collective protest chanting "there is no God but God, and Asad is the enemy of God."²³⁵ Following his murder, large crowds including many Christians gathered to protest against the Syrian/Lebanese government and graffiti appeared around the city proclaiming "Liban aux Libanais!" or "Syria Out!"²³⁶ A reactionary demonstration of about half a million protesters was held on the 8th March by the Hezbollah led coalition calling itself *shukr wa-wafa' li souriya* (Thanks and Loyalty to Syria) which sparked a dramatic response of about a million Christians, Sunnis and Druze in a unique manifestation of solidarity and appeal for justice and independence on the 14th March, one month after Hariri's murder. In echoes of the French revolution, there were creative public calls for freedom, autonomy and independence.²³⁷

²³³ See Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its Impact on the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 100-127 and Harris, *History*, 266-9

²³⁴ Mackey, *Mirror*, 209

²³⁵ Khalaf, *Beirut*, 241; Harris, *History*, 269

²³⁶ Mansel, *Levant*, 348

²³⁷ Shebaya, *Intifada*, 261; Khalaf, *Civil*, 243

The Independence Intifada was instrumental in disrupting the political *status quo*, removing the Syrian military from Lebanese territory and opening the way for an international tribunal into Hariri's murder.²³⁸ Although Aoun soon swung from opposing Syria to joining the pro-Syrian coalition, the government is still divided into two coalitions, named after these historical dates (March 8 and March 14) and the Spring elections of 2005 gained a large March 14 majority (with 72 out of 128 seats).²³⁹ However, the uprising did not bring a real break from the past and Lebanon remains as vulnerable and permeable as it did before. By continuing to foster insecurities and inviting outsiders into Lebanese politics, the Independence Intifada exacerbated the existing sectarian divides and the post-revolution period has not been without serious apprehension. With a forced extension of president Lahoud's term in office, Syrian clients and informers have spied on Lebanese leaders, tapped phones, and facilitated several assassinations and attempted assassinations targeting prominent anti-Syrian figures.²⁴⁰

The UN International Independent Investigating Commission (UNIIC) first suggested the Syrian/Lebanese "security machine" was responsible for Hariri's

²³⁸ Knudsen, *Introduction* 270

²³⁹ Harris, *History*, 270

²⁴⁰ Killed in 2005: Defence Minister Elias al-Murr, al-Nahar publisher Gibran Tuéni, al-Nahar journalist Samir Kassir, former Communist party leader George Hawi; in 2006 - MP Pierre Mine Gemayel; in 2007 - MP Walid Eido, MP Antoine Ghanem, Brigadier General Francois el-Hajj; in 2008 - Key STL investigator Wissam Eid; in 2012 - head of Internal Security Forces (ISF) intelligence branch Wissam al-Hassan; in 2013 - former Future Movement minister Mohamad Chatah; in 2014 - ISF intelligence officer Ghassan Ajaj

Harris, *History*, 210-272 (There were other assassinations of prominent figures in this period but disproportionately targeting those opposed to Syria.)

assassination, identifying Syrian suspects and suggested Hezbollah participation.²⁴¹ In July 2006, Hezbollah sought to reassert itself with the kidnap of two and murder of three Israeli soldiers sparking the “30 day war” between Hezbollah and Israel during which Israel heavily bombarded the South of Lebanon and Shi’a areas of southern Beirut causing severe destruction. However on cease-fire Hezbollah declared “divine victory,” was boosted in its popular image and received increased support from Syria.²⁴² In 2007 and 2008 further clashes erupted in Nahr-el Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Tripoli (involving Syrian intelligence) and in West Beirut (Hezbollah’s “Operation Smashing the Balance”).²⁴³ Knudsen writes that:

“After 2005, Christian-Muslim divisions gave way to the Sunni-Shia split prevalent in the region, the Maronites divided between those whose interests are best served by supporting the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis, and those aligned with the US-Saudi alliance.”²⁴⁴

He describes the “unity cabinets” or coalitions as a means for the minorities to pressure the majority to comply with their demands and act as a “blocking third” which have caused continual political deadlock and polarised societal divisions, contributing to localised violence and a powerless government.²⁴⁵ Walid Junblat, the so-called “political weathervane” due to his foresight and tendency to switch allegiance as befits his interests, withdrew from the March 14 coalition in 2009 in the belief that a position in the March 8 coalition would be safer due to the change in the

²⁴¹ Harris, *History*, 270

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 271

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 272

²⁴⁴ Knudsen, *Introduction*, 5

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6

western political climate and the USA's new attitude to Asad.²⁴⁶ In the same year, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon was established, leading to some of the aforementioned assassinations and heightening tensions with Hezbollah. On the 13th January 2011, eleven ministers from March 8 left the government, forcing Prime Minister Sa'ad Hariri to resign and leaving a political vacuum for six months before a new cabinet was formed under Najib Mikati.²⁴⁷ Harris aptly states that:

“Preeminent influence in Lebanon, both on the central government and between the various factions, is critical for Syria from defensive and offensive strategic perspectives, whatever one considers Syria's role to be in the pan-Arab arena or in the Arab-Israeli conflict.”²⁴⁸

The same could be said today although the tactics of Syrian monopoly have evolved over time with the developments of both internal and external politics in the region. Post-war Lebanon has returned to a consociational model of democracy but without full democratisation, stability cannot be permanent. Since 2010 there have been large street demonstrations in Beirut calling for Secularisation.²⁴⁹ Many Christians saw this as the solution to Lebanon's problems but the sectarian, patron-client system of government has roots too deep to change with any ease or rapidity and its beneficiaries are the very figures who perpetuate the paradigm. Relations

²⁴⁶ Harris, *History*, 272

²⁴⁷ Are Knudsen, “special Tribunal for Lebanon: Homage to Hariri?” in *Lebanon after the Cedar Revolution* (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), 231

²⁴⁸ Harris, *Syria in Lebanon*, 134

²⁴⁹ See The Daily Star, Lebanon: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2010/Apr-26/57117-thousands-march-in-beirut-to-promote-secularism-in-politics.ashx>

between the two countries are still very close, with Lebanese political elites still shuttling to Damascus to receive direction.²⁵⁰

Since mid 2011, Damascus has been faced with its own internal crisis as a wave of the Arab Spring has taken hold in Syria. As tensions rise, the violence in Syria has continually threatened to overspill into Lebanon, and has sparked fierce street battles (for example in Tripoli in May 2012) between mostly Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.²⁵¹ The catastrophe in Syria has raised fears that the Syrian regime will try to displace the conflict to Lebanon once again forcing it to carry the burden and pay the cost of neighbouring conflicts. As the Shi'a community was the only Lebanese sect without significant connections in Syria Hezbollah has cultivated close ties with the Syrian regime which serves as a connector with Iran and remains the "sole vector through which the arms supplied by Iran have flowed."²⁵² Hezbollah has been actively engaged in the war in Syria since 2012 fighting on the side of the Asad regime and Knudsen, writing at that time, states that "as the Arab Spring develops, it also increases Hezbollah's significance to Iran as the embattled Asad regime struggles to quash a country-wide insurgency."²⁵³ Once again, one is reminded of the interconnectedness of the region and of the importance in maintaining Lebanese stability and security.

The Lebanese State itself has maintained a "policy of neutrality and non-

²⁵⁰ El-Husseini, *Pax*, 213; and Mackey. *Mirror*, 203

²⁵¹ El-Husseini, *Pax*, 219

²⁵² Harris, *Faces*, 89; Khalaf, *Civil*, 14

²⁵³ See The daily Star, Lebanon "Analysts see Qusair as First Hezbollah step in Syria:" <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jun-06/219598-analysts-see-qusair-as-first-hezbollah-step-in-syria.ashx> 06.06.13; Knudsen, *Introduction*, 7

intervention with regards to the war in Syria.”²⁵⁴ However, Sunni support for the uprising against the Asad regime is also on the rise and the fragile Lebanese state is struggling to function under increasing polarity within the government. The 2014 elections have been postponed until 2017 due to the failure to elect a new president (leaving a vacuum for over a year). The present government (since 2009) is composed of the March 8 coalition together with the Change and Reform Bloc and Pro-government Independents (68 seats), with the March 14 Coalition providing the whole of the opposition (58 seats). The Syrian war will undoubtedly bring about yet another era of relations between the two countries but at present it is impossible to predict in which direction they may swing. Meier warns that:

“Unfortunately, the political division in the country is sending messages of discord, even among members of the 8 or 14 March coalitions, revealing a fragmentation process where every little event could degenerate in less controllable fights. ... The growing number of refugees arriving from Syria plus the postponing of the parliamentary elections are increasing the pressure for divisions.”²⁵⁵

Pax Syriana

This chapter has traced the changing relations between Damascus and Beirut since the establishment of the Lebanese state in 1943. A pattern of deeply-rooted conflicting interests within Lebanon itself has been revealed, along with the “dizzying duplicity” of Lebanese politics leaving one to wonder whether Lebanon is a “neutral

²⁵⁴ El-Husseini, *Pax*, 219

²⁵⁵ Daniel Meier, *The Effects of Arab Spring and Syrian Uprising on Lebanon* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2013), 17

enclave” or a “confrontation state.”²⁵⁶ Knudsen summarises that: “Repeated political conflict in Lebanon has led to violence, then stalemate, then a return to the politics of consociational government following a painful compromise.”²⁵⁷ The tendency for the Lebanese to seek patrons outside their own borders has meant a polarisation within government between those who lean west and those who lean east (towards Syria). Syria has been described as “the destabilising stabiliser, an equilibrator of disequilibrium or, as the Lebanese say, *Hāmīhā Harāmīhā*, the guard who is the robber.”²⁵⁸

The difficulty for Lebanese to recover from the rifts and wounds left by over three decades of ruthless Syrian hegemony has also been revealed. This has an impact on the response of the Lebanese to the present influx of refugees as many Christian Lebanese were brought up to hate the Syrians.²⁵⁹ Politically, the present challenge for the state is to maintain stability and security against the effects of the Syrian war and the continued threat and intimidation coming from Damascus. Generally speaking, the Christians have a greater tendency to lean toward the West due, in part, to their shared worldviews and understanding of the role of the State (see following chapter). The Lebanese themselves all have personal and professional allegiances and alliances with external powers and so the enemies to peace “creep through the weaknesses” of the state, opening cracks for suspicion, fear and disintegration.

²⁵⁶ Michael Young *Hizbullah's Other War* (New York Times, 4 Aug.2006 in Hirst, *Beware*, 312); Bulloch, *Death*, 11

²⁵⁷ Knudsen, *Introduction*, 5

²⁵⁸ Ziadeh, *Sectarianism*. 175

²⁵⁹ FN.LB.24.03.15: 12

Chapter Three

The Lebanese Church

*“To each his religion,
and may God help him to live by it!”²⁶⁰*

The aim of this chapter is to identify the particular position and role of the Christians in modern Lebanon. Firstly, the Lebanese Church is introduced as a mosaic of composite communities which reflect the demographic diversity of the country. Secondly, this chapter places the Church in the geographical and political picture that has been established in the previous chapters and illustrates to what extent the experience of the Lebanese Church is indicative of the strains and struggles of the wider society. Finally, its particular position and role will be addressed and its principal strengths recognised before a more detailed discussion in Part Two of the Church’s present role in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis.

Although the Christian experience of violence, injustice, insecurity and emigration is no different from that of their Muslim neighbours, I propose that the Lebanese Christian position is unique, both regionally and internationally, and that the Lebanese Church is well placed to have significant positive influence in both

²⁶⁰ Popular adage quoted in Mahmoud Ayoub, “Lebanon Between Religious Faith and Political Ideology” in *Peace for Lebanon? : From War to Reconstruction* Deirdre Collings, (ed.) (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 246

contemporary Lebanon and the wider Middle East region. I will conclude by suggesting two ways in particular which will be explored in the following chapters.

A Lebanese Church?

To use the term “Lebanese Church” is to attempt to unite a group which does not naturally hold together. The previous two chapters have established the presence of Christians in Lebanon since early Christian times, as key to establishing the Lebanese State and as continuing actors in the political sphere. Before continuing, it is necessary to first identify the Lebanese Christians who constitute this group. Until relatively recently there has been little western academic interest in the Middle Eastern churches.²⁶¹ Consequently, many westerners have made the naïve and ignorant assumption that Islam eradicated the remainder of the early church and that Christianity left its region of origin when it spread to northern Europe with the expansion of the Roman Empire.²⁶² There are studies on the origins and traditions of the Eastern Churches, as well as explorations of regional Muslim – Christian relations and a wealth of writing on Christian understandings of the Israeli-Palestinian situation which are widely read in the West.²⁶³ However, those featuring traditional Eastern

²⁶¹ Taken from Emma Loosley “Peter, Paul and James of Jerusalem: The doctrinal and political evolution of the Eastern and Oriental Churches” in *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East* Anthony O’Mahony and Emma Loosley (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2010), 1

²⁶² For example the American preacher who said: “We have come to bring Christianity back to its birthplace” (at a Christmas service in Bethlehem, December, 2008)

²⁶³ E.g. Anthony O’Mahony, and Emma Loosley (eds.) *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East* (London: Routledge, 2010); E.g. Kenneth Cragg and Colin Chapman, both familiar with Lebanon; Na’im Ateek, Salim Munayer, Yohanna Katanacho, Munther Isaac, etc. offer a Palestinian perspective.

churches do not tend to venture beyond descriptive accounts of historical roots, rites and liturgy into the exploration of real, lived experience, and the physical division of the churches, which will be explored below, is reinforced by academic work which investigates the different denominations as separate entities.²⁶⁴ Another limitation of academic writing particular to Lebanon is that, in the historical and political sphere, the mention of the “Christians” usually refers to the Maronites, and thereby ignores the diversity of Christian faith and practice, the attempts at building ecumenical unity, and the reality of shared experience.²⁶⁵ This research aims to consider the churches together as a whole community which is experiencing a shared struggle in adapting to contemporary challenges. The terms Arab and Middle Eastern are used almost interchangeably throughout. It would be incorrect to identify all Lebanese churches as “Arab” and some churches would object to such a definition.²⁶⁶ However, the appellation “Arab” is used loosely here to describe Arabic speaking congregations and to highlight inherited cultural traditions which influence them. Drawing on Corbon’s development of the term “L’Eglise des Arabes,” this chapter outlines a Lebanese Church which is a symbol of hope by its very existence.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Fiona McCallum, “Christians in the Middle East: A New Subfield?” in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 42, 2010, 486

²⁶⁵ See O’Mahony “Christianity in the Middle East,” 253

²⁶⁶ Particularly the Maronites, as mentioned in Chapter one. See Kaufman, *Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920*, Middle East Studies Journal 37.1 (2001); See also Antoine Audo, “Eastern Christian Identity: A Catholic Perspective” in *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, (London: Melisende, 2010), 19-36

²⁶⁷ “A church (as opposed to a community *ta’ifa*) is ‘called by God’ (*ekklesia*) and sent to all the human beings of that place because it lives in the Spirit of Christ” Corbon “The Churches of the Middle East: Their Origins and Identity, from their Roots in the Past to their Openness to the Present” in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 92; Jean Corbon *L’Eglise des Arabes* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 40

The Middle Eastern Churches

Studies of Church History in the West tend to make a leap from the Early Church and the Pauline missions recorded in the New Testament to the conversion of Constantine in 312. Thereafter, the focus continues westward and it is often forgotten that by the fifth century there were already five Christian patriarchates, only one of which was in Europe (Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Rome).²⁶⁸ These all remain today and are each represented in Lebanon by a variety of denominations within these “families,”²⁶⁹ as will be shown below.²⁶⁹

The Middle Eastern churches have been living alongside Islam since the time of the Muslim conquests and throughout the caliphates. In the course of history, Christians have at times enjoyed relative freedom of worship under Muslim rule (for example with the Abbasids) then persecution and humiliation meaning that the Eastern Church “lost its position at the heart of public life and subsided into obscurity.”²⁷⁰ This pattern has continually alternated between peaceful periods and periods of severe oppression.²⁷¹ Today’s pressures from Islamist extremists to convert to Islam, pay a tax (*jizya*) or face death are no worse than in history but the present ease of international travel and network of personal and professional

²⁶⁸ Philip Jenkins *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa and Asia - and How it Died* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 47

²⁶⁹ “Families” is the term used by the Middle East Council of Churches to group churches. Corbon “The Churches of the Middle East” in “*Christian Communities*,” 97

²⁷⁰ Thomas, *Arab Christianity*, 18, 19

²⁷¹ Anne-Marie Eddé Françoise Micheau and Christophe Picard (Eds.) *Communautés Chrésiennes en Pays d’Islam: Du début du VII^e siècle au milieu du XI^e siècle* (Condé-sur-Noireau: SEDES, 1997), 180

connections abroad allows greater ease of exodus from the region completely.²⁷²

Today, the persecution facing Christians in Syria, Egypt and Iraq echo those of history. One person interviewed for this research said that in Syria, where the Christians are known to be non-violent and peaceful, their children are kidnapped and a ransom is demanded. It is said: “You Christians don’t fight - you must pay ransom.”²⁷³

Lebanese Christians

In Lebanon, however, religious freedom has been a key characteristic of the modern state. The Christians have had significant political representation due to the presence of the Maronites. As mentioned in chapter one, it was the Maronites who were key to bringing about the establishment of the Lebanese state as a means of achieving “political insulation from the Islamic surrounds.”²⁷⁴ Lebanon was seen as a Christian homeland and to be preserved at all costs.²⁷⁵

The Maronites trace their heritage to an early hermit called Maron whose followers established the Bet Maroun monastery in Northern Syria and accepted the Council of Chalcedon (451). Populating northern Lebanon since the seventh century and creating a Maronite Patriarchate under bishop John-Maron in the early eighth century, they maintained their own autonomy in the early centuries of Islam and moved inland to Mount Lebanon in the tenth century, gradually spreading south

²⁷² Jenkins, *Lost History*, 97

²⁷³ FN. LB. 26.03.15 3:3A

²⁷⁴ Harris, *Faces*, 68

²⁷⁵ One of the reasons for the brutal Christian militias of the civil war(s).

throughout the mountains towards Jezzine in the Shouf region.²⁷⁶ In 1180, the Maronites accepted the supremacy of the Pope and established a link with the Roman Catholic Church, the result of which was the Romanisation of the church in the late sixteenth century.²⁷⁷ The Maronite openness to the West and emphasis on the importance of education are two major contributions to the ethos of the modern Lebanese State.

As mentioned previously, there has been no official census since 1932 which, although unreliable in its methodology suggested a Christian majority.²⁷⁸ Estimates from that time varied between 49.9% and 53% but figures today are more likely to be between 35% and 40% due to low birth rates in the Christian community, the rules applying to religious inheritance, and a high tendency to emigrate.²⁷⁹ Lebanon is

²⁷⁶ Shafiq Abouzayd, "The Maronite Church" in *Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 305

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 306; Robert Brenton Betts, *Christians in the Arab East: A Political Study* (London: SPCK, 1979), 48-9; Harris, *Faces*, 70; Atiya, Aziz S. *A Study of Eastern Christianity*, (London: 1968), 397-403 and Corbon, "The Churches of the Middle East" in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 95

²⁷⁸ It included tax paying emigrants (56% of whom were Christian), without whom the statistics would have been in favour of the Muslims with 57.63% Firro, *Inventing Lebanon*, 119-121 (Table 3); Firro, *Inventing Lebanon*, 119 (Table 1)

²⁷⁹ Official Gazette in Firro, *Inventing Lebanon*, 119; Mixed marriages of a non-Muslim man to a Muslim woman are forbidden without the prior conversion of the man to Islam. In the reverse case (Muslim man and non-Muslim woman), the woman need not convert but must raise the children as Muslims. See Philippe Fargues "The Arab Christians of the Middle East: A Demographic Perspective" in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 51; Habib Badr, "The Religious Landscape of Lebanon" in *Theological review* Vol. 33.1&2 (Beirut: The Near East School of Theology, 2014), 7 and CIA World Factbook (2012) suggests 40.5% Christian, 54% Muslim; Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, 84; Fargues, *Arab Christians*, 51; See also Herman Teule, "Middle Eastern Christians and Migration: Some Reflections" 1-23

home to approximately four million resident Lebanese belonging to eighteen recognized religious sects, twelve of which are Christian.²⁸⁰ These are further divided into four ‘families’ recognised by the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC): Oriental Catholic, Greek Orthodox (Chalcedonian or Byzantine churches), Oriental Orthodox (non-Chalcedonian or “Monophysite” Churches) and Reformed (Protestant) Evangelical as shown below.²⁸¹

Oriental Catholic:

Maronite

Greek Catholic (Melkite)

Armenian Catholic

Syrian Catholic (Syriac)

Assyrian Catholic (Chaldean)

The Latin Community (Roman Catholic)

Greek Orthodox:

Greek Orthodox (Rûm)

Oriental Orthodox:

Armenian Orthodox (Gregorian)

Syrian Orthodox (Syriac)

Coptic Orthodox²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Badr, *Religious landscape*, 7

²⁸¹ The Churches which recognised only one nature of Christ (either solely divine or a fusion of divine and human), Frans Bouwen “The Churches in the Middle East” in *Ecumenism: Present Realities and Future Prospects*, Lawrence S. Cunningham (ed.) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 27

²⁸² Coptic Catholic not yet recognised. Badr, *Religious Landscape*, 11

Reformed Churches:

This is categorised as one sect accounting for about 0.88% of the Lebanese population and encompasses a spectrum of reformed churches including Episcopal, Lutheran, Congregational churches (including Arab and Armenian), Arab Presbyterian, and many others which are not members of the MECC.²⁸³ Some of these churches (Reformed, Episcopal and Presbyterian) have, however, become united under the separate Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) a move which may be the first step to absorbing peripheral congregations into the MECC in the future.²⁸⁴

It is difficult to know how many reformed congregations there are in Lebanon and there are no reliable statistics. There are said to be 50,000 Lebanese registered as Evangelical (i.e reformed – lit. *Injiyeh*) which may include those who are outside the country, and those not regularly attending, and does not include those attending who are not registered. These congregations may range from twenty-five to a thousand members although the figures for regular attendance will be lower.²⁸⁵ In order for a congregation to be recognised as such, it must have thirty active members, (those who will be involved in church life, participate in activities, pay yearly fees, etc.).²⁸⁶ In general, urban churches are composed of people with very high levels of education and less so in rural areas.²⁸⁷

²⁸³ Termed “Protestant Evangelical” by Lebanese, including Baptist, Brethren, Nazarenes, Free Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Assemblies of God, Church of God, Christian Alliance, Pentecostal and Quaker. Bouwen, *The Churches in the Middle East*, 32 and Badr, *Religious Landscape*, 9

²⁸⁴ Bouwen, *The Churches of the Middle East*, 35

²⁸⁵ Dr. N, Near East School of Theology, email, 19.04.16

²⁸⁶ Dr. G, Near East School of Theology, email, 21.04.16

²⁸⁷ Dr. N, 19.04.16

For the most part, each Orthodox Church (which emerged from the historical patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople) has a Catholic counterpart, which separated some time from 1724 onwards.²⁸⁸ This is also true of the Patriarchate of the Ancient Church of the East, whose origins are Persian, and is represented in Lebanon by the Chaldean Catholic Church, an offshoot from the Assyrian Church of the East (which does not have official representation in Lebanon).²⁸⁹

Connections to the West

This ecclesial variety serves to demonstrate that within the small Lebanese state, virtually all the Christian traditions of the region are represented as well as Roman Catholic and Reformed communities, and including many western expressions of Christianity which have developed with more recent western reformed missions and returned *émigrés*. This means that all the Lebanese Christians have sister congregations either in other parts of the Arab world or further afield.²⁹⁰ Only the

²⁸⁸ See Fig A2.2 Pacini, *Christian communities*, 310; See Table 1 *The Place of the Syrian Orthodox Church among the Other Churches* in Sebastian Brock “The Syrian Orthodox Church in Modern History” in O’Mahony, *Studies*, 18

²⁸⁹ O’Mahony, *Introduction*, 12; See also O’Mahony, “Christianity in the Middle East: Modern History and Contemporary Theology and Ecclesiology: An Introduction in Overview” in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, Vol. 63 (3-4), 2013: 232

²⁹⁰ Today there are also countless Ethiopian, Nigerian, Filipino and Sri Lankan congregations in Lebanon mainly attended by migrant workers, most of whom are women. Migrant workers account for about 250,000 in Lebanon. See International Labour Organisation, “Lebanon:” <http://www.ilo.org/beirut/countries/lebanon/lang--en/index.htm>

Maronites are particularly *Lebanese* in the sense that they established themselves as a historical sect in Mount Lebanon and have developed a particular attachment to the land itself.²⁹¹ They are also the only sect confined mainly to that region today and, having no natural allies, it is for that reason that the Maronites have historically sought external political support.²⁹² The Maronites are the only church with a formal connection to a State outside their own.²⁹³ During Ottoman rule there were “capitulations” (treaties with the West) which ensured protection of the independence of the Maronite patriarch and safeguarded the early Lebanese state.²⁹⁴ Today that external allegiance takes the form of political affiliation and support from France. Rather than by religious or cultural loyalties, this connection was established as “a

²⁹¹ Betts *Christians in the Arab East*, 49 and Fiona McCallum, “The Maronites in Lebanon: An Historical and Political Perspective” in *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East* Anthony O’Mahony and Emma Loosley (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2010), 26

²⁹² (Although there are some remaining Maronite communities in Syria) Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, 47-49; Aziz, S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity* (London: Meuthen & Co. Ltd.), 410 and Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, 32-35

²⁹³ France, as mentioned above. McCallum, *The Maronites in Lebanon*, 25

²⁹⁴ “Treaties between a Western country and the Ottoman empire that secured special rights for European residents and indigenous employees (who were predominantly Christian.” McCallum, *The Maronites in Lebanon*, 28 – 30 and Corbon “The Churches of the Middle East” in Corbon “The Churches of the Middle East” in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 95; An example of Patron-Client relationship which, I suggest, illustrates the Arab view of relations with the West, i.e. showing loyalty to the West, adopting Western ideas and strategies in the hope of achieving and establishing long-term Western support and provision; One of the historical reasons for the emergence of brutal Christian militias of the civil war(s)

call for protection and patronage in the struggle for control of the Middle East.”²⁹⁵ An earlier hope had been to develop relations with the emerging Jewish state of Israel to establish solidarity against the wider Muslim region but that soon became impossible with the *Nakba* (disaster) of 1948 and the ensuing political developments of the mid-twentieth century.

Obstacles to unity

As mentioned above, the majority of challenges facing the Christians are not necessarily different from those facing their Muslim neighbours. In Syria, for example, minority Muslim communities are equally vulnerable to attack.²⁹⁶ The Christians can, however, provide a gauge to measure the political climate of the region as their responses to such political uncertainty invariably reflect the neurophysiological responses to fear and anxiety identified by Walter Cannon as “freeze,” “flight” and “fight.”²⁹⁷ In the Lebanese context, these responses can be roughly summarised as: retreat to safe enclaves (distancing the self from the other); emigration (or ‘nostalgic retreat’- yearning for a lost Lebanon); or internecine

²⁹⁵ Mahmoud Ayoub “Lebanon Between Religious Faith and Political Ideology” in *Peace for Lebanon?: From War to Reconstruction* Deirdre Collings, (ed.) (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 242

²⁹⁶ As has been seen with the attack on, Druze, some Shia communities and Yazidis in Iraq, for example.

²⁹⁷ Adopted as a model for understanding the Lebanese situation by sociologist, Samir Khalaf in a very interesting discussion in Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 310-313.

conflict, leading to the disintegration of society and the perpetuation of old wounds.²⁹⁸

In the Church these are manifested as a fragmented community with a high rate of emigration and hostile towards the Other.

The plurality of Lebanese churches was exacerbated and institutionalised by the Ottoman *millet* system which made each group autonomous and therefore less likely to interact with each other. Over time, groups gathered together in enclaves and there came to be a geographical separation between the sects.²⁹⁹ It is problematic that in Middle Eastern society, perhaps especially in the sectarian climate of Lebanon, “church” has been confused with “sect,” thereby suggesting a tribal quality, or what Saadeh argues is better described as “caste.”³⁰⁰ Defined as “a rigid system of social gratification based on heredity,” she writes that, unable to merge, castes can only subdivide.³⁰¹ In Lebanon, the Civil War reinforced this tendency and the Church (particularly the Reformed church) exemplifies such fragmentation to the extreme.³⁰² Certainly in times of external threat, a disintegrated, inward-looking church is easily penetrable and vulnerable to ruin. This diversity can, however, also be recognised as a rich variety, as an example of the breadth of the world church and an opportunity for united strength. It was the Middle East Council of Churches

²⁹⁸ See Sune Haughnolle, *War and Memory*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010); Khalaf, *Civil*, 305

²⁹⁹ Fargues, *Arab Christians*, 52-3

³⁰⁰ Sofia Saadeh, “Greater Lebanon: the Formation of a Caste System?” in *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon* Choueiri, Youssef M. (Ed.) (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), 64-74

³⁰¹ Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, 225; See also Corbon in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 92-110; Saadeh, *Greater Lebanon*, 64, 74

³⁰² Described by Patriarch Sfeir as “Chaos prevailing within the Christian ranks.” McCallum, *The Maronites in Lebanon*, 38

(MECC), established as the Near East Council of Churches in 1974 and based in Beirut, which established a Middle Eastern ecumenical community in the region. The MECC is now comprised of twenty-seven denominations which work together to create unity from this diversity of expressions of the Christian faith.³⁰³ Habib explains that the mission of the MECC is:

“(T)o facilitate the positive interaction of these two cultural currents, on the basis of the reconciliation of the human being with God in Jesus Christ and for the purpose of bringing peace upon all people irrespective of their cultural affiliation or racial origins.”³⁰⁴

It is, in this fragmented society and climate of suspicion, a task made harder by countless obstacles such as displacement and emigration, the threat of uneducated western missions (“aggressive proselytism”) and conflicting views of what kind of unity to pursue.³⁰⁵ Corbon suggests that the healing of the wounds which separate the churches is slow and is restricting mission, if is because they are motivated by human interests more than by the “Love of Christ, ‘friend of all men.’”³⁰⁶ He argues that the only future for the Arab Church is as a unified body, divided perhaps in tradition and doctrinal details but united as the people of the resurrection.³⁰⁷ In Lebanon, this need for unity is all the more acute in a context where the church is in decline and fragmenting into further minorities within a minority. The increased presence of a

³⁰³ Listed on the MECC website: <http://mecc.org/content/member-churches>

³⁰⁴ Gabriel Habib “Ecumenism in the Middle East: A Personal Experience” in *Christianity: A History of the Middle East* Habib Badr (chief ed.) (Beirut: MECC, 2005), 891

³⁰⁵ Discussed in Corbon “Middle East” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 591-608

³⁰⁶ Corbon, “The Churches of the Middle East” in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 109

³⁰⁷ Corbon, *L’Église des Arabes*, 211

multiplicity of Reformed congregations is making the task of unity building even harder as newer denominations have unclear theologies and are suspiciously western in appearance.

Because of the Middle Eastern confusion of Christianity with the West, there is what Mitri describes as a “non-distinction between western cultural influence and political loyalty to the West...even between secular thought and Christianity.”³⁰⁸ This has been exacerbated by the fact that many (mostly Christian) intellectuals have tried to emulate the West since the late nineteenth century in the hope of sharing in the perceived “superiority of the West.”³⁰⁹ The Christians have often been accused of being pawns of the West or even Israeli agents and have even been victimised as a result of their identification with the crusaders.³¹⁰ This prejudice even exists within the Christian community, perhaps as a result of the nineteenth century “sheep stealing” (conversion of Orthodox and Catholic Christians to Reformed theology) and means that the churches which appear to be most western are viewed as least authentic and most suspicious.³¹¹ The Middle Eastern Christians are, however, closer to their Muslim neighbours than to the West, both ethnically and linguistically, and

³⁰⁸ Mitri, *Contemporary History*, 858

³⁰⁹ Jérôme Chahīne, “Christians and the Arab Renaissance” in *Christianity: A History of the Middle East* Habib Badr (chief ed.) (Beirut: MECC, 2005), 807-8; see also Zamir, *Formation*, 26 and Harris, *Faces*, 90

³¹⁰ Roland Flamini “Forced Exodus: Christians in the Middle East” in *World Affairs* Nov/Dec 2013 American Peace Society, Washington, 71; Westerners themselves often are accused of espionage (as happened to me in Beirut, Spring 2012); Loosley, *Evolution of the Eastern and Oriental Churches*, 11 The Arab sense of time (with its sharp sense of shared heritage and narrative) means the crusades are seen as recent history. This accounts for statements such as “The crusades happened yesterday.” (Conversation, Bethlehem, West Bank, Spring 2009)

³¹¹ Bouwen, *The Churches in the Middle East*, 27; and FN.LB. 26.03.15: 4

the majority of contemporary debates in western churches are alien and irrelevant to them.³¹²

Several of the leaders interviewed for this study, however, stressed their separation from the political sphere but the importance of relations with the wider world church.³¹³ The Middle Eastern Churches are increasingly looking outward towards the West for support. Particularly for the reformed churches, there is a natural connection with western churches of the same denomination and shared reformed roots.³¹⁴ There is also a strong sense that their primary belonging is with Christ (who is faithful and unchanging) and the worldwide Church as the people of the risen Christ rather than with a transient and often hostile political power.³¹⁵ One negative consequence of this belief is that there is a reduced attachment to land and therefore a higher tendency to emigrate.

The predicament Corbon describes, as “*peur de disparaître ou risque d’exister*” is all the more pertinent today as Arab and Middle Eastern Christians throughout the region are choosing whether to risk existing and remain in their lands or to emigrate in fear of disappearing.³¹⁶ Several conversations during fieldwork for this research revealed that fear and suggested that there has been an increase in emigration of

³¹² E.g. the ordination of female priests and homosexuality in Christian leadership are “fringe debates indicating that Western society has lost its way.” Loosley, *Evolution of the Eastern and Oriental Churches*, 11

³¹³ FN. LB. 24.03.15: 1.4 and FN. LB. 26.03.15: 2.3

³¹⁴ “We are more or less all products of mission schools ...(and) that provides us with a kind of a common heritage with some western countries.” FN. LB. 26.03.15: 2.3

³¹⁵ FN. LB 26.03.15 3:5-6 Perhaps an example of “Christ as *wasta*” (i.e. the middle man with the only faithful and true Patron – God.)

³¹⁶ Corbon, *L’Église des Arabes*, 142 and Jenkins, *Lost History*, 260

Lebanese since the development of the war in Syria and recent public persecution of Christians in the region.³¹⁷ Corbon stresses that financial administration of Church property is a contributing factor to the emigration of young couples who cannot find affordable housing or employment which corresponds with the reasons given by interviewees for this research.³¹⁸ Although many who emigrate join Middle Eastern expatriate churches, the majority has, until recently, been absorbed into churches of the host nations and thus the Middle Eastern Church has indeed risked disappearing. There are now, however, historical religious hierarchies functioning as Christian communities in the West and research by a research project based at St Andrews University (DIMECCE) is exploring the phenomenon of Eastern emigrant churches in western countries.³¹⁹ Thomas states that:

“The Christian population of the Arab world had by the beginning of the present century reached a low point never seen before, and there is no sign of reversal. While the long history of Arab Christianity continues, it does so in new environments where it must learn once again to survive in the tenacious way it has done in its original homeland for more than fifteen hundred years.”³²⁰

Mitri warns that “some Christian leaders exacerbate sentiments of insecurity within their communities for the purpose of homogenizing, mobilizing and

³¹⁷ FN.LB.27.03.15 ii, FN.LB.27.03.15: viii and 29.03.15xii

³¹⁸ Corbon in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 106; E.g. FN. LB. 27.03.15: ii (A young couple employed a present by the National Evangelical Synod but emigrating to Canada.)

³¹⁹ Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe, <http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/>; David Thomas “Arab Christianity” in *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*, Ken Parry (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 20

³²⁰ Thomas, *Arab Christianity*, 21

dominating them while pretending to ensure protection.”³²¹ This is a symptomatic of fear and insecurity which drives them to control the other by threats and instilling fear, an example of the church echoing the state rather than standing firm against the temptation to follow suit.

The Middle Eastern church is sometimes likened to a “canary in the coal mine,” in the sense that its predicament is the gauge by which the climate of the region can be measured.³²² The flow of emigrants to the West is composed of those who have the means to escape and start a better life elsewhere. Those others who cannot afford to do so or are not privileged with work opportunities or useful connections (or a welcome religious identity) undoubtedly account for a much higher, and unknown, number. For example, the estimated 300,000 Palestinians in Lebanon[¶] remain unregistered without employment or basic human rights after sixty years and are still ignored by the Lebanese state and key international agencies.³²³ The exodus of the Christians does not only demonstrate the severity of their own circumstances but indicates there is a much greater problem in the region: the disappearance of moderate political and religious thought, of mutual compromise and coexistence. It would appear to the external observer that the twentieth century development of the nation-state is now undergoing slow disintegration with the departure of critical participants in dialogue and development.

Rather than standing firm against this tide of either emigration or the temptation to retreat into enclaves in fear of the other, the Lebanese Church is, for the most part,

³²¹ Mitri, *Arab Spring*, 73

³²² Emma Loosley “Peter, Paul and James of Jerusalem: The doctrinal and political evolution of the Eastern and Oriental Churches” in *Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East* Anthony O’Mahony and Emma Loosley (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2010), 1

³²³ World Report 2015: Lebanon <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/lebanon>

a mirror of society. The previous chapter highlighted the deeply rooted social system of patron – client relationships and of the fear and distrust which is so prevalent in Lebanon. It is said by some that Lebanon is a society affected by post-traumatic stress and sociologists such as Khalaf agree with psychologists in recognising behaviours of the State echoed in the private sphere and in the behaviour of individuals.³²⁴ In a society where no-one can be trusted and everyone is a potential threat or enemy, there is a retreat to the safety of one’s own people, class, sect, village, clan then family. This “hyper-defensive psychology” which colours the Lebanese mentality fortifies them, isolates them and fractures society.³²⁵ Winslow argues that in such a society, no-one can be trusted and even generosity and hospitality can become bargaining tools.³²⁶ All these factors are visible in the Church, including the centrality of communal allegiance and the tendency towards one-figure leadership, fear mongering and clientelism, a phenomenon to which the Church is not immune.³²⁷ The effects of this in responding to the Syrian crisis will be discussed further in chapter four.

Positive Christian Influence

³²⁴ E.g. Farhood L, Dimassi H, Strauss NL “Understanding Post-Conflict Mental Health: Assessment of PTSD, Depression, General Health and Life Events in Civilian Population One Year after the 2006 War in South Lebanon.” *Journal of Traumatic Stress Disorders and Treatment*, April 2013; Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 2002

³²⁵ Winslow, *Lebanon*, 4; (see also chapter four).

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ Corbon, “Middle East” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 593 See also Mitri, *Arab Spring*, 74; See chapter two.

The Christians have, however, made many positive contributions to the Arab world. Although as a result of the pressures mentioned above some retreated into their safe enclaves and became internally focussed, others chose to lead the political mainstream rather than remove themselves from it. This was, in part, to ensure survival but this, too, endangered the Christians by giving them political and national affiliation.³²⁸ They have historically been active members of society, both politically and culturally, in varying and creative ways since with the arrival of Islam and throughout the changing imperial powers. This was, in part, to shape the image they projected to the other, by asserting their value and skill in order to survive as a minority.³²⁹ They became known for their reliability, and their skills in trade, banking, medicine, education, arts and languages.³³⁰ Still today they continue to contribute positively to society but, due to the factors addressed above, their influence is decreasing. Christians have maintained a “dignified presence” especially in the arts and in the media but they are no longer considered “indispensable to progress.”³³¹ The “disproportionately influential contribution of the Christians” during the *Nahda* (cultural awakening of the nineteenth century) not only opened the way for the possibility of cultural and political change but also led to subsequent disappointment

³²⁸ Jenkins, *Lost History*, 165; 209

³²⁹ Eddé, et al. *Communautés Chrétiennes*, 181 and Corbon “The Churches of the Middle East” in Pacini, *Christian Communities*, 103

³³⁰ See Hechaïme, Camille “The Cultural Production of Arab Christians Today: An Expression of their identity in a Predominantly Muslim Society” in Pacini *Christian Communities*, 155-171 and 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 Pacini *Christian Communities*, 101 See also Habib Mousalli “The Christians of Syria” in Pacini *Christian Communities*, 286-293

³³¹ Hechaïme, *Cultural Production*, 170

at the limitations of the church in society.³³² The resulting “Arab Malaise” was shared by Christians and Muslims but was felt most acutely by the Christians in their sense of political failure, anxiety of an uncertain future and the fear of Islamism.³³³ The loss of the Christians today may not end Christianity in the region but does leave the region bereft of a historical and influential sector of society.³³⁴ Hechaïme argues, however, that:

“(The Christians’) adherence to the fundamental values of freedom, of individual rights, of dialogue, and their education which is freely open to other cultures which spurs them to promote criticism of sources and facts, lead them to act as a propelling force, although sometimes a hidden one.”³³⁵

In the nineteenth century, as seen in chapter one, the Reformed missionaries contributed extensively to Lebanese society with the development of education, the printing press, and the establishment of the Syrian Protestant College (American University of Beirut). It was also the Reformed missionaries Eli Smith and Cornelius Vandyke who undertook to translate the Bible into comprehensible Arabic, thereby allowing the Bible to be read by ordinary people without theological training and some knowledge of biblical languages.³³⁶ These developments encouraged the

³³² Tarek Mitri, *Middle Eastern Christians and the “Arab Spring”* in *Theological Review* 33, Near (Beirut: East School of Theology, 2012), 70

³³³ Samir Kassir, *Being Arab*, (London: Verso, 2006); Mitri, *Arab Spring*, 71

³³⁴ Flamini, *Forced Exodus*, 70

³³⁵ Hechaïme, *Cultural Production*, 171

³³⁶ Henry Munsell Bliss, *A Concise History of Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Ravell, 1897), 136 and Salibi, *Modern History*, 143-4 Parts of the Bible had been translated into classical Arabic as early as the ninth century and it is estimated that there were Arabic speaking Christian communities from

Lebanese churches to improve their own facilities and develop schools and church based organisations to improve society. Today, each denomination continues to have its own projects, with the addition of the ecumenical group Joint Christian Committee for Social Action(JCC, the organisation which has become the humanitarian branch of the MECC).³³⁷

More recently, the Christians have been instrumental in establishing non-governmental organizations for humanitarian aid and development as well as media channels, all of which have influence beyond the Lebanese borders in the wider region. International organisations such as World Vision and Sat-7 also have the freedom to establish headquarters in Lebanon, from where they can reach other parts of the Middle East. There has been continued development of theological training in all denominations, in Bible translation and the production of Bible Study materials in Arabic for use in small groups and for individuals with online resources such as Better Life, *Balshi Min Hon*, Arab Women Today and Ophir publications which are accessible by people from all church traditions.

Despite these connections with the outside world, many Middle Eastern Christians today feel neglected by the Churches of the West.³³⁸ Considering the scale of historical western missions in the Middle East, the high level of western cultural and religious influence in Lebanon, and the Middle Eastern loyalty to their western

earlier. (Thomas, *Arab Christianity*, 16) However, most Arab denominations used Syriac, Latin or Greek in their liturgy until the Reformed Arabic revival of the nineteenth century.

³³⁷ JCC was originally established as a regional and ecumenical “Department of Service for Palestinian Refugees” in the 1950s. Now it runs additional projects catering for Syrian Children in particular. For example a new project has been established to allow them to continue their Syrian exams. FN.LB.29.03.15: 5

³³⁸ Flamini, *Forced Exodus*, 69

patrons, this neglect is a source of bitterness and pain. In the political sphere, the West has been slow to recognize and respond to the increasing persecution of Middle Eastern Christian communities in the region and when so many of the *mujahedin* (jihadists) of so-called Islamic State and other extremist military groups are westerners, this serves to increase the sense of betrayal.³³⁹ Lebanon's small size and historical Christian freedom means it is overlooked by western powers and the focus falls instead on Iraq or Syria.

It must be recognised that there are ways in which the West has also hindered progress, for example in what Corbon identifies as "aggressive proselytism" in the form of anti-ecumenical American evangelical missions which seek to destabilise the established churches.³⁴⁰ However, in the fieldwork for this study, several of the interviewees stressed the continued importance of relations with western churches as a source of strength.³⁴¹ One stated that:

"Without a connection to the West, Christianity would probably not have survived here, whether it was the Catholic or the Protestant or even the Orthodox because Constantinople was west of here, it was The West at one point. This Christian connection with the West is vital."³⁴²

³³⁹ "All Christian centers, organizations, and institutions, leaders and followers, are legitimate targets of the *mujahedin*" Flamini, *Forced Exodus*, 70; FN.LB.25.03.15: v; (I was told of a Syrian who met an English jihadist who thought he was fighting to free Palestine, and was recalling details of an atrocity he had performed under the influence of drugs.)

³⁴⁰ Corbon "Middle East" in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 606

³⁴¹ FN.LB.24.03.15: 15

³⁴² FN.LB.26.03.15: 15 He continues: "This connection the Christian one and the political one have caused some problems like any relations and connections but certainly the good that has come out of it far outweighs the bad... We would hope that the missionaries who come will learn from history and

Rather than the complex and limited political relations of the past, the churches today are finding encouragement in personal relations with western Christians and partnerships between congregations and churches.³⁴³ They want their stories to be heard and related abroad and they feel strengthened to know they are held in prayer.³⁴⁴ In fact the Lebanese Churches have much to teach their western counterparts. Their position with religious freedom in an otherwise Muslim region has given them strength and steadfastness (*sumud*) and an ability to find hope in hopeless circumstances. I suggest that there are two main sources for this strength.³⁴⁵ Firstly, their unwavering sense of belonging primarily with Christ who is both unchanging and faithful but also lived in their region and knew the struggles and pain of human life. Secondly, it is their close relations with the wider world Church which sustains them. For the reformed Churches this is most clearly seen. However, the Middle Eastern Churches also have much to teach western churches about survival as a minority, depending on God through suffering, forgiving enemies in a context of on-going conflict and finding hope.

Corbon argues that it is the Holy Spirit which is the “catholicity” of the churches and unites them.³⁴⁶ By responding to that Spirit, the Lebanese churches are,

work ... with the Christians of the region and not bypass them ... (like) some of the more evangelical missions (which) just go directly to Muslims.”

³⁴³ FN.LB.24.03.15 and 26.03.15

³⁴⁴ FN.LB.26.03.15 “We are very, very grateful to the churches around the world who are supporting us in prayers and support for the ministry of healing and also in advocacy.”

³⁴⁵ This word is considered a virtue and is most often used in reference to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

³⁴⁶ Corbon, *L'Église des Arabes*, 212

at the present time, finding themselves united in their willingness to serve the Syrian refugees, prompted by Christian love, hospitality and forgiveness. Although there will undoubtedly remain physical separation and each denomination will hold on to its own sense of identity as different from the others, there can be the possibility of become The Church, a unified people, united in willingness to respond to the Spirit of love. Corbon concludes that the Church itself is the gift of divine Love (“*plus forte que la mort*”) which flows from the resurrection.³⁴⁷ That Love qualifies those to whom it gives itself and is not earned by those who wish to possess it.³⁴⁸ This is true of individuals and also of the Christian community. The Middle Eastern Church (like all other churches) has not earned that Love but has received it and is, by its very existence, the physical expression of divine Love. Corbon asserts that all fear vanishes in front of that divine Love and all becomes possible. The very fact of being The Church is to have the possibility of peace, of reconciliation, of unity and, most importantly, hope.³⁴⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Lebanese Church is unique both regionally and globally in its long experience of coexistence with Islam; its struggle to reconcile the

³⁴⁷ Corbon, *L'Église des Arabes*, 213

³⁴⁸ Original text says: “L’Eglise est e don de cet Amour d’où jaillit la Résurrection. L’Amour se qualifie par ceux auxquels il se donne, non par ceux qui voudraient le posséder. De même l’Eglise. Elle ne peut se qualifier, ici et maintenant, que comme Eglise des Arabes. Toute peur s’évanouit devant un tel Amour et tout devient possible: là où est l’Eglise, là est l’esperance.” Corbon, *L’Église des Arabes*, 213 (translation mine).

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

opposing pulls of East and West; its willingness to adapt to modernity while holding onto traditional values; and its ability to survive conflict and continued search for hope in hopeless situations. Much like the Middle Eastern Council of Churches which has struggled to create some form of unity despite irreconcilable theological differences between denominations, Lebanon has the potential to be an example of peaceful, pluralistic society in the Middle East and also for western countries as they learn how to adapt to Islam and the tensions which pluralistic society brings.³⁵⁰

As the graffiti on a Beirut street which said “So many voices, so little sense,” there are indeed many voices in Lebanon all clamouring for attention, each claiming the truth.³⁵¹ It may be true that the Middle Eastern churches are in alarming decline and weakened further by internal divisions but if they can see beyond their differences and be united by the Spirit which is the “catholicity” of the churches, they may find that they do indeed have a voice that makes sense.³⁵² If their only allegiance and commitment is with Christ, they can share the Christian message of freedom and hope to the wider society, unbound by social and political allegiances.

Rather than being “a minority obsessed with their sense of being a minority,” the Lebanese Church may be able to maintain its importance in Lebanese and Middle Eastern society if it looks beyond itself, putting the neighbour before itself, as the Christians are doing with the Syrian refugees.³⁵³ Cragg says:

³⁵⁰“Lebanon was and still is a living example of coexistence and perhaps this is the characteristic that is vexing those who want to destroy it.” Patriarch Sfeir in McCallum, *The Maronites of Lebanon* 39

³⁵¹ Abd el Kader Street, Zarif, Beirut Spring 2013 (photo in appendix)

³⁵² Corbon, *L'Église des Arabes*, 212

³⁵³ Kemal Junblat (speaking of the Maronites) in Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, 226

“Christians must learn to overcome the psychological separatisms that are even more persistent than the doctrinal ones. Relinquishing the illusion of being ‘privileged partners of the West,’ they must be ready for that recognition which means feeling ‘vulnerable to their being different.’”³⁵⁴

In a similar vein, Patriarch Ignatius IV says the witness of the Church is:

“(S)haring fully the suffering of our peoples, in patience but also in courage, a Church that does not maintain itself in a survivalist conservatism and in an ethnic and linguistic particularism, a church dispersed like salt, seeking its identity in its vocation.”³⁵⁵

The Lebanese churches may well be historically and physically separated but today they are finding themselves united in their attitude towards the Syrian refugees. Although they are each active in taking care of their own communities and running independent community projects, the churches are united in their willingness to serve their Syrian neighbours who have arrived in Lebanon and have been made homeless by war, as many Lebanese themselves have been in the past. The following chapters will explore this phenomenon in more detail, first looking at hospitality and finally hope. It can be said that although the Lebanese Church may be a “canary in a coal mine” whose voice it is feared may stop, the Christians can still sing.

³⁵⁴ Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, 228

³⁵⁵ Patriarch Ignatius IV in Mitri, *Arab Spring*, 75

PART TWO

Chapter Four

Hostis to Hospes: Choosing Hospitality

*“A small house is room enough for a thousand friends”*³⁵⁶

In the following chapters, which constitute Part Two of this thesis, I offer preliminary steps towards answering the question posed by Frans Bouwen: “How can a Christian be personally involved in this political turmoil and by doing so be inspired by his or her faith, rooted in tradition but facing the future in hope?”³⁵⁷ Chapter four explores the “horizontal” dimension of this, that is, the encounter with the stranger. It offers a description of the present situation in Lebanon and explores the encounter in which Lebanese Christians are offering hospitality to Syrian refugees, choosing to see the other as not *hostis* but *hospes*.³⁵⁸ By outlining both Arab and Christian traditions of hospitality, I argue that the Lebanese Christians are acting out of humanitarian compassion but aided and inspired by the love of God. Chapter five then seeks to find and articulate the “vertical” dimension of such hospitality as an encounter with

³⁵⁶ A Syrian proverb which illustrates the innate hospitality of the Syrians and suggests their sense of betrayal as refugees seeking assistance but encountering hostility.

³⁵⁷ Frans Bouwen, “The Churches in Jerusalem” in *Ecumenism: Present Realities and Future Prospects*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 48

³⁵⁸ Taken from Nouwen: “That is our vocation: to convert the *hostis* into a *hospes*, the enemy into a guest and to create the free and fearless space where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced.” Henri Nouwen, J. M. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Collins: Glasgow, 1976), 63

God.³⁵⁹ By briefly surveying the psychological effects of historical wounds of the Lebanese, I argue that the hospitality offered by the Lebanese Christians to their Syrian neighbours in this time of need is not only an act of humanitarian service but a step towards further healing of their own wounds and offers hope for the future.

The Encounter

Official sources state that Lebanon has taken in the highest number of Syrian refugees in relation to its size since the crisis began, despite its small size and limited resources.³⁶⁰ Latest statistics suggest there are now approximately 1.5 million refugees in Lebanon with 343,904 registered refugees in Beirut alone, almost doubling the estimated total population in three years.³⁶¹ As mentioned in chapter one, there has always been freedom of movement between the two countries with family and professional connections across the borders and many Syrians working in Lebanon, particularly in construction and development. Hariri's Downtown reconstruction project, *Solidaire*, attracted many Syrian labourers who were employed

³⁵⁹ In reference to James Taylor, "Hospitality as Translation" in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 18

³⁶⁰ "Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon" World Vision Advocacy Report, July 2013, 10 figure 1

³⁶¹ "One in four people in Lebanon is a refugee" Al Jazeera 29 Aug, 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/campaign-syria-refugee-abdul-halim-attar-150829184125802.html>; "Syria Regional Refugee Response" UNHCR report: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=202&country=122®ion=88>; The last estimate, made in 2007, suggested a total population of 361,366 in Beirut: https://www.google.co.uk/publicdata/explore?ds=z5567oe244g0ot_&met_y=population&idim=city_pr oper:028250:023560&hl=en&dl=en(From UNData, 24.07.15)

in the rebuilding of Beirut, causing resentment among the Lebanese.³⁶² The first Syrians who left the early stages of conflict in Syria to settle in Lebanon were the wealthy and well connected who were able to transfer their jobs or open new businesses in Beirut. In 2012, Syrian vehicles started to appear on the streets, with many staying either in hotels or with family and friends while they waited for the conflict to subside. When the likelihood of ceasefire diminished, many were initially able to find permanent accommodation.³⁶³ However, there was then a marked increase in the arrival of poorer Syrians and those applying for UN registered refugee status.³⁶⁴ In Beirut, this was manifest by the presence of beggars and children selling chewing gum and flowers in the streets.³⁶⁵ The Syrian willingness to work for low wages has had an economic impact, threatening the job market for the Lebanese and undercutting Lebanese prices by importing from Syria.³⁶⁶ This, in turn, has increased inflation, causing a rise in the cost of accommodation and basic amenities such as

³⁶² Harris, *History*, 261 (This sentiment is often revealed in conversations with taxi drivers.)

³⁶³ International Labour Organization Report, “Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile” Regional Office for the Arab States, 2013 (http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_240134.pdf), 16

³⁶⁴ International Labour Organization Report, “Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile”, 2013,

³⁶⁵ International Labour Organization Report, “Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile” 2013, 22 In August 2015, the story of Abdul and Reem, a Syrian man selling pens in the street with his daughter, sparked a campaign called #BuyPens which quickly raised \$130,000 in just two days but few are so fortunate.

³⁶⁶ International Labour Organization Report, “Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile”, 2013, 36

electricity, water and waste disposal.³⁶⁷ The pressures of such a sudden influx of refugees has significantly increased overcrowding and added to the strain on an already fragile and insecure infrastructure. Most recently, this has been brought to public attention by the rubbish crisis.³⁶⁸ These factors have contributed to the deterioration of living conditions and increased health risks (both physical and physiological) as a result of poor housing, the dangers of unfamiliar physical labour and also the trauma of loss and experience of war.³⁶⁹ Those Syrian children who have been unable to continue their education are often referred to as a “lost generation.”³⁷⁰ Initially they were able to find places in Lebanese schools but increasing pressure forced them into private schools or out of education altogether.³⁷¹ Once the most highly educated people in the region, the Syrians had compulsory primary education

³⁶⁷ With prices of accommodation in some areas of Beirut increasing by up to 400% International Labour Organization Report, “Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile”, 2013, 38-9 and Tim Midgley, and Johan Eldebo, World Vision Advocacy Report “Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon,” July 2013, 14

³⁶⁸ In which the authorities are unable to agree on a new dumping ground, leading to streets filled with rubbish and the resulting “You Stink” campaign in July 2015 followed by large-scale demonstrations and the clashes of 23 August 2015. See <http://www.youstink.org>, An-Nahar and “Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon” July 2013, 14

³⁶⁹ (Including depression, post traumatic stress, physical injury as a result of unfamiliar physical labour, Leishmaniasis, Scabies, Measles, and water-borne diseases such as Hepatitis A and Typhoid), “Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon” July 2013, 14-15

³⁷⁰ FN.LB.26.03.15 - 2: E-F

³⁷¹ “Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon” July 2013, 15 and International Labour Organization Report, “Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile” 2013, 19-21 inc. figure 4 “Distribution of Syrian refugees by sex and educational attainment,” 20

and funding available for capable students to continue education in Syria or abroad.³⁷²

Now many of these children are forced into child labour in order to support their families.³⁷³

By 2013, there was already a distinct change in the atmosphere in Beirut. The overcrowding of urban areas and the development of refugee camps on agricultural land populated by traumatised and uprooted people struggling to provide for their families means there has been an increase in theft and other crime which exacerbates the Lebanese wariness of the Syrian presence. Some have suggested that Lebanese criminals are using the presence of Syrians as cover for their criminal activity and in some areas curfews have been imposed after dark.³⁷⁴ As a result of such increased crime and fear, some Lebanese have themselves sought refuge outside their country.³⁷⁵ In addition to the ordinary fear of the other, *xenophobia*, which is natural to the human condition, the Lebanese are afraid that the Syrian presence may increase Lebanon's vulnerability, raising existing tensions and disturbing the fragile post-war peace.³⁷⁶ Another legitimate fear is that the country will be drawn further into the Syrian conflict. There are regular reports of weapons being smuggled into Syria

³⁷² FN.LB.26.03.15 2:E

³⁷³ International Labour Organization Report, "Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile" 2013, 22

³⁷⁴ FN.LB.27.03.15: xx; FN.UK.11.05.15: xi

³⁷⁵ FN.UK.11.05.15: xx - A family of Lebanese Christians moved from their mountain village to Scotland after the brutal murder of the daughter's school friend, a crime suspected to have been perpetrated by a Syrian.

³⁷⁶ Mark Patrick Hederman, "Hospitable by Calling, Inhospitable by Nature" in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* Richard Kearney and James Taylor (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 87

through Lebanese territory and incidents of shelling over the border.³⁷⁷ There have also been increased incidents of kidnapping of Lebanese hostages and the threat of extremist groups entrenched along the Lebanese border.³⁷⁸

In the previous chapters, the painful history between Syria and Lebanon was outlined, revealing deep historic wounds from civil war and long-term Syrian political stronghold. Those wounds, which mostly remain unhealed today, have led to bitterness and resentment towards the Syrians and, having been brought up to hate the Syrians, the first natural response of the Lebanese Christians to the present Syrian crisis was to say “they deserve it.”³⁷⁹ When the Syrians started to appear in Lebanese churches, many Lebanese held their noses and kept their distance.³⁸⁰ The Lebanese have perfected the art of pretending everything is alright, and the presence of so many needy people who remind them of their own painful history is unsettling and, for many, too much to face. Because most Syrians who fled to Lebanon have joined family or settled in areas where their sect is in the majority, Lebanese sectarian ghettoization has been intensified. Beirutis tend to socialize and mix relatively freely in neutral environments but do not trust each other to create close friendships or to

³⁷⁷ “Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon” July 2013, 9

³⁷⁸ For example the hostages being held by IS “Talks with IS over hostages resume after six months [sic] Freeze,” <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/187841>; and “3,000 Islamist Fighters Entrenched along Lebanese Border,” <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170278>

³⁷⁹ FN.LB. 23.03.15: i

³⁸⁰ FN.LB. 23.03.15: i - This person said that over time their attitudes had changed to be more accepting.

enter each other's homes.³⁸¹ Each views the other with suspicion and labels them as dirty, fanatic, tasteless, self-centred, having no God, and so on.³⁸² Yassin's lucid study of youth interactions in Beirut exemplifies the practices of the wider society. He states that such segregation becomes:

“(An) extreme way of avoiding forms of contact with the other, and which in turn reinforce(s) perceptions of hostility and otherness through a lack of contact or understanding of the other's interests and concerns.”³⁸³

These factors listed above are serving to increase hostility towards the Syrians, making it harder for both parties (host and guest) in this encounter. There are willing individuals, communities and churches but there are also increasing external and internal pressures and challenges. The existing rifts are further dividing society and the present political stagnation is likely to bring this to breaking point.

The Church and the stranger

As shown in chapter three, the Church is not immune to the pain of historic wounds of war and hostility, the fear or suspicion of the other (even within the Christian community and between denominations), nor the separations which echo the fractured and defensive Lebanese society. In responding to Syrian refugees, the

³⁸¹Nasser Yassin, “Sects and the City: Socio-Spatial Perceptions and Practices of Youth in Beirut” in Knudsen, Are and Michael Kerr (Eds.) *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution* (Hurst and Company: London 2012), 210

³⁸² Yassin, 210

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 206

churches have, for the most part, tended primarily to the needs of those of their own sect, offering assistance to a small number of Muslims, often as a visible gesture which satisfies the donors and contributes to a positive external image.³⁸⁴ Other obstacles to hospitality include the different forms of corruption which function on all levels of society with donated money often disappearing into private pockets or used to buy land and extend property.³⁸⁵ Some Christian leaders have a tendency to mirror political leadership by engineering fear to ensure allegiance, contributing to a narrowing worldview, alienating their congregations from society and limiting Christian freedom.³⁸⁶ The traditional system of patron-client relationship (mentioned in chapter two) is a danger to genuine hospitality in that such a contract usually requires something in return. In Christian hospitality there is no requirement in such an exchange, however it has been suggested there are instances of the expectation of exchange in this Syrian-Lebanese context.³⁸⁷ There is also an extraordinary number of accounts of the conversion of Muslim Syrians to Christianity.³⁸⁸ This is perhaps as an act of recognition of the hospitality they have received but many would say they have chosen freely and are aware of the costly consequences.³⁸⁹ Further research is

³⁸⁴ FN.UK.12.08.15: ixx

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Mitri, *Arab Spring*, 74

³⁸⁷ FN.UK.12.18.15: ixx

³⁸⁸ FN.LB.24.03.15 and FN.UK.27.08.15:xx

³⁸⁹ One interviewee spoke of a veiled Muslim woman who was now preaching in church and leading Bible Studies but that after her husband had been beaten, they had to flee the country. (FN.LB.24.03.15: 11) “Many are being baptised in this church. Every day they have Bible groups for different levels. I’ve never seen people changed in this manner. I’ve been raised in the very classical evangelical church, Baptist, people are at ease ...but they (the Syrians) are on fire... And you can see women still wearing their veils but preaching and telling about Christ.”

required on this subject regarding the attitudes and expectations of the giver and receiver in hospitality to refugees in a patron-client framework such as Lebanon.

Despite all these obstacles, however, the Lebanese have responded almost unanimously with warm and sincere hospitality for reasons which will be explored below. From the beginning of the Syrian conflict there were individuals who hosted Syrian families in their own homes and, later, the churches began organized communal efforts to alleviate Syrian suffering.³⁹⁰ In fact, all Lebanese churches are now involved in the Syrian refugee crisis to some degree, although those denominations with sister congregations in Syria were naturally the first to respond. The churches are collecting money (from within their congregations and from contacts and supporters outside the country) and distributing it to Syrians, sometimes supplying food, clothing and simple household items such as mattresses and blankets. Not all churches are equipped to respond directly and instead support local and international Christian agencies to provide larger scale services, for example Youth For Christ, Heart For Lebanon and World Vision.³⁹¹

The churches are now a reliable source of information for the authorities and key aid agencies such as the UNHCR.³⁹² Increasingly, the churches are being called

³⁹⁰ See “Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon” July 2013, 15 and International Labour Organization Report, “Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile” 2013

³⁹¹ Email, Dr. D. 31.08.15:2 More research is required to gain a better understanding of these projects, how they are funded and maintained. It is, unfortunately, very difficult to gather this information remotely and requires a longer period of fieldwork.

³⁹² A result of churches being primarily “local” institutions. Appleby, R. Scott “Retrieving the Missing Dimension of Statecraft: Religious Faith in the Service of Peacebuilding” in *Faith-Based diplomacy*:

upon to provide information on those they are assisting in their areas because they have first hand contact and detailed records.³⁹³ Although it is difficult to obtain information from a distance on this continually and rapidly changing situation, it appears to be the case that the Reformed churches are different in their approach towards and hospitality to the Syrians. Some churches, for example in Zahle in the Beka'a Valley, Dora district and the suburbs of Beirut, are full of Syrian refugees, some of whom have suggested they recognize something different about these churches in their manner, their welcome, their friendliness, their work with children and so on.³⁹⁴

Although there are many explanations for these experiences in the reformed churches which may seem suspicious when viewed from outside, I suggest that as less “established” than their Catholic and Orthodox counterparts, they have a freedom to act out with the usual limits of society. More so than these older churches, they are aware of their minority status which has recognizable challenges but can bring freedom with it. Perhaps being viewed as “strange” can be beneficial when working with “the stranger” as only those who have been marginalised can understand how it is for others who are marginalised from the majority and are ignored by the State.³⁹⁵

Trumping Realpolitik Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003, 231-258; Emails (Rev. Dr. C 31.08.15; Dr. D 31.08.15; “Sana”, 29.08.15)

³⁹³ FN.UK.12.08.15: ixx

³⁹⁴ Including some which run seven days a week for Syrian refugees. FN.LB.24.08.15; FN.UK.12.08.15: ixx

³⁹⁵ See Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Cambridge, 1999), 105-114 and Thomas Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Other: Dimensions of Moral Understanding*, (Westminster John Knox Press, London, 2003), 4: “The ramifications of hospitality are not fully manifest unless I also know the meaning of being a stranger.”

Their connections with the West and perceived “western-ness” of character give them an added freedom to break out of the moulds of society as they are already expected to be different. This connection possibly allows them to partially evade the trap of local patronage and may also be an attraction for needy refugees who see the Reformed churches as an intermediate step towards life in the West.³⁹⁶ Another surprising advantage is that the multiplicity of expressions of faith represented by these reformed churches (although an obstacle to Arab Christian ecumenism) allows them to function independently as they offer hospitality towards Syrian refugees. Many churches have their own projects providing childcare, Bible studies, women’s groups and other initiatives which reach the Syrians, meet their practical needs and offer encouragement through primary counselling and spiritual direction.³⁹⁷

Hospitality

In order to analyse Lebanese Christian hospitality towards Syrian refugees better, it is perhaps necessary to provide a brief outline of the Arab and Christian traditions of hospitality.³⁹⁸ The Sanscrit, *ghas*, is the common root of both the Latin, *hostis*, (meaning stranger, guest or enemy) and *hospes* (meaning sojourner, visitor, guest or friend) which have evolved to give the English words hostility, hospitality,

³⁹⁶ More research needs to be done in this area of refugee attitudes and expectations. I am unaware of any present research from this particular angle.

³⁹⁷ FN.LB.23.03.15; FN.LB.24.03.15: 11; FN.LB.27.03.15; FN.LB.29.03.15; FN.UK.11.05.15;

³⁹⁸ Only a few key elements of hospitality that are relevant to the Syrian-Lebanese relationship will be explored here. For a full exploration of the subject one would have to look at Levinas, Derrida, Kant, Kierkegaard, Aristotle, Chrystostom, Vanier, et al.

hospice, hospital, hostage, hostel, host and guest.³⁹⁹ This proximity of these words highlights the reality that encounter with the other involves a certain risk and is therefore an opportunity to discover either a friend or a foe. The immediate natural human instinct towards a stranger is apprehension or uncertainty and it takes both time and self-confidence to begin to know and trust the other.⁴⁰⁰ The Greek, *xen*, for the “other” (stranger, enemy or guest) can just as easily become either *xenophobia* (fear of the other) or *xenophilia* (love of the other).⁴⁰¹ Interestingly, the Greek word *xenizein* means both to “receive as a guest” and “surprise” and, in the context of hospitality to refugees, the encounter is one in which an uninvited (surprise) guest is received.⁴⁰² Hospitality in this case, therefore, becomes what Kearney describes as “an act of daring and trust, of bold compassion and justice, never a matter of cheap grace or easy virtue.”⁴⁰³

The term “hospitality” has become confused with industrialised hospitality such as is provided by hotels and restaurants but that is a narrowing of the original term and the fullness of its meaning. Additionally, the English expression of “entertaining

³⁹⁹ From which we get ‘hostility’ and is also the origin of enemy and host (multitude) White, John T.T. *Latin – English Dictionary*, (Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1890); McGovern, Deirdre F. “Hospitality to the Other in Faith-based Schools,” (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, May 2010), 18

⁴⁰⁰ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 65-68

⁴⁰¹ Hederman, *Hosting the Stranger*, 87

⁴⁰² Derrida distinguishes two forms of hospitality, an “invitation” where the guest is invited and “visitation” where the guest interrupts us. Shepherd, Andrew “*The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*” University of Otago Press: Otago, 2009, 58 and Westmoreland, Mark W. “Interruptions: Derrida and Hospitality” *Kritike*, Vol 2.1, June 2008, 6-7

⁴⁰³ Richard Kearney and James Taylor, “Introduction” to *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 1

guests,” suggests a light hearted, temporary social encounter.⁴⁰⁴ Primarily, the practice of hospitality is about supplying physical needs, welcoming the other and providing food, water and shelter. In long-term hospitality encounters, there are further elements which include not only physical shelter from the elements but also a place of rest and refuge, a sense of ‘home’ and peace which will be explored below.⁴⁰⁵

The first feature of hospitality is inviting the stranger or allowing him or her to enter into our private space, either that of our own physical home or country or “the personal space of our personal awareness and concern,” in other words that which is ours, including that which we prefer to hide.⁴⁰⁶ This involves a primary acceptance of the “stranger of the self” allowing one to be at home with the self and with God before being able to give freely to the other.⁴⁰⁷ McGovern describes hospitality as “a practice of sustained welcome to the ‘other’ in all the tensions and paradoxes of that ‘otherness.’”⁴⁰⁸ In this, another two challenges for the host are highlighted; firstly accepting the other in their “otherness” and, secondly, sustaining the welcome. A requirement of true hospitality is that the other is accepted as they are in their

⁴⁰⁴ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Brazos Press: Grand Rapids, 2007), 26

⁴⁰⁵ John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality* Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1974, 1

⁴⁰⁶ Parker Palmer, quoted in Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 6; Jennifer Kilps, *Hospitality to the Stranger: The Experience of Christian Churches in the Resettlement of African Refugees to the United States* unpublished PhD thesis, (University of St Andrews, 2008), 23

⁴⁰⁷ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 7; Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 33 and Pohl, *Making Room*, 72

⁴⁰⁸ Deirdre F. McGovern, “Hospitality to the Other in Faith-based Schools,” 37

otherness without the expectation of change.⁴⁰⁹ There is a certain degree of adaptation required on the part of both host and guest, but this otherness cannot ever be completely overcome.⁴¹⁰ An inescapable part of being a “stranger,” therefore, is to be “strange.” However, it is in this encounter with the other in his or her otherness, that we discover something of ourselves and welcoming the other is, therefore, not without the possibility of danger and may induce change in ourselves, for better or worse. Not only does the guest become known, there is an opportunity to learn more of oneself and it is perhaps this factor which makes hospitality an act of courage. A truly hospitable encounter, Pohl notes, involves “struggling with issues of recognition and identity, transcending social differences, negotiating tensions, maintaining boundaries, (as well as) welcoming strangers.”⁴¹¹ Thomas Ogletree, in his exploration of hospitality as a metaphor for moral life states that:

“To offer hospitality to a stranger is to welcome something new, unfamiliar, and unknown into our life-world. On the one hand, hospitality requires a recognition of the stranger’s vulnerability in an alien social world. Strangers need shelter and sustenance in their travels, especially when they are moving through a hostile environment. On the other hand, hospitality designates occasions of potential discovery which can open up our narrow provincial worlds. ...The stranger does not simply challenge or subvert our assumed world of meaning, she may enrich, even transform, that world.”⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ I say “true hospitality” to differentiate from institutionalized hospitality which, usually depends on the exchange of money and therefore no longer meets the requirements of sincere and freely given hospitality with no expectation of return. See Pohl, *Making Room*, 7

⁴¹⁰ Were it to be overcome completely, it would no doubt be too suspicious for the host.

⁴¹¹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 7

⁴¹² Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Other*, 2-3

One must first come face to face with the self and remove prejudice and fear to make room for the stranger.⁴¹³ This constitutes part of what Taylor identifies as the readiness to let go and be willing to lose in order to be able to gain.⁴¹⁴ Hospitality, in the sense of creating a place for the other, includes not only the physical space of our property but also of our selves.⁴¹⁵ In order for the Lebanese to freely give, they have had to come face-to-face with their own prejudices, fears and un-forgiven wounds. This takes humility, together with the poverty of self that Nouwen recommends, and allows a fully open and honest encounter with the other.⁴¹⁶ A further challenge he identifies is the ability to create empty space and to embrace silence, two things which can be revealing and are therefore fearsome for most people.⁴¹⁷ It is in these things, he argues, that the mystery of the encounter can be revealed. They open one up to “othernesses” in general and encourage in to meet not only the other but also the hidden self.⁴¹⁸

When the initial uncertainty of the other is overcome in the encounter of hospitality, there is the new challenge of discovering the emerging relationship between host and guest. Hospitality is very often understood as a one-way

⁴¹³ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 98

⁴¹⁴ James Taylor, “Hospitality as Translation” in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 14-16 (drawing on Ricoeur’s ‘act of mourning’)

⁴¹⁵ Palmer in Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 6

⁴¹⁶ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 95-101

⁴¹⁷ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 70-73 See also Bretherton who seeks to articulate a Christian hospitality to refugees which starts from a basis of “hallowing” what Agamben describes as “bare life”. Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness*, (Wiley-Blackwell: Chichester, 2010), 142 – 160

⁴¹⁸ Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 3

relationship of giver to receiver but true hospitality involves reciprocity in which the giver may also become the receiver, and host becomes guest. Lombard states that: “Hospitality... is a two way exchange. If the basis of hospitality is humility then it is also the basis of virtuous receiving.”⁴¹⁹ In a similar vein, Ogletree asserts that our readiness as hosts to welcome the other into our “world” must be matched by a readiness for us as hosts to enter the “world” of our guest.⁴²⁰ It is only when this is the case that there is the possibility of mutuality which is characteristic of true hospitality. Such hospitality also requires both a light hold on material possessions and an honest recognition of one’s own weakness, failures and wounded-ness or vulnerability.⁴²¹ Nouwen describes this as starting from a place of poverty, both of the material and of the heart.⁴²² If we have nothing to lose, or likewise, nothing to protect defensively, we are free to allow the other to enter our space without great risk of loss. This does not necessarily require material poverty but in monotheistic traditions such poverty is a recognition that all we possess is a gift from God and the readiness to “lose” the self for the sake of the other.⁴²³

⁴¹⁹ He continues: “Seen also as an important act of generosity in Qur’anic tradition is the receiving of hospitality and acceptance of invitations, known as *ithaar*, preference of the other before the self.” Joseph Lombard, “Some Reflections on Hospitality in Islam” in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* Richard Kearney and James Taylor (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 133, 136 (This is practiced throughout the Arab world, also in Christian homes.)

⁴²⁰ Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Other*, 4

⁴²¹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 12, 118-9. This will be explored further in chapter five.

⁴²² Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 95-101

⁴²³ See Taylor, “Hospitality as Translation” 14-16, and following chapter; Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 95-

Arab hospitality

Western hospitality usually requires an invitation and an unspoken etiquette ensures the guest does not “overstay their welcome” but in the Arab world the rules of hospitality are very different. To arrive as an uninvited guest is to honour the host and to leave too soon is insulting.⁴²⁴ In the context of hospitality to refugees, however, these unexpected guests will stay for an indefinite period and the Lebanese do not want a repetition of the situation with the Palestinians who have been in Lebanon as “refugees” for almost seventy years.⁴²⁵ Bedouin customs stipulate that after a period of forty days, a guest is no longer treated as a guest but as one of the family.⁴²⁶ It is harder, however, to draw such clear lines marking when a guest becomes a native in a context of mass migration and long-term refuge from conflict.

This study has assumed that the Lebanese are, for the most part, linguistically and culturally Arab and, as part of the Arab world, Lebanon shares the Arab tradition of hospitality, usually in the sense of offering a meal.⁴²⁷ It is interesting how virtually

⁴²⁴ Andrew Shyrock, “Breaking hospitality apart: bad hosts, bad guests, and the problem of sovereignty” in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (2012): 23 also Pohl, *Making Room*, 69

⁴²⁵ FN.LB.26.03.15: 11; FN.LB.26.03.15: 2G

⁴²⁶ Shyrock, “Breaking hospitality apart,” 31

⁴²⁷ Also interesting is the fact that in the Arab tradition of *sulha* in conflict resolution, involves the drinking of coffee at the point of reconciliation followed by a shared meal to show that trust has been reestablished and peace restored. See Mneesha Gellman, and Mandi Vuinovich “From *Sulha* to *Salaam*: Connecting Local Knowledge with International Negotiations for Lasting Peace in Palestine/Israel,” in *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 26.2, (2008): 13 and Yohanna Katanacho, “*Palestinian Protestant Theological Responses to a World Marked by Violence*” *Missiology: An International Review*, 36. 3, (2008): 289 - 305

all expressions of hospitality place the sharing of food at the centre of the encounter.⁴²⁸ The Arabs and Middle Eastern people in general are famous for their hospitality, a characteristic which is also a central aspect of Islam and takes Abraham as the model of the principle described as the right of hospitality, *ikram al dayf*.⁴²⁹ As Lumbard explains: “From pre-Islamic times until today, one of the vilest of insults in Arab lands has been to call someone stingy, miserly or inhospitable.”⁴³⁰ Perhaps as a result of its geographical location at the junction of continents and on the old Silk Route, attracting travellers, pilgrims and visitors throughout history. The Bedouins of the desert have a custom of offering food and shelter to any who are need for up to three days without even asking their name.⁴³¹ This was primarily an agreement which ensured survival in a harsh landscape and served the function of highland bothies in Scotland today.

The Arabic for hospitality, *Diyafa*, has at its root the idea of inclusion, adding to that which is already there, in the sense of extending one’s tent to make room for the guest.⁴³² In the Bedouin tradition there is a deeply ingrained code of personal honour, which includes the obligation of hospitality alongside vengeance and dedication to tribe.⁴³³ The welcome greeting of “*Ahlan wa sahlán*,” means literally “a people and a land” giving the understanding that one has come upon a hospitable people (i.e.

⁴²⁸ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 149

⁴²⁹ All the monotheistic religions taking Abraham as the original model of hospitality with Islam taking the fundamental principle of hospitality from Genesis 18:1-33) See Derrida, “Hostipitality” in *Acts of Religion*, (Routledge: London, 2002), 370-1

⁴³⁰ Joseph Lumbard *Hospitality in Islam* 134

⁴³¹ Shyrook, “Breaking hospitality apart,” 24

⁴³² Guest (*Deif*) and host (*muDeif*)

⁴³³ Mackey, *Mirror*, 15

people that are ready to be family to you and you are treading on smooth and flat terrain].⁴³⁴ The simple greeting, “*Marhaban*,” which is often translated as “welcome,” comes from the root meaning spacious, open-hearted and generous. The word seeks to assure that the other is not constrained or shut in but free to feel at peace, a metaphorical stretching out the tent pegs to allow room for the visitor.⁴³⁵ Sajdi describes the Arab welcome as “the release of exclusive ownership of a place to the other, the ideal which is expressed in the Arabic proverb, ‘the house is yours,’ *al-bayt baytuka*.”⁴³⁶ In the Middle East, hospitality is so central to society that in the home there are rooms for receiving guests with the women often not visible from this room. The danger of this kind of institutionalized hospitality is that it is made ‘safe’ and *al-bayt baytuka* is no longer true if it only applies to the part which one is willing to share is for the guest.⁴³⁷ When the risk of hospitality is removed, so too is the opportunity for surprise and possible transformation.

Another important Arabic expression that emphasises the honour of receiving visitors is: “The guest is a guest of God.”⁴³⁸ Although the Lebanese see themselves as very distant from the Bedouins, this centrality of welcome and hospitality is still key

⁴³⁴ “Assalamu alaykum,” Lisanularab, <http://lisanularab.blogspot.co.uk/2007/10/assalamu-alaykum-warahmatullahi.html>24.10.07

⁴³⁵ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (4th edition) J. Milton Cowan (ed.) (Urbana: Spoken Language Services, 1994)

⁴³⁶ Dana Sajdi, “The Dead and the City: The Limits of Hospitality in the Early Modern Levant” in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* Richard Kearney and James Taylor (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011),123

⁴³⁷ Shyrock, “Breaking Hospitality Apart”, 24

⁴³⁸ Well-known Arabic proverb explored by Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler in “Sacred Hospitality ‘Middle Eastern Style.’”

to Lebanese practice. Lebanon may not be a harsh desert landscape, but the political environment can be equally testing and the country has been host to refugees not only from Syria but also from Armenia, Palestine, Iraq, and Kurdistan. Among the Lebanese themselves and across the Middle East there is also a readiness to help others to prevent them from suffering one has experienced oneself. To the outsider it may seem like interfering but, perhaps another result of a weak state, is the strength of camaraderie which is revealed in helping the other. Very often in the Middle East one is given medical advice out of concern and the eagerness to give relief for something one has experienced oneself.⁴³⁹ For the Lebanese, familiar with conflict and war, they wish to ease the pain of those who are living through what they themselves have experienced.

Christian Hospitality

For the Lebanese Christian, there is further reason to respond to the stranger with hospitality, as it is a central aspect of the life of Christian faith. A brief survey of the biblical references to hospitality reveals its centrality to both the Old and New Testaments. To cite a few (by no means all) biblical examples one must first recognise Abraham who welcomed the three strangers and is the model of hospitality for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In this he “entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2) and received the promise of God (Gen. 18:1-15).⁴⁴⁰ The Israelites are reminded

⁴³⁹ FN. UK. 27.05.15: 1

⁴⁴⁰ See Kearney, *Hosting the Stranger*, 96-99 and Marianne Moyaert, “Biblical, Ethical and Hermeneutical Reflections on Narrative Hospitality” in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* Richard Kearney and James Taylor (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 95

not to oppress strangers but to remember they were themselves once strangers in Egypt (Exod. 23.9). In the New Testament, the Christ child arrives as a stranger far from home and is born in a stable, receiving and depending on hospitality from beginning of his life (Luke 2:8).⁴⁴¹ Hospitality continues to be of major importance to Jesus' life and ministry, although not in the sense of preparing and serving a meal, he accepts invitations and shares meals with both rich and poor alike, at once receiving from the other and giving of himself, thus exemplifying the duality of the hospitality encounter.⁴⁴² Jesus teaches his disciples to love one another, even our enemies, without expecting anything in return (Luke 6:27-35) saying, "He who receives you, receives me." (Matt. 10:40)⁴⁴³ On the road to Emmaus, the mystery of the stranger is revealed to the disciples in the breaking of bread in a shared meal (Luke 24: 13-35). The Christian life itself begins with an invitation to an encounter, "behold I stand and knock," (Rev. 3.20) to which a person is free to accept or reject. This very brief summary of some biblical references to hospitality shows that, for the Christian, it is a natural response to first having received the love of God and the hospitality of Christ.⁴⁴⁴ Ogletree writes:

"Followers of Jesus belong essentially to the new age even though they still carry on their lives in social contexts determined by the old...He himself (Jesus) is a stranger, wholly vulnerable to a hostile, violent world. In welcoming him they discover that they too have

⁴⁴¹ Hans Frei in McGovern, 48

⁴⁴² See Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 15-51

⁴⁴³ Also "I was a stranger and you did not welcome me... Whenever you did it for the least of these, you did it for me" (Matt 25:31-46) See Pohl, *Making Room*, 5

⁴⁴⁴"We are to love, then, because he loved us first." (1 John 4: 19-21); Aguilar, Mario I. Introduction to *Contemplating God, Changing the World*, SPCK: London, 2008, x

been welcomed, received by grace as beloved of God. Since the basis of their true home is no longer kinship or a common history and culture, but grace, they are less in need of familiar places and customs to stabilize their individual and corporate identities... Since we are all strangers, no one is a stranger any more.”⁴⁴⁵

By welcoming the stranger and offering sustenance, shelter and rest, the Christian enters into an event that is greater than the physical encounter between people. When this is done in response to and sustained by the love of God, one is able to offer true hospitality to the other in humility.⁴⁴⁶ When God is central to the encounter and the other is seen as welcome not to our table but to God’s, all parties have the possibility of encounter with God. Pohl encourages her reader to see Jesus in every stranger, welcoming him or her with the expectation of seeing God already at work.⁴⁴⁷ She suggests that after such encounters we consider “Did we see Christ in them? Did they see Christ in us?”⁴⁴⁸ Indeed, Aguilar writes:

“We are only instruments and stewards for God’s creation. In welcoming the stranger, the immigrant, the unloved, the prisoner and the frail and sick, we welcome Christ.”⁴⁴⁹

Christianity recognises that human beings are all sojourners and strangers in this

⁴⁴⁵ Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 7-8

⁴⁴⁶ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 94-101

⁴⁴⁷ Bruggeman writes: “Now we live in a society that wants to separate God and neighbor, to keep something of God without the neighbor who comes with God.” Walter Bruggeman, “Suffering Produces Hope” presented as Dr. A. Vanlier Hunter, Jr. Memorial Lecture, Baltimore, April, 1998, sponsored by the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies, 9 See also Pohl, *Making Room*, 67-8; Pohl, *Making Room*, 157

⁴⁴⁸ Pohl, *Making Room*, 173

⁴⁴⁹ Aguilar, *Contemplating God*, 123

world, that they are dependent on God and are responsible for one another in the transience of human life. It could be suggested that the fact that hospitality is vulnerable to corruption indicates that it is something virtuous and worthy of practice. Perhaps the practice of hospitality is so easily distorted (becoming institutionalised, proud or altruistic) precisely because it has so much potential for good but is dependent on humility.⁴⁵⁰ The hospitality encounter involves a risk and potential loss but also holds the potential for something greater to emerge and be gained. This may be something unforeseen, a blessing from God, perhaps, or even healing, as will be explored in chapter five.

It may be said that such Christian hospitality is an act of foolishness or even tremendous naivety.⁴⁵¹ However, as the Lebanese encounter with Syrian refugees shows, it takes remarkable courage to make a change of heart and welcome those one has long despised. The Christian faith allows a person to see the humanity of the other, beyond their “otherness” and gives courage to act contrary to society in a practice that is not “tame and pleasant” but perhaps a “subversive act of resistance.”⁴⁵² Cragg writes that:

“(A) sect has the instinct to tighten, to foreclose questions, to let fear override generosity, to intensify allegiance in exclusivism, whereas a true church has dimensions of patience, charity, compassion and hospitality.”⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Arthur Sutherland, *I was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality*, (Abingdon Press: Nashville, 2006), 79; Pohl, *Making Room*, 15

⁴⁵¹ Moyaert, Marianne “Biblical, Ethical and Hermeneutical Reflections on Narrative Hospitality,” 95

⁴⁵² Pohl, *Making Room*, 61

⁴⁵³ Cragg, *The Arab Christian*, 225

Within the Lebanese churches it must be recognised that there are many instances of exclusivism and acting from fear but this study has sought to find examples of this “true church” which is identifiable by its striving towards compassionate and patient hospitality.

Hostis to Hospes

The hospitable encounter between Lebanese Christians and Syrian refugees is what Sajdi describes as a “human encounter.”⁴⁵⁴ Although the practice of hospitality has varied expressions, the basic expression of honouring the other in humility is international. Just as speaking begins with listening and acting starts with observing, giving begins with receiving – from God and from others. Hospitality to needy refugees is the natural, compassionate response for those who have themselves suffered the pain of war, exile and loss and wish to alleviate the suffering of their neighbours. The Lebanese are, however, compelled also by their Arab and Christian traditions to open their homes to the stranger. Despite the many negative accounts of hostility and rejection, there are some Lebanese who are willing to persevere against their primary instincts of ambivalence or hostility towards the Syrians and are choosing to take them in and offer true *Diyafa*. For Christians, there is the added motivation of the love of God which they have received and compels them to love their neighbour and provide for the stranger in need. For many Lebanese Christians

⁴⁵⁴Sajdi, “The Dead and the City: The Limits of Hospitality in the Early Modern Levant,” 130

this has involved a process of first choosing to forgive Syria for the damage it has done to Lebanon and the wounds that Syrian hegemony has caused.⁴⁵⁵

The multiple factors listed above, including the pressures on the infrastructure and security, heighten fears and create further obstacles to peaceful engagement with the other. However, the Lebanese churches which are familiar with war and suffering and the difficulties of being in the minority, find their primary allegiance with God, through Christ, and are therefore enabled to disentangle themselves from social structures and expectations to be free to respond to political turmoil as agents of peace. I have suggested that the Lebanese Reformed Christians in particular who are a “minority within a minority” and have their primary allegiances with God and the West, are the most free of Lebanese churches to practice free hospitality.⁴⁵⁶ In conclusion, it can be said that the move from hostility to hospitality is a choice and an act of courage which involves accepting the self, loosening the grip on possessions, opening a space for the unexpected to occur and being ready for the possibility of transformation. This chapter has argued that the real Christian hospitality described is rooted in humility, accepts the other in their ‘otherness,’ expecting nothing in return but ready for the self to be changed. Nouwen affirms that this will bring unity between guest and host but (I suggest) perhaps also between the hosts:

⁴⁵⁵ FN.LB.27.03.15:4 and Emails (Rev. Dr. C 31.08.15; Dr. D. 31.08.15). There are several stories about former militiamen turning away from hatred and choosing peace (to the point of welcoming Syrians) but more research is required to verify such reports.

⁴⁵⁶ I suggest that an exploration of the concept of “Christ as Wasta”(middleman) would be an effective means of articulating a contextual theology for Lebanese Reformed Churches. See also Ekkardt A. Sonntag “Jesus, the Good Wasta? The Sociology of Middle Eastern Mediation as a Key to Christian-Muslim Dialogue” Conference paper as The European Conference for Social Sciences, Brighton, July 2013

“When hostility is converted to hospitality then fearful strangers can become guests revealing to their hosts the promise they are carrying with them. Then, in fact, the distinction between host and guest proves to be artificial and evaporates in the recognition of the new found unity.”⁴⁵⁷

Christine Pohl writes “Christians have a vital role in making sure that the needs of refugees are taken seriously by national governments.”⁴⁵⁸ Despite the Lebanese political impotence and probable blindness to the activities of the churches in this particular field, the Lebanese church is an example to other Arab and European churches as they, too, struggle to respond to the influx of refugees and migrants in search of new life. This courageous and vulnerable hospitality encounter will be explored in the following chapter as a means of establishing the “vertical dimension” of hospitality as an encounter with God.

⁴⁵⁷ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 64

⁴⁵⁸ Pohl, *Making Room*, 166

Chapter Five

Hospes to Hope: Finding Hope

*“But now I felt not the weight of the cross. I felt only His hand.”*⁴⁵⁹

This chapter seeks to find and articulate the “vertical” dimension of Christian hospitality as an encounter with God.⁴⁶⁰ By briefly surveying the psychological effects of the historical wounds in Lebanese society, I argue that the hospitality offered by the Lebanese to their Syrian neighbours today is not only an act of humanitarian service to the other but a step towards healing (for all parties) and is a source of hope.⁴⁶¹ The Lebanese are a wounded people of a country trapped in cycles of violence and burdened by the wounds of ruthless Syrian hegemony. In order to receive their Syrian neighbours, they have had to once again face their own wounds

⁴⁵⁹Gibran Khalil Gibran *Jesus the Son of Man*, (A. A. Knopf: University of Michigan, 1928), 201
Gibran imagines Simon the Cyrene carrying the cross of Jesus, saying:

“And I carried His cross. It was heavy... And Jesus looked at me. And the sweat of His forehead was running down upon His beard. Again He looked at me and He said, “Do you too drink this cup? You shall indeed sip its rim with me to the end of time.” So saying He placed His hand upon my free shoulder. And we walked together towards the Hill of the Skull. But now I felt not the weight of the cross. I felt only His hand. And it was like the wing of a bird upon my shoulder.”

⁴⁶⁰ In reference to James Taylor, “Hospitality as Translation” in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 18

⁴⁶¹ It is not within the limits of this thesis to fully explore the concept of “hope.” Taken here to mean a victory against hopelessness. See Desroche, *The Sociology of Hope*, 41

and to overcome obstacles of fear and hostility towards the Syrians as representative of that which has wounded them.

In this chapter, I suggest that the ‘yes’ of Christian hospitality echoes the ‘yes’ of Gethsemane (Christ’s willingness to accept the pain of the cross as God’s will) and is a faithful and courageous response to receiving the love of God. The examples of contemporary Lebanese hospitality towards the Syrian refugees today are glimpses of hope and provide a model for Christian responses to the current refugee crisis in the region and beyond. Both the war in Syria and the consequent encounter between Lebanese and Syrians were unexpected and echo Derrida’s “interruption” by the uninvited guest.⁴⁶² The media has been quick to portray the worst of the Syrian crisis and its impact on Lebanon but behind the headlines there are some positive stories of hospitality, healing and transformation, bringing a hope that was also unexpected.

Historical wounds

The previous chapter raised the difficulty of offering hospitality to those who represent Syria and remind the Lebanese of their un-healed wounds, both past and present. As mentioned previously, anti-Syrian feeling remains high among the Christian population in particular and the first response of many Lebanese Christians to the Syrian war was to say: “they deserve it.”⁴⁶³ Strained political relations between Lebanon and Syria continue to generate bitterness and fear on all levels of society and

⁴⁶² In conversation, Near East School of Theology, Beirut 03.2011; Shepherd, “*The Gift of the Other*,” 58 and Westmoreland, “*Interruptions*,” 6-7

⁴⁶² Richard Kearney and James Taylor, “Introduction” to *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 1

⁴⁶³ FN.LB.23.03.15: v

the country remains “hostage” to Syria while collapsing under the burden of ever-increasing numbers of Syrian refugees. Khalaf, in his astute analysis of the Lebanese condition explains, “Lebanon remains today virtually under Syria’s hegemony (and is) almost akin to a satellite state.”⁴⁶⁴ Syria continues to hold a level of control over Lebanese media and government and both the postponement of elections and the interminable presidential vacuum are, he says, “all done largely with Syria’s tutelage and prodding.”⁴⁶⁵ Granted, the level of direct interference in Lebanon has decreased as the war in Syria has progressed but despite there being little written material addressing this topic outwith the media at present, many Lebanese affirm that Syria is still maintaining control by subtly reinforcing social divisions and fears and mobilizing Syrian agents within Lebanese territory.⁴⁶⁶ Khalaf portrays a Lebanese population that is:

“(s) till unable...to vindicate their collective grievance. They have been homogenized by fear, terror and grief, but remain divided and powerless in identifying and coping with the sources of their anguish.”⁴⁶⁷

Describing the atmosphere of paranoia and hostility, defensiveness and blame in 1958, Sheikh Pierre Gemayel articulated the view many hold today: “The Christian psychosis of fear is internalized, visceral, and tenacious. We can do nothing about it.”⁴⁶⁸ This “Christian psychosis” is by no means limited to the Christian population

⁴⁶⁴ Khalaf, *Civil*, 54-55

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 55

⁴⁶⁶ FN.LB.26.03.15; 10-11

⁴⁶⁷ Khalaf, *Civil*, 243, 247 (see also “The Scars and Scares of War,” 252-272)

⁴⁶⁸ Khalaf, *Lebanon Adrift*, 4

but is manifest throughout society and across sectarian divides by vilification of the other and retreat to the familiar which leads to limited physical movement and increased ghettoisation or “re-tribalisation.”⁴⁶⁹ It may also be expressed in a “collective amnesia;” in nostalgia for that which has been lost and a re-glamorisation of the “Golden Age.”⁴⁷⁰ Other individual symptoms which include restlessness, instability, difficulty concentrating, insomnia, depression, behavioural problems, aggressive tendencies, dependence on alcohol, drugs and cigarettes, hyper-vigilance, depression and what have been described as “epidemic” levels of hypertension have their origin in this ‘Psychosis.’⁴⁷¹ These symptoms are often identified with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which, it is said, can be passed on to people not directly affected by the original trauma and can affect a whole society.⁴⁷² Most

⁴⁶⁹ Khalaf, *Civil*, 305

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 306

⁴⁷¹ Khalaf, *Civil*, 35, 305, 252-272 “I call these ‘islands’. We live on islands. We visit some islands but others we don’t.” FN.LB. 26.03.15; 8; Sune Haughbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010; Bloomfield, David, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: A Handbook*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance: Stockholm, 2003), 78; Aiadeh, *Sectarianism*, 22; L. Farhood, H. Dimassi, & N.L. Strauss “Understanding Post-Conflict Mental Health: Assessment of PTSD, Depression, General Health and Life Events in Civilian Population One Year after the 2006 War in South Lebanon.” *Trauma Stress Disorder Treatment* 2:2 (2013); Bloomfield, et al. *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict*, 78; a study in 2015 showed that two thirds of the populations have hypertension or pre-hypertension. Dany Matar, et al. “Prevalence, Awareness, Treatment, and Control of Hypertension in Lebanon” in *The Journal of Clinical Hypertension* vol.17.5, May 2015, 387

⁴⁷² See Leila Farhood, “War, Trauma and Women: Predisposition and Vulnerability to Adverse Psychological Health Outcomes” in Lamia Rustom Shehadeh, (Ed.) *Women and War in Lebanon* (University Press of Florida: Gainesville, 1999) and Alexandra Asseily, “Breaking the Cycle of

analyses of Lebanese society show that because the past has not been dealt with, it continues to haunt the population.⁴⁷³ It can also be said that due to the fact that psychological trauma has been overlooked for so long, it has become an ingrained feature of the Lebanese psyche and threatens to continue affecting future generations.⁴⁷⁴

Although there is a considerable number of both Lebanese and International civil society organisations (NGOs) working in Lebanon for social justice, equality, development, conservation, education and public health, there has been little or no public provision which focuses primarily on recovery from the civil war. There have been no large-scale public efforts to address post-trauma healing with reflection groups, for example, as there were in Argentina to support families of the *desaparecidos*.⁴⁷⁵ Psychotherapist Alexandra Asseily has worked to develop the idea of forgiving the wounds of history to break the cycle of violence in Lebanon and has inspired the creation of a Garden of Forgiveness. Lying in a war-destroyed and

Violence in Lebanon” in *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* Edited by Youssef Choueiri, 89-119. Stacey International: London, 2007

⁴⁷³Haughbolle, *War and Memory*, 228 See also 5-28

⁴⁷⁴Steve S. Olweean, “When Society Is the Victim: Catastrophic Trauma Recovery” in Stanley Krippner, and Teresa M. McIntyre (Eds.) *The Psychological Impact of War Trauma on Civilians: An International Perspective* (Praeger: Westport Connecticut 2003), 271

⁴⁷⁵ Lucila Edelman, et al. “Psychosocial effects and Treatment of Mass Trauma Due to Sociopolitical Events: The Argentine Experience” in Stanley Krippner, and Teresa M. McIntyre (eds.), *The Psychological Impact of War Trauma on Civilians: An International Perspective*, 249-256. (Praeger: Westport Connecticut, 2003), 143-154. See also the work of Haughbolle on memory and healing, for example: Haughbolle, Sune “Memory as Representation and Memory as Idiom,”121-134

excavated area of Downtown Beirut surrounded by seven religious buildings, it is a physical representation of the possibility of co-existence and peace.⁴⁷⁶

Furthermore, despite the prevalence of medical education and facilities in Lebanon, the obvious detrimental effects of long-term regional conflict, and the work of organisations such as the Lebanese Psychology Association, the Lebanese are dismissive of mental health as a medical concern and are very resistant to psychiatry. It may be, however, that further research on the role of psychology in understanding illness and social tensions may assist Lebanese education in the future. There are some studies attempting to break the stigma of mental illness in Lebanon but very little which tackles PTSD as a national epidemic.⁴⁷⁷ The Church and other religious organisations have tended to aggravate these problems by over-spiritualizing mental illness, blaming the sufferer and hiding such problems out of view to avoid community stigma.⁴⁷⁸

This brief overview of the Lebanese psyche gives an impression of a wounded society, struggling to recover from decades of political upheaval and sectarian violence. The arrival of Syrian refugees has reminded the Lebanese of pain that they had mostly concealed behind a facade of reconstruction, consumerism and nostalgia.⁴⁷⁹ For many, the proximity of the Syrians has reminded them not only of strained relations with Syria but also of residual personal pain, grief and unforgiveness. As chapter four showed, however, the Lebanese have responded almost unanimously with welcome and kindness towards their Syrian neighbours and there

⁴⁷⁶ See Asseily, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence in Lebanon" 89-111

⁴⁷⁷ PTSD is a difficult term which must not be taken in isolation but may help to articulate and address a serious problem in Lebanese society. See Bloomfield, et al. *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict*: 79

⁴⁷⁸ Personal observation.

⁴⁷⁹ Khalaf, *Civil*, 243, 247 (see also "The Scars and Scares of War," 252-272)

are some who have spoken of their change of heart from hostility to hospitality. One such example is an ex-militiaman who is now a Baptist pastor and said that if he could not forgive the Syrians, he could not continue to be a pastor.⁴⁸⁰ Although key leadership figures and many church members are willing to forgive and provide assistance, there are also many others in the churches who still harbour ill will towards the refugees. Research for this study revealed that in one church, for example, 85% of the congregation left when the doors were opened to Syrians but that true hospitality and healing is visible in a small number of Reformed churches.⁴⁸¹

Reflections of a wounded Christ

It may be argued that this very wounded-ness and vulnerability is what makes the present Lebanese Christian hospitality so real and therefore so powerful. The term ‘vulnerability,’ coming from the Latin for a wound, *vulnus*, literally means wounded-ness and can be described as a distinctive feature of a Christian.⁴⁸² This vulnerability is what defines the Christian as a “suffering servant host,” and is essential to true hospitality.⁴⁸³ It is what Schreiter calls a “manifestation of the trust that is at the basis of self-giving in love” that characterises the life of faith.⁴⁸⁴ In this uncomfortable encounter with the Syrians, the Lebanese are being brought face to face with their own pain and must be able to reach a point of vulnerability (the

⁴⁸⁰ Email 31.07.15:2 (Dr. C)

⁴⁸¹ Email 31.07.15:2 (Dr. C)

⁴⁸² Hederman, “Hospitable by Calling, Inhospitable by Nature,” 94 and Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, (Orbis Books: New York, 1998), 78

⁴⁸³ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 41-2

⁴⁸⁴ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 60

willingness to risk being wounded again) in order for real self-giving hospitality and transformation to take place.⁴⁸⁵

For the Christian whose faith is based on the wounds of Christ and his transformative resurrection, a person's own wounds become a potential source of restored humanity and healing to others.⁴⁸⁶ The cruelty which Christ himself suffered restores one's own humanity and so one's own wounds can "become life-producing rather than death-dealing."⁴⁸⁷ Hederman echoes this saying: "The only wound through which such super power (grace) can flow is the freely opened heart and will of an authentic lover of God."⁴⁸⁸ However, Lombard recognises the difficulties of freely opening the heart:

"To fully open one's heart to others is among the greatest challenges of the human condition. For it demands that one combine effacement with generosity, humility with charity, and modesty with compassion."⁴⁸⁹

If hospitality to the other is a willing response to the love, forgiveness and acceptance received by God, it is also an act of worship, giving back to God that of

⁴⁸⁵ The decision to move from *hostis* to *hospes*, as discussed in Chapter four.

⁴⁸⁶ Mark Patrick Hederman, "Hospitable by Calling, Inhospitable by Nature" in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* Richard Kearney and James Taylor (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 94; Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 82

⁴⁸⁷ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 81

⁴⁸⁸ Hederman, *Hospitable by Calling*, 94

⁴⁸⁹ Lombard, *Hospitality in Islam*, 137

which He is worthy.⁴⁹⁰ If the Christian believes that everything is received as a gift by the grace of God, then everything can be freely offered back to God in humility and in worship. This includes the sharing of possessions with those in need and loving God by loving neighbour.⁴⁹¹ “True Christian worship,” Tutu affirms, “includes the love of God and the love of neighbour,” adding, “(t)he two must go together or your Christianity is false.”⁴⁹² To a certain extent, the hospitality that is shown to the other is also a way in which God is welcomed into the world and our lives, “making Him present within our homes and within ourselves.”⁴⁹³

Hospitality is also a form of sacrifice, in the sense of making something sacred by offering it up to God, is not necessarily the loss or deprivation of possessions but the willingness to let go and freely return them to God.⁴⁹⁴ This sacrifice also includes the readiness to let go of the self, including its pride and wounded-ness. Bruggeman argues that the Christian life which is defined by loss is a “huge resource for faith and life in our time” but requires letting go of the past in order for a new thing to emerge.⁴⁹⁵ Hospitality (welcoming the other into our space) is therefore uncomfortable

⁴⁹⁰See Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*; Chawkat Moucarray, *The Search for Forgiveness: Pardon and Punishment in Islam and Christianity* (Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, 2004); and Pohl, *Making Room*, 172-3

⁴⁹¹ “He who receives you, receives me.” (Matt. 10:40) Also “I was a stranger and you did not welcome me... Whenever you did it for the least of these, you did it for me” (Matt 25:31-46) See Pohl, *Making Room*, 5

⁴⁹² Charles G. Haws *Suffering, hope and forgiveness: the Ubuntu theology of Desmond Tutu* (Scottish Journal of Theology, 62.4 (2009): 482

⁴⁹³ Lumbard, *Hospitality in Islam*, 138

⁴⁹⁴ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 131

⁴⁹⁵Bruggeman, *Suffering Produces Hope*, 2,4 (Quoting Isaiah 43:19 “I am about to do a new thing, □now it springs forth, □do you not perceive it”)

and involves a degree of loss of the self, as is described in detail by Taylor in reference to Ricoeur's "work of mourning."⁴⁹⁶

In letting go of the self and recognising our human frailty and weakness, strength can be found in the wounded Christ.⁴⁹⁷ The "yes" of Gethsemane when Jesus accepts the suffering which is to come in order to restore humanity, becomes the Christian "yes" to accepting pain, surrendering to God and offering hospitality to those in need even at the risk of further loss.⁴⁹⁸ One interviewee for this research said that central to her understanding of the Church's mission, especially in the present day, is that when Jesus re-appeared after Easter and showed his wounds, he told his disciples to go and do likewise; "As the father has sent me, so I send you." (John 20: 21-23) Bretherton writes:

"Hospitality towards strangers constitutes part of the church's witness to the Christ-event and the hospitality that weak and sinful humans have received from God... Thus, the Christian practice of hospitality is often, because of its priorities, deeply prophetic, calling into question the prevailing political hegemony."⁴⁹⁹

Christian hospitality to the other is therefore not "something of comfort and luxury" and may cost us everything but is part of the Church's responsibility and mission of justice and peace to the world.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ James Taylor, "Hospitality as Translation," 11 - 22

⁴⁹⁷ "The crucified Jesus is our strength." In a comment posted by Munther Isaac in *Reflections of a Palestinian Christian* <http://muntherisaac.blogspot.co.uk> 23.06.15

⁴⁹⁸ FN.UK.27.05.15: 10

⁴⁹⁹ Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, 211-2

⁵⁰⁰ FN.UK.27.05.15: 10 and FN.LB.26.03.15: 5B

Hospitality as Healer

It is precisely in this humility, recognition of human weakness and the readiness to return everything to God, however, that there is the possibility of the vertical dimension of the hospitality encounter to emerge and which enables the possibility of healing for all parties.⁵⁰¹ By welcoming in the stranger, we have the opportunity to view ourselves from a new perspective.⁵⁰² By coming face to face with the inner self and confronting our own pain, even “embracing” it, we then find the opportunity to acknowledge the wounds, and re-write the memory of the grievance or trauma.⁵⁰³ It may be uncomfortable but is unavoidable and fundamental in a true and honest encounter with the stranger. In meeting the other, we tell our stories and, by re-telling our stories, we not only become friends with others but with our stories themselves.⁵⁰⁴ We then move from being victim to survivor (or conqueror).⁵⁰⁵ Instead of forgetting, we become more able to break free from being controlled by the past and to develop a new relationship to it.⁵⁰⁶ Indeed, Derrida states, “There is no forgiveness without

⁵⁰¹ The term “healing” is used here loosely to describe any process to improved psychological health after extensive violent conflict. See Bloomfield, et al. *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict*, 77

⁵⁰² See McGovern, Deirdre F. “Hospitality to the Other in Faith-based Schools” Unpublished PhD thesis, (University of Glasgow, May 2010), 77

⁵⁰³ Nouwen writes: “The paradox indeed is that the beginning of healing is in the solidarity with the pain.” *Reaching Out*, 60; Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 44-5,58 See also Haughballe, *War and Memory in Lebanon* and Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*.

⁵⁰⁴ Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Other*, 5; Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 89 and Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 44-5

⁵⁰⁵ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 58-59, 108

⁵⁰⁶ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 58-59 See also Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Other*, 5

memory...to forgive is not to forget, above all not to forget.”⁵⁰⁷ It is in this act of remembering and re-writing one’s understanding of the past that there is an element of forgiveness required, of the perpetrator, of the self, and perhaps even of abstract things which continue to impede healing.

It is not within the limits of this thesis to explore the theme of forgiveness, especially in a so-called honour-and-shame society such as the Middle East, but a few points will be highlighted to emphasise the “counter-cultural” nature of the Christian faith in this setting.⁵⁰⁸ Revenge is central to Arab society and is a major cause for the cycles of conflict which continue over generations.⁵⁰⁹ For the Christian who believes that vengeance is not our duty but God’s, this cycle is broken and allows the Christian the possibility of an alternative power, that of liberating forgiveness.⁵¹⁰ To a Christian in the Middle Eastern context, forgiveness can seem like a betrayal of the self, of the community and of the past.⁵¹¹ It takes time, perhaps many years, and is especially difficult in a situation of on-going conflict or violence. The subject of forgiveness is too vast to do justice in this study but it would be interesting to investigate this further and, I suggest, it may prove easier for the Lebanese to forgive

⁵⁰⁷ Derrida, *Hostipitality*, 382

⁵⁰⁸ See Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 59-63

⁵⁰⁹ Mackey, *Mirror*, 15 and Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 60 See also Choueiri, Youssef M. “Explaining Civil Wars in Lebanon” in Youssef Choueiri (Ed.) *Breaking the Cycle: Civil Wars in Lebanon* (Stacey International, London 2007), 21-46

⁵¹⁰ Romans 12:19, referring to Deuteronomy 32:35; See Moucarry, *The Search for Forgiveness* for full exploration of forgiveness in the Middle Eastern context.

⁵¹¹ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 55

the Syrians than their next-door neighbours who were once direct enemies in the civil war.⁵¹²

In the hospitality encounter, the Christian has the opportunity to act out that which has been received from Christ.⁵¹³ For those who are aware of their weaknesses and failures, but have received the forgiveness of God, there is a reason and motive to extend that forgiveness to the other. Derrida asserts that the hospitality encounter itself must begin with asking forgiveness of the guest because one's hospitality always falls short.⁵¹⁴ If, in this case, the first act of the host on the threshold of hospitality is asking forgiveness, then the readiness to also forgive the guest must surely follow. Those who have spoken of healing in this encounter between the Syrians and the Lebanese have first mentioned the need to forgive the Syrians who represent that which has historically wounded them.⁵¹⁵ This includes the wounds of war, the pain of Syrian hegemony, the fear of enemies creeping through the weaknesses of the state and destroying the precarious Lebanese stability. It may also entail forgiving other parts of the Church, other Lebanese, and even the feeling of betrayal and neglect by the wider world. If the hospitality encounter is entered into in

⁵¹² Many Lebanese make reference to the fact that their neighbours were once shooting at them and killing their families, and that ex-militiamen are now running businesses and driving taxis. One spoke of a former enemy turning up to fix the boiler. Both recognized each other but neither was able to speak. (In conversation, Beirut 2013)

⁵¹³ See Appleby, R. Scott *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, inc.: New York, 2000)

⁵¹⁴ Derrida, *Hostipitality*, 380

⁵¹⁵ E.g. FN.LB.24.03.15: 12 "It was very hard at the beginning...but I am ready to forgive and to love and I am learning to see the good side (of them)."

this manner with true humility, in the readiness to be forgiven and the readiness to forgive, the way is opened for possible healing.

Hospitality, Newman says, is “not a hedge against pain and suffering but sees Christ present with us in our suffering,” and thus such suffering does not have the final say.⁵¹⁶ I suggest that if God is love, and God is healer, then love is healer. In this case, a person can be healed through selfless expressions of God’s love, either as receiver or as giver of hospitality, because both giver and receiver are participating in God’s love in action. Hospitality done in love and humility is therefore potentially healing for all parties. In offering such hospitality to those who are suffering, particularly if they have been perceived as enemies, perhaps one’s own pain and bitterness also has a chance to be healed.

Hospitality as Hope

When the Church engages in a national crisis such as the influx of refugees to Lebanon, and offers hospitality that is both worshipful and sacrificial, done in humility and love, the Church can truly become what Corbon calls the “bearer of hope.”⁵¹⁷ He says that to be the Church is to have hope and to bring that hope to the world.⁵¹⁸ When the Church offers hospitality to refugees, the “holy ground of the hospitable encounter,” is a human event which opens up the possibility for an

⁵¹⁶ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 103

⁵¹⁷ “It means taking seriously all that makes the churches local, that through which, in the Middle East, they sacramentally represent the mystery of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. This challenge is progressively being taken up and in this the “little flock” that remains is the bearer of hope” Corbon, “Middle East” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 608

⁵¹⁸ Corbon, *L’Église des Arabes*, 213

encounter with God and the emergence of the unexpected.⁵¹⁹ Jean Vanier describes hospitality to strangers as “a sign of contradiction, a place where joy and pain, crises and peace are closely interwoven.”⁵²⁰ It is in this encounter and contradiction that God becomes real. True hospitality enters into God’s greater hospitality which provides the “vertical” dimension of the encounter.⁵²¹ Bruggeman comments that a remarkable feature of the life of faith communities is that in the same way that amnesia produces despair, memory produces hope.⁵²² He writes that:

“The capacity to turn memory to hope in the midst of loss...is not a psychological trick. It is a massive theological act that is not about optimism or even about signs of newness. It is rather a statement about the fidelity of God who is the key player in our past and in our future.”⁵²³

For the Christian, hospitality to the other is not an option but an obligation.⁵²⁴ Such service to the other may cost everything, even life, yet it is the purpose and mission of the Church as the body of Christ and symbol of hope to do so. This readiness to accept such a mission, despite the pain it will entail reflects Jesus’ own willingness to accept his trial and crucifixion saying, “Not my will but yours be done.”(Luke 22:42) For the Christian, who sees his or her place in the bigger picture of God’s active grace in the world, there is hope and the certainty that if God is

⁵¹⁹ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 2

⁵²⁰ Vanier quoted in Pohl, *Making Room*, 10

⁵²¹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 13

⁵²² Bruggeman, *Suffering Produces Hope*, 4

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 5

⁵²⁴ FN.UK.27.05.15: 10

present in the pain and suffering, His purposes will finally triumph.⁵²⁵ Newman says that by entering into the “wider story of the triune God” one becomes free to receive life as a gift and to “enter more fully into communion with God and the other.”⁵²⁶ Nouwen writes that it is God himself who makes this movement possible.

“Not the movement from weakness to power, but the movement in which we become less and less fearful and defensive and more and more open to the other and his world, even when it leads to suffering and death.”⁵²⁷

This perspective of hope allows the Christian to offer true hospitality which acts out a faithful and courageous response to the love of God. Hospitality, therefore, does not require a specific place or time, nor any particular possessions or abilities but rather a people whose primary focus is on God and whose communal life is marked by a readiness to worship, to sacrifice, and to receive the unexpected as a gift of God.⁵²⁸ When the unexpected guest is also seen in this way, as coming from God, perhaps even as “guest of God,” and is welcomed and allowed to flourish in their “otherness,” the Church can offer an opportunity for co-existence, reconciliation and hope.⁵²⁹ The examples of such Lebanese hospitality towards Syrian refugees today

⁵²⁵Tutu in Haws, *Suffering, Hope and Forgiveness*, 448

⁵²⁶Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 113

⁵²⁷Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 100-1

⁵²⁸Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 115

⁵²⁹ Popular Arabic expression; See McGovern, “Hospitality to the Other in Faith-based Schools,” 38 Reconciliation is taken here to mean the willingness to overcome hostility to be able to receive the other.

are glimpses of hope in an otherwise hopeless situation, and can provide a model for Christian response to the current refugee crisis in the region and beyond.

Both the war in Syria and the resulting encounter between Lebanese and Syrians in this meeting of host and guest have been unanticipated and echo Derrida's description of "interruption" by the uninvited guest which is unforeseen, unexpected and un-awaited.⁵³⁰ The greatest surprise for the Lebanese Christians in this encounter has been the rate of conversion of Syrian Muslims to Christianity. A Muslim woman who preached in her veil in a church in the Beirut suburbs until she was forced to leave is just one example of a wider movement.⁵³¹ There are many unconfirmed reports of this phenomenon but because of the security concerns involved, it is difficult to obtain figures to confirm this apparent trend.⁵³² Perhaps for the first time in history it can be said that the Lebanese churches have an unexpected opportunity to engage with their Muslim neighbours in this way, to serve them and share the Christian message of peace through love in action in the hospitality encounter. When their focus has been on survival and defence, the churches have become more divided and hostile. There have, of course, always been examples of inter-religious dialogue; attempts at ecclesial reconciliation in the form of ecumenical unity and

⁵³⁰ In conversation, Near East School of Theology, Beirut 03.2011; Shepherd, *"The Gift of the Other,"* 58 and Westmoreland, *"Interruptions,"* 6-7 See also Richard Kearney and James Taylor, "Introduction" to *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* (eds.) (London: Continuum, 2011), 1

⁵³¹ FN.LN.24.03.15: 11 "One of them went to Turkey (Muslim background) and now she is having Bible Study in her apartment and inviting all her neighbours, everybody she sees... She had to flee from Lebanon because it wasn't safe... they beat up her husband."

⁵³² I am aware of some studies which are currently investigating these reports from a variety of perspectives (e.g. at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Beirut) but, in a constantly changing situation such as this, it may be some time before this movement can be better understood.

small scale examples of hospitality to the other but not on a large scale such as is visible in this present crisis.⁵³³ As Fr. Thomas Michael comments in a discussion of Christian hospitality to Muslims:

“When people of various faiths live together—not simply cohabiting the same town but sharing life together—the question of dialogue or proclamation doesn't arise. When they work, study, struggle, celebrate, and mourn together and face the universal crises of injustice, illness, and death as one, they don't spend most of their time talking about doctrine. Their focus is on immediate concerns of survival, on taking care of the sick and needy, on communicating cherished values to new generations, on resolving problems and tensions in productive rather than in destructive ways, on reconciling after conflicts, on seeking to build more just, humane, and dignified societies.”⁵³⁴

This brief overview of the complex relationship between Syria and Lebanon has attempted to show the degree to which historical pain continues to affect interpersonal relations and to provide a counter-narrative which reveals instances of hospitality, healing and transformation, bringing a hope that was also unexpected.⁵³⁵

Finding Hope

This chapter has shown that the Lebanese are a wounded people who are struggling under the pressure of the influx of so many needy Syrian refugees to their territory but who have, for the most part, responded with true hospitality as described

⁵³³ See Chapter three for the Ecumenical movement in the Middle East.

⁵³⁴ Fr. Thomas Michael in Amir Hussein, “Christian Hospitality and Muslims” in *Theological Education*, 47. 2 (2013): 69

⁵³⁵ See also Dr. Michel Nseir, *Christians in the Arab World: Between the Risk of Existing and the Fear of Vanishing*,” Public lecture at Near East School of Theology, December 2014

in chapter four. In order to respond with Christian love to their neighbours, the Lebanese have first had to overcome the obstacles of long-term hostility, fear and prejudice towards the Syrians as representative of that which has wounded them politically and personally. This has involved the struggle of forgiveness in the pursuit of peace. Such forgiveness and love towards the other has emerged (for some) out of a readiness to respond to the love and forgiveness first received from God and the Christian commitment to see Christ in the stranger.

The Lebanese Christians remain divided physically but are finding themselves united in their willingness to respond to a humanitarian crisis with Christian hospitality and hope. In doing so, there are positive encounters emerging which, in their service to the other, have a healing element also for the Lebanese. The Lebanese Reformed churches in particular, I have suggested, as minorities within a minority, have a status which gives them a freedom to offer hospitality to the other, unbound by social conventions and expectations. They see their primary belonging with Christ, having received all that they possess as a gift from God, are participating in God's greater plan for the world which extends beyond that which is known, and are thus enabled to serve the other in confidence and faith.⁵³⁶

As the verse which preceded this chapter suggests, in assisting the other one's own burdens are alleviated and there is the opportunity for an encounter with Christ. Rather than feeling only the weight of the burden of sorrow or responsibility that comes with hospitality to refugees, the Lebanese Christians say they feel the hand of Christ sustaining them.⁵³⁷ To see Christ as the purpose and motivation for hospitality to the Syrian refugees, Christ as *wasta* (middle man between the Church and God)

⁵³⁶ See Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 113-5

⁵³⁷ FN.LB.23.03.15; FN.LB.26.03.15: 5C & 12

liberates the Lebanese Christian, lifting him or her out of the limits and dictates of society towards the possibility of breaking free and allowing another dimension to arise.⁵³⁸ The Church becomes a form of invisible revolution as such stories of transformation are emerging primarily from hidden parts of the Church rather than the established denominations. The fact that this hospitality to the other is based on humility means that such a movement is not easily measured. However, such stories contribute to a picture which will develop over time and I suggest, will show the Lebanese churches to be truly revolutionary in the sense that they are ready to counter society by choosing to offer Christian love to the other and not be controlled by state powers and traditions. In this way, by choosing to overcome hostility and take a risk in order to welcome the other, the Church can freely offer hospitality as both worship and sacrifice and in return discover a source of healing and hope, unexpected.

⁵³⁸ See Ekkardt A. Sonntag *Jesus, the Good Wasta? The Sociology of Middle Eastern Mediation as a Key to Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (Conference paper as The European Conference for Social Sciences, Brighton, July 2013)

Conclusion

Hope, Unexpected

This research has sought to explore and narrate the present day encounter between Lebanese Christians and Syrian refugees. Lebanon is straining to cope with the burden of a twenty-five per cent population increase over three years and the constant threat of the Syrian conflict spilling over the border. Already an over-populated country with poor infrastructure, disintegrated society and a weak government, Lebanon has been revealed as a country which is reaching breaking point but powerless to change. This study has proposed that the Church is well placed to have significant positive influence both regionally and globally.

Part one of this study established the geographical, political and religious setting of Lebanon. Chapter one presented Lebanon as a place of geostrategic vulnerability, but home to a resilient people whose character has been forged through the struggle of reconciling tradition with modernity, the pulls of East and West, and the continual balancing act of navigating between religion and politics. The Lebanese have an inherent ability to re-emerge from cycles of conflict and to find hope in what can seem to be hopeless situations. Chapter two outlined the complex relationship between Lebanon and Syria and traced the progressive stages of Syrian political hegemony over Lebanon from the establishment of the state in 1943 to the present day. A deeply rooted pattern of conflicting interests was revealed presenting Lebanon as a weak state which remains under Syrian authority and continues to be controlled by Syrian proxies and agents. The Lebanese tendency to seek patrons outside their borders has contributed to political polarisation and the disintegration of society. The

Christians in particular have suffered the wounds of Syrian hegemony which, in turn, has increased their hostility towards their Syrian neighbours. Chapter three presented the Lebanese Church as a mosaic of composite communities which reflect the demographic diversity of their country. This study attempted to hold together the Christians as one people but they are not easily unified, despite the ecumenical efforts of the Middle East Council of Churches to bridge irreconcilable theological differences. Furthermore, this chapter explored the degree to which the Church reflects the struggles and strains of wider society, mirroring both its strengths and weaknesses. I proposed that the position of the Lebanese Christians is unique, both in Lebanon and the Middle East, and that the Lebanese Church is well placed to have positive influence regionally and globally. This is especially pertinent now that Europe is facing its own refugee crisis and is facing the possibility of having to welcome those who we have perceived as enemies.⁵³⁹

Part two of this research focussed on the current encounter between Lebanese Christians and Syrian refugees and searched for a means to answer the question posed by Frans Bouwen:

“How can a Christian be personally involved in this political turmoil and by doing so be inspired by his or her faith, rooted in tradition but facing the future in hope?”⁵⁴⁰

Focussing on the practice of hospitality as a means of Christian engagement in the current political crisis, chapter four presented the “horizontal” dimension of

⁵³⁹ Many coming from what Bush termed the “Axis of Evil” and contributing to a fear of “Islamisation.”

⁵⁴⁰ Frans Bouwen, “The Churches in Jerusalem” in *Ecumenism: Present Realities and Future Prospects*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 48

hospitality as both an Arab and Christian tradition, and an act of humanitarian service to the other. In choosing to move from hostility to hospitality, the Lebanese Christians are acting in response to the primary “hospitality” of God and provide an example to the western churches as they begin to engage with the European migrant crisis. Chapter five sought the “vertical” dimension of the hospitality encounter as a means to encountering God. By briefly outlining the extent of historical and psychological wounds still harboured by the Lebanese, I argued that the self-less hospitality exemplified by some Lebanese churches is not only an act of humanitarian service to their neighbours but a step towards further healing for all parties as they welcome perceived enemies and have to overcome obstacles of fear and hostility to do so. I suggested that such hospitality which begins with as a worshipful response to the love of God accepts the other in their otherness, expects nothing in return, is ready to both give and receive, and involves both the readiness to be surprised and transformed is a step towards healing and hope in the midst of hopelessness. The Lebanese who have entered into this encounter in this way, have found hope, unexpected.

Avenues for further research

This research indicates that the Lebanese churches may have influence beyond their field of vision and greater power than they have thus far realised. Could it be that Lebanon could be the point, with the Church at the centre, from which hope might be brought to the Middle Eastern region? Could that hope extend to Europe as it engages with the migration debate as thousands arrive on our shores?

It has not been within the scope of this research to fully explore each of the subjects raised: Christian self-identification; belonging and loyalty; Christianity and Clientelism; war trauma and its effects on society; communal healing and recovery; forgiveness in a context of on-going conflict; the role of the Church in war-torn society; the practice of hospitality to the perceived enemy; a theology of hope for the Middle East; and so on. Each of these areas provides avenues for further research in the current context of the Syrian war and its consequences regionally and globally. Further research is needed to better understand the practicalities of Lebanese hospitality to Syrian refugees, for example who is helping whom exactly? How are their efforts funded and resourced? Are these activities mainstream or marginal? Are they working together with larger local and international agencies? Are the Orthodox helping mainly Orthodox, and the Catholics, mainly Catholics? In other words, how “other” is the other in this encounter? Are the Lebanese operating merely out of pity or is there genuine humility and Christian love in their service? What are their goals besides offering immediate assistance and are they successful in them? Why are Muslims going to evangelical churches? When the refugees say “there is no-one else,” where is the UNHCR? The high numbers of conversions are interesting but are they in any way forced? Do they convert for some kind of gain (such as acceptance into a community or a step towards emigration) or is there real spiritual renewal? This also raises the question of the relationship between hospitality and power.

This study has assumed an approach from the perspective of the host but it would be very revealing to explore hospitality from the side of the recipient. In this particular case, how do the Syrians feel about coming begging from the Lebanese who have a reputation for being pretentious and superior? What are the trauma symptoms of the Syrians? What healing and provision do they require and to what extent has

this been provided? I imagine that this will be the last feature to be addressed as the needs for bread and water and shelter are urgently pressing and show no signs of subsiding. Further research is required to explore to what extent the Lebanese themselves have been changed by this encounter. This study has been based mainly on conversations with a small number of mostly Reformed Christian leaders and therefore the picture it presents is by no means complete. Perhaps in time it could be recommend to organise focus groups or systematic seminars facilitated by a professional counsellor. This may provide an opportunity for the Lebanese to reflect on the sufferings of the Syrians in the light of their own experience of civil war as a means to further breaking down the barriers of “otherness” and revealing shared humanity. An uncomfortable topic raised in this thesis but perhaps better addressed by a Lebanese is to what extent the patron-client framework affects the Church and to what extent can the Church be freed from it? Perhaps a Theology of Christ as *wasta* could be explored as a Lebanese contextual and (maybe even liberation) theology. Likewise, this research has made preliminary steps towards articulating the theology of hope which is emerging from the Middle Eastern Christians whose very existence is threatened by the atrocities of *da'esh* and other extremist groups and the waves of Christian emigration from the region.

Hope, Unexpected

In conclusion, it may be said that this research has revealed a society that is fractured and wounded from a long history of conflict and is ruled by a system that is both confessional and “clientelist.” In order to bring change, there must first be an end to the transfer of blame that is so prevalent and stops progress. Instead, solutions

must be found from within this existing framework. Writing in 1983, but articulating a truth equally valid today, Randal states:

“As for the Christians, a little imagination, a bit of flexibility, a small dose of humility, and a tiny gesture indicating acceptance of even a small part of the responsibility for what happened would go a long way toward furthering Lebanon’s national reconciliation.”⁵⁴¹

The Church, finding its primary belonging with God through Christ and holding onto the hope that sees the present suffering as temporary is, to a degree, liberated from the confines and control of society to act as free agents. In this autonomy, rooted in tradition but freed by faith, the Lebanese Christians have been able to offer true hospitality that is based on the primary “hospitality” of God in humility and service to other bringing the possibility of healing and unexpected hope. The Lebanese Church, with its long history of co-existence with Islam and with other denominations may be easily criticised from outside but a closer investigation reveals a Church that is only encountering challenges because it is struggling to reconcile differences and build unity. The West, particularly in addressing the current migration debate and responding to the needs of refugees in Europe, has much to learn from the Lebanese Christians and, I have suggested, can look to Lebanon as a model of hospitality to the other.

Moreover, it is crucial that the West recognise the Lebanese situation and support the Lebanese churches at this crucial time for the sake of the Middle Eastern Christians but also Christianity itself. It is quite probable that the challenges facing the Lebanese today will face the Europeans tomorrow and Lebanon may well be the

⁵⁴¹ Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, 279

point from which co-existence, peace, reconciliation and hope can be derived for both the region and the wider world. I close with the words of British Ambassador Tom Fletcher who recently wrote in his parting blog:

“If we cannot win the argument for tolerance and diversity in Lebanon, we will lose it everywhere... This is the frontline for a much bigger battle. The real dividing line is not between Christianity and Islam, Sunni and Shia, East and West. It is between people who believe in coexistence, and those who don't.”⁵⁴²

⁵⁴² Fletcher, Tom “*So... Yalla Bye*” 31.06.15 <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/tomfletcher/2015/07/31/19389/>

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