

# **Religion in FBO Contributions to Refugee Integration Processes**

A case-study examining the role of religion in the Isaiah Church's help for refugees with their integration processes.

Marie Claessen



Master Thesis in Religion and Diversity: Conflict and Coexistence,  
University of Oslo, The Faculty of Theology

Supervisor: Dr. Rosemarie van den Breemer

Spring 2023

## Abstract

Influenced by existing discourses on how the Western-secular conceptualisation of religion can have a negative impact on how Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) function, this research investigates the role of religion within FBOs. The decision to focus on FBOs working on integration processes stems from the fact that the European refugee crisis is not likely to improve within the upcoming years, so the efforts of FBOs within this field are much needed. In order to give them the appreciation they deserve, there must be a better understanding of how religion plays a role in them, which is why this thesis focuses on answering the following: *“How do Volunteers Perceive and Experience the Role of Religion in the FBO Help Offered to Refugees in regards to Integration Processes?”* Answers to this question were found through a case-study done on the Isaiah Church, a Dutch Reformed Protestant Church involved in refugee aid. The findings from the case-study, which were collected via interviews and online research of the church’s websites, were analysed within an analytical framework that was developed by the researcher based on where the role of religion could be identified within existing literature on the topic. Under the three subheadings from the framework (religion as source of motivation, religion for accessing resources, and religion as influencing activities), as well as under the fourth subheading (the religious identity of refugees), the analysed findings revealed that religion was perceived and experienced to play an important role for the volunteers, but that this role and its significance fluctuated as a result of personal religious identities and external factors.

## Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor, Rosemarie van den Breemer, for her help and feedback throughout the thesis-writing process.

I would further also like to give thanks to both my programme leaders, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow and Serena Baldari, for believing in me at times where I could not find it in me to do so myself.

In addition, I wish to express my gratitude to the people who took their time to participate in this research's interviews, sharing with me the rawness of refugee aid and reminding me what kindness looks like. I am grateful and honoured that they were willing to share their experiences with me, and needless to say, without them this thesis would not have been possible.

Last but not least, I want to thank my friends for their support, whether by listening to my passionate monologues about the thesis topic or by being there for me when I needed it, they were always by my side. I also wish to thank my family who made sure to always be one phone-call away, despite living in another country. My gratitude especially extends towards my father, whom in solitude with his daughter spent endless nights offering support to finish the final sprint for completion.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Structure of the Thesis .....	3
1.2 Rationale Behind the Research Topic and Formulating the Research Question .....	4
<b>Chapter 2: Contextualisation of the Research.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Existing Literature and Academic Discourses on FBOs .....	8
2.2 Determining the Scope of the Thesis.....	12
2.3 Defining Key Terms .....	12
2.3.1 <i>Secular</i> .....	12
2.3.2 <i>Religion</i> .....	13
2.3.3 <i>Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)</i> .....	15
2.3.4 <i>Refugee</i> .....	15
2.3.5 <i>Integration and Refugee Aid</i> .....	17
2.4 Context for the Case-study: The Isaiah Church.....	18
<b>Chapter 3: Presenting The Analytical Framework.....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1 Religion as a Source of Motivation .....	22
3.1.1 <i>Motivation on an Individual Level and on an Organisational Level</i> .....	22
3.1.2 <i>Limitations and Significance of Religious Motivation</i> .....	24
3.2 Religion for Accessing Resources .....	26
3.2.1 <i>The Role of Religiously-Framed Values</i> .....	27
3.2.1.1 <i>Limitations and Significance of Religiously-Framed Values for Resources</i> ....	29
3.2.2 <i>Accessing Resources Through Shared Religion</i> .....	29
3.2.2.1 <i>Networking via Shared Religion</i> .....	29
3.2.2.2 <i>Building Social Connections and Community Based on Shared Religion</i> .....	31
3.2.2.3 <i>Limitations and Significance of Shared Religion</i> .....	33
3.3 Religion as Influencing Activities .....	35
3.3.1 <i>Limitations and Significance of Religion for Activities</i> .....	36
3.4 Concluding Observations on the Analytical Framework .....	38
<b>Chapter 4: Methods, Limitations, and Ethical Considerations .....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Choosing a Case-study Approach.....	39
4.2 Using Semi-Structured Interviews, Sampling Methods, and Introducing the Interviewees.....	40
4.3 Ethical Considerations and Limitations.....	42
4.4 Positionality .....	44
<b>Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion .....</b>	<b>45</b>

5.1 The Relationship Between Motivation and Religion at the Isaiah Church .....	45
5.1.1 <i>Individual Motivations and Religious Obligations</i> .....	45
5.1.2 <i>The Religious Motivations of the Church</i> .....	51
5.2 How Resources Were Accessed Through Religion.....	53
5.2.1 <i>Accessing Resources Through Religiously-Framed Values</i> .....	53
5.2.2 <i>Shared Religion for Accessing Resources</i> .....	57
5.2.2.1 Relying on the Church Network.....	57
5.2.2.2 Building Social Ties and Community on Shared Religion .....	61
5.3 How Religion Influenced the Church’s Activities.....	64
5.3.1 <i>Perceived Distinctions Between Religious and Non-religious Activities</i> .....	65
5.3.2 <i>How Distinctions Differed in Practice</i> .....	68
5.3.3 <i>Concluding Remarks on Religious and non-Religious Activities</i> .....	69
5.4 The Religious Identity of Refugees .....	70
5.4.1 <i>Refugees Faking their Christianity</i> .....	70
5.4.1.1 The Problematic Side of Fake Conversions .....	72
5.4.2 <i>The Implications of the Refugees’ Religiosity</i> .....	72
5.4.2.1 The Relevance of Christianity for Receiving Help .....	73
5.4.2.2 Conversions and Helping Refugees Find God .....	74
5.4.4 <i>Concluding Observations</i> .....	76
5.5 Summary and Reflections on the Findings and Discussion Chapter .....	76
5.5.1 <i>Conceptualising Religion and Distinctions between Religious and Non-religious Elements of Refugee Aid</i> .....	78
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Appendix 1: NSD Approval.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Information Letter and Consent Form .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Interview Guides .....</b>	<b>98</b>
Appendix 3.1 .....	98
Appendix 3.2 .....	99

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*'Is that a task for a church?'*

*'That is precisely a task for a church.'*

(A pastor from the GKV Lutten church answering a news reporter's question about church involvement in refugee aid).<sup>1</sup>

Long queues of weary refugees<sup>2</sup>, make-shift tents set up in unhygienic conditions, and in some cases even nights spent sleeping outside with no shelter- these are not the images we like to imagine when thinking of how refugees are treated when arriving in Europe. Yet this scene was a reality for refugees who came to the registration centre in Ter Apel, the Netherlands, as recently as nine months ago.<sup>3</sup> Due to an unexpectedly high number of incoming refugees and a lack of capacity in reception centres throughout the country, finding shelter and appropriate care became a challenge. Fortunately, one source of help that stepped up for the occasion came from churches in the area, who opened their doors and offered shelter, food, and a sense of belonging to those who had already left so much behind.<sup>4</sup>

The assistance of churches, or other types of faith-based organisations (FBOs), is not new within the Dutch context; in fact, they have often participated in civic engagement over the years, especially when the state could not offer the necessary support.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the Central Organ for the Reception of Asylum Seekers calculated that there would be a larger wave of refugees coming to the country, with a need for over 75,000 shelter spots by late

---

<sup>1</sup> NOS Nieuws. "Zeventien Kerken vangen Komende Tijd 255 Asielzoekers Ter Apel Op," NOS Nieuws, August 30, 2022, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2442647-zeventien-kerken-vangen-komende-tijd-255-asielzoekers-ter-apel-op>.

<sup>2</sup> Legally the correct term to use would be asylum-seeker, but for the reasons stated in Chapter 2.3, this thesis will be using the term "refugee".

<sup>3</sup> "Opnieuw Puzzel Waar Honderden Asielzoekers Ter Apel Moeten Overnachten." NOS.nl - Nieuws, Sport en Evenementen. NOS Nieuws, August 27, 2022. <https://nos.nl/collectie/13898/artikel/2442247-opnieuw-puzzel-waar-honderden-asielzoekers-ter-apel-moeten-overnachten>.

<sup>4</sup> NOS Nieuws. "Zeventien Kerken,".

<sup>5</sup> Justin, Beaumont, and Candice Dias. "Faith-based Organisations and Urban Social Justice in the Netherlands," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 99, no. 4 (2008): 382-392. 386; René, Bekkers, and Theo Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor? Explaining Denominational Differences in Charitable Giving and Volunteering in the Netherlands," *Review of Religious Research* (2008): 74-96. 74; Herman, Noordegraaf. "Aid Under Protest? Churches in the Netherlands and Material Aid to the Poor," *Diaconia* 1, no. 1 (2010): 47-61. 48-53.

2023.<sup>6</sup> It therefore makes it likely that the support of FBOs in handling the Dutch refugee crisis will be a fact of the future as much as it was of the past. Considering the importance of their contributions, not just during the initial phases but also throughout the rest of the refugees' integration processes, it is thus only right to enhance our understanding of FBOs within the Netherlands. It is for this reason that this thesis will focus on the refugee aid (including integration aid)<sup>7</sup> offered by FBOs by studying the role that religion plays in this for the volunteers.

It will do so by doing an in-depth case-study on the Isaiah Church<sup>8</sup> which is part of the Gereformeerde Kerk Vrijgemaakt (GKV)<sup>9</sup> and is located in the north of the Netherlands. After refugees from a neighbouring Asylum Seekers Centre (ASC) expressed a desire to learn more about Christ, in 2009, the Isaiah Church began organising Bible studies for them. Eventually, more needs were discovered in regards to the refugees and their integration procedures, resulting in the church starting to offer a wide range of services for refugee aid. Being a Dutch church that assisted refugees throughout their integration journeys, the Isaiah Church was hence an ideal location for this thesis' research.

Moreover, the findings, which were collected through semi-structured interviews and gathering information from the church's website, will be approached and analysed from the perspective that the role of religion in FBOs is a non-static phenomenon, as suggested by Fountain and Petersen.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, when discussing the findings in relation to the religious-secular dichotomy, Fountain's recommended approach of examining the distinction in terms of how it is 'actually imagined and practiced,'<sup>11</sup> will be used. More will be explained about this in the Rationale.

---

<sup>6</sup> "Eind Volgend Jaar 75.500 Opvangplekken Nodig." [www.coa.nl](http://www.coa.nl), November 4, 2022, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/nieuws/eind-volgend-jaar-75500-opvangplekken-nodig>; "Komende Jaren Grote Toename Aantal Asielzoekers Verwacht." NOS.nl - Nieuws, Sport en Evenementen. NOS Nieuws, April 12, 2023. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2471187-komende-jaren-grote-toename-aantal-asielzoekers-verwacht>.

<sup>7</sup> Definitions for what refugee aid consists of within this thesis will be discussed in the Definitions sub-chapter.

<sup>8</sup> For anonymity purposes, all names in this thesis are pseudonyms, including the church's name. More on this can be found in the Methods chapter.

<sup>9</sup> GKV can best be translated as the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), and is a type of reformed orthodox Calvinism. However, on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, it merged together with the Dutch Reformed Church, creating a new church network, namely, the Dutch Reformed Churches.

<sup>10</sup> Philip, Fountain, and Marie J. Petersen. "NGOs and Religion: Instrumentalisation and its Discontents," in *Handbook of Research on NGOS* ed. Aynsley Kellow, & Hannah Murphy-Gregory (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), 404-432. 417.

<sup>11</sup> Philip, Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs: Development Studies and the Return of Religion," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013), 9-30. 27.

Furthermore, the broad nature of the topic required an approach that could ensure that the research remained focused and coherent. For this reason, the case-study findings will be analysed within an analytical framework that was developed by the researcher with the purpose of providing guidance for the research. It was created by investigating existing studies on religion and FBOs involved with refugee aid, and identifying which roles of religion came to light within the literature. These roles were then divided into the three subheadings that make-up the framework: religion as a source of motivation, religion for accessing resources, and religion as influencing activities. Nonetheless, as will be shown in the Findings and Discussion chapter, an additional subheading was found throughout the interviews, which was the role of the refugees' religious identities. Rather than limiting the research to the predetermined subheadings, the fourth subheading was therefore also included within the Findings and Discussion chapter. In addition, as will be discussed in the Contextualisation chapter, there have been problems associated with how current studies on FBOs present and discuss an organisation's religious elements. Therefore, by having the framework serve as a backdrop against which to contextualise and compare the case-study's findings, it will also become possible to enhance the understanding of how the role of religion is conceptualised by the FBO itself and its staff.

## 1.1 Structure of the Thesis

After presenting the rationale for this thesis' topic and through this formulate the research question, the introduction will be followed by a chapter on the contextualisation of the thesis. This consists of a discussion on the problems within the current literature and academic discourses surrounding the topic of FBOs, the scope of the thesis, the definitions of key terms used throughout the research, and an introduction to the case-study with a focus on how the chosen church contributes to refugee aid. Following this, there will be a chapter presenting the analytical framework that will be used for the analysis of the case-study findings. The chapter will delve into the different subheadings, including how the different roles of religion were found within the literature, and what the significance of these roles was according to the studies. After this will come the Methods chapter, in which the research method and data collection will be explained, referring to what they are as well as why they were chosen. This chapter will also discuss limitations, ethical considerations, and the positionality of the researcher. Lastly, before presenting the conclusion, there will be the Findings and

Discussions chapter. This chapter will present the analysis of the case-study findings within the analytical framework, discussing how the different roles of religion were experienced and perceived by the volunteers. As aforementioned, a fourth subheading was found during the interviews, which will therefore also be examined within this chapter. The Findings and Discussions chapter will also include a summary and analysis of how this research connects to the wider themes explored in the existing literature.

## 1.2 Rationale Behind the Research Topic and Formulating the Research Question

Despite FBOs being beneficial for handling the refugee crisis, recent literature has revealed that FBOs face multiple obstacles, such as marginalisation, instrumentalisation and privatisation.<sup>12</sup> As described by Ager and Ager in their research on the problems of FBOs, these restrict the extent to which FBOs can offer help. For example, the marginalisation of FBOs involves FBOs being left out of planning and coordination processes, leading to them being unable to participate properly in humanitarian work.<sup>13</sup> The instrumentalisation of FBOs consists of their work being exploited by non-religious organisations, meaning that the FBO's resources are being used up with no regards to the 'religious commitments, principles and dynamics' that gave access to such resources.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, the privatisation of religion hinders FBOs because it involves the restriction of religion to the private domain, leading to FBOs not being able to operate freely within the field of humanitarian work.<sup>15</sup>

Understandably, this can lead to greater problems in how the refugee crisis is handled because a significant source of help is being hampered. According to Kraft's study on humanitarian values in religious aid, the challenges faced by FBOs can be traced back to how the 'discourse in humanitarian, development and academic circles has long been marked by suspicion about the capacity of faith-motivated institutions to contribute to humanitarian objectives.'<sup>16</sup> Using Ager and Ager's other work on humanitarian engagement, these

---

<sup>12</sup> Alastair, Ager, and Joey Ager. "Challenging the Discourse on Religion, Secularism and Displacement," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question* ed. Luca Mavelli and Erin Wilson (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 37-52. 41.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem.* 42-43.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem.* 44.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.* 41-42.

<sup>16</sup> Kathryn, Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response: Lessons from Lebanese Evangelical Churches Providing Food Aid," *International Review of the Red Cross* 97, no. 897-898 (2015): 395-421. 396.

objectives can be linked to secular values.<sup>17</sup> This is because the authors discuss how the secularisation of Western societies in the 20th Century led to a secular framing of humanitarian aid.<sup>18</sup> This became problematic because the secularisation of Western societies also influenced conceptualisations of religion.<sup>19</sup>

Wagenvoorde's research on FBOs in refugee aid can be used to better understand how this relates to the problems experienced by FBOs.<sup>20</sup> He describes how humans tend to categorise groups, and that within Western-European secularism, this categorisation is reflected through distinctions between "secular" and "religion".<sup>21</sup> However, since this categorisation comes from secular perspectives, it tends to make the secular superior to religion, and sees religious discourses as threats to the Western discourse.<sup>22</sup> Ager and Ager hence state that this dualism results in religion being undermined.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, because humanitarian objectives stem from secular discourses and that such discourses undermine religion, FBO contributions to humanitarian engagement also become undermined. The authors' works thus indicate that the underlying reason for FBOs facing problems is that concepts of religion are constructed based on biased Western discourses of the secular, discourses which shape humanitarian engagement.

In order to solve these problems, Ager and Ager therefore suggest having a 'reframing of the place of religion in the shaping and delivering support to refugees,'<sup>24</sup> that can be achieved by 'challenging the secular-religious divide,' through a more 'fundamental deconstruction of the notion of the secular and of religion.'<sup>25</sup> An approach to challenging this divide can be found in Fountain's work on FBOs within human-development discourses.<sup>26</sup> Using Green, Fountain argues that it requires 'examining how [the distinctions between

---

<sup>17</sup> Alastair, Ager, and Joey Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*. 5 & 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> Ager and Ager. "Challenging the Discourse on Religion," 40-41; Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 13.

<sup>20</sup> Renée, Wagenvoorde. "How Religion and Secularism (Don't) Matter in the Refugee Crisis," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*, ed. Luca Mavelli & Erin K. Wilson (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 61-74.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*. 71.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*. 65; Ager and Ager. "Challenging the Discourse on Religion," 40-41.

<sup>23</sup> Ager and Ager. "Challenging the Discourse on Religion," 40-41.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*. 39.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>26</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGO,".

religion and the secular] are constructed, blurred, and transgressed,<sup>27</sup> and states that ‘rather than placing any given entity into clearly defined secular or religious categories, it is more helpful to explore how these distinctions are actually imagined and practised.’<sup>28</sup> Additionally, using Fountain and Petersen’s research on the same topic, these distinctions should be understood with the knowledge that ‘the role of religion in an organisation may change over time, or it may simultaneously play very different roles in different parts and practices of an organisation.’<sup>29</sup> The authors thus recommend performing empirical research through ethnographic studies as these allow for a ‘more complex picture of shifting meanings [of religion] , roles and significances [of religion] over time, in different contexts and with different actors.’<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, since Fountain and Petersen argue that it is the role of religion that fluctuates, a good approach to generating this form of research could thus be to study the role of religion. This is because by exploring the role of religion, insights can be gained into what the religion in an FBO consists of, what it does for the FBO, and whether or not it is significant to how the FBO offers help. Taking all of this into account, the investigation presented in this thesis will therefore be answering the question:

*“How do Volunteers Perceive and Experience the Role of Religion in the FBO Help Offered to Refugees in regards to Integration Processes?”*

By taking on an inductive approach, this research question bases the meaning-making of religion in FBOs on lived realities rather than on pre-established conceptualisations of religion, with the relevance of the question being reflected in the need to have more research taking this approach. The question focuses on the volunteers of an FBO because it can be argued that it is the volunteers who shape and colour the organisation.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, in order to understand the lived reality of the organisation, a good starting point would be to understand the lived realities of the volunteers. This can be done by analysing how they perceived

---

<sup>27</sup> M., Green. "Religion and Development: Exploring Relationships in Development Paradigms in Tanzania," Unpublished Conference Paper Presented at the Religions and Development Conference, University of Birmingham, UK. 2010. **As cited in** Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGO," 27.

<sup>28</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 27.

<sup>29</sup> Fountain and Petersen. "NGOs and Religion," 417.

<sup>30</sup> Idem. 417 & 425.

<sup>31</sup> Bethan, Lant. "Praxis Community Projects: a Secular Organization? Exploring the Boundaries between Religious and Secular Migration Support," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*, ed. Luca Mavelli & Erin K. Wilson (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 53-60. 58.

religion to influence their experiences throughout refugee aid, whether or not this was beneficial to their work, and what the significance of it was. In addition, this approach would also result in more nuanced perspectives on the role of religion that are not limited to only the official mission statements of the FBO.

Furthermore, in order to answer the research question, the research will also look into the following sub-questions:

- How does the church and its volunteers provide help, and for whom?
- How do the volunteers describe their own religiosity, and how would they describe the church's?
- What motivates the volunteers and the church to help?
- Do the volunteers experience any problems in relation to the church's refugee aid?
- Is religion prevalent throughout the church's refugee aid?

Through the examination of these questions and attempting to answer the overarching research question, the themes covered by the research open the door to better understanding religion within FBOs, and hence also to gaining more clarity on how the relationship between the secular and religion plays out within actual FBO aid. This thesis therefore aims to contribute to the existing literature by offering an analysis of FBOs and the role of religion that is not directed by pre-existing conceptions of religion and the secular, instead basing its analysis on the lived experiences of volunteers. In doing so, despite being aware that one thesis alone will not change the way in which FBOs are treated, the findings from this research can hopefully serve as a building block on which future discourses can begin building a greater apprehension of religion within FBOs.

## Chapter 2: Contextualisation of the Research

The Rationale discussed how current literature attributed the problems experienced by FBOs to secular conceptualisations of religion. As will be shown, this issue is also reflected within the academic discourses on FBOs. Since the influence of such discourses can expand outside of academic circles into the lived world, it is therefore also important to recognise the complexities of defining religion within the academic field. In addition, the academic discourse can be useful to further elucidate why focusing on lived experiences may be a good solution to the problem. The following chapter will hence delve into this discourse, and through this demonstrate the relevance of this thesis' research question. It will also define the scope of the research in relation to the academic discourse. Additionally, because part of the discourse concerns itself with definitional issues, the academic discussion and scope will be followed by definitions of the key terms used throughout this thesis. The Contextualisation chapter will then end by presenting the context of the case-study, namely, the Isaiah Church and its assistance with refugee integration.

### 2.1 Existing Literature and Academic Discourses on FBOs

Before delving into the discourse, it is necessary to acknowledge that literature on the topic of FBOs is still lacking, especially in regards to refugee-aid.<sup>32</sup> Since discussions on FBOs in refugee aid stemmed from the human-development discourse on religion and humanitarian engagement, this section will thus also be referring to literature on FBOs within the broader field of human-development.<sup>33</sup>

A good entry point to the academic discourse is Fountain's work on religious Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).<sup>34</sup> Fountain criticises the current literature on religion and development-related NGOs, stating that its inclusion of religion is plagued by 'an

---

<sup>32</sup> Nida, Kirmani, and Ajaz Ahmed Khan. "Does Faith matter: An Examination of Islamic Relief's work with Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2008): 41-50. 41& 44; Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 402.

<sup>33</sup> Ager and Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement*. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs,".

ongoing ideological bias apparent in the framing and deployment of the concept [of religion].<sup>35</sup> Through an analysis of different works that he considers important contributions to the field, Fountain points towards definitions of religion being the cause for this. He argues that authors fail to properly define religion, and that those who do attempt it use a substantive approach.<sup>36</sup> The problem with this, as explained by Fountain, is that ‘substantivist definitions posit that all religions share something in common, and attempt to identify that content.’<sup>37</sup> As a result, these definitions ‘essentialise religion by assuming that there is a “thing”, “religion”, that is always and everywhere a distinct, separate and identifiable entity.’<sup>38</sup> The issue with substantive approaches is hence that they define religion based on fixed and shared categories of attributes. As will shortly be discussed, this can be problematic in regards to FBOs if the definitional categories are formed out of secular perspectives.

Whilst discussing how the concept of religion is being redefined, Fountain refers to Asad’s and Fitzgerald’s works to explain how ‘the redefinition of religion corresponded with the invention of the secular which was conceptualised as non-religion.’<sup>39</sup> Combining this with a substantive approach, this would thus mean that the attributes used to define religion represent the opposite of what the secular is.<sup>40</sup> For example, where the secular is seen as normal, ‘morally superior,’<sup>41</sup> and neutral, religion is painted as conservative, unprofessional, and a threat to secular ideas of neutrality.<sup>42</sup> Religion and the secular therefore become distinct and opposing concepts. Fountain then argues that the modern West uses this separation to make secular values seem favourable hence resulting in religion becoming a ‘second-order

---

<sup>35</sup> *Idem.* 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Idem.* 10-14, & 23.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem.* 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem.* 12.

<sup>39</sup> Talal, Asad. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003, **As cited in** Fountain "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 13; Timothy, Fitzgerald. *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth*. London and New York: Continuum, 2011. **As cited in** Fountain "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 13.

<sup>40</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGO," 11-14; Fountain and Petersen. "NGOs and Religion," 414-417.

<sup>41</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGO," 11.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*; Ager and Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement*. 15; Majbritt, Lyck-Bowen, and Mark Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe: A Preliminary Examination of Potential Benefits of Multi-religious Cooperation on the Integration of Migrants," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 1 (2019): 21-41. 29; Alastair, Ager, and Joey Ager. "Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 456-472. 457. **As cited in** Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 404.

discourse.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, when scholars use substantive definitions of religion within a Western-secular frame, religion starts to be perceived as separate and inferior to the secular.

Moreover, this not only results in religion potentially becoming a marginalised topic within academia, it also limits the ways in which religion is studied in general. This is because the separation between the secular and religion means that religion is no longer considered to be a part of other sectors of life, such as politics or economics.<sup>44</sup> Parallels can be drawn between this and the previously discussed issue of privatisation. In practice, privatisation meant that FBO aid was restricted because religion was not seen as part of humanitarian aid. Likewise, within academia, the separation of religion from other categories restricts the research done on religion because it leads to scholars failing to study religion outside of its own category, hence creating a lack of understanding of religion within wider contexts, such as humanitarian aid.<sup>45</sup> In addition, this also encourages literature to treat religious organisations as separate entities from secular organisations.<sup>46</sup> As shown through Clarke and Ware's research on FBO definitions, these distinctions lead to FBOs being defined in literature only through comparisons to NGOs, yet such distinctions may not always be an accurate reflection of the different organisations' realities.<sup>47</sup> The authors therefore argue that such comparisons, especially when lacking clarity, can negatively impact the effectiveness and efficiency of FBOs.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, in similar fashion to how views of "religion" and "secular" as separate and opposing concepts can instrumentalise FBOs in practice, so too can they instrumentalise the idea of religion within academia. In his analysis of the literature, Fountain mentions how some authors refer to religion in a manner that showcases the benefits of implementing FBOs.<sup>49</sup> Using examples from them, Fountain explains that this leads to discussions on FBOs revolving around the question of 'how religion may align with *our* (secular liberal) priorities.'<sup>50</sup> Reflecting on Jeffrey Hayne's research which he analysed, Fountain then states that this can also result in the construction of new categorisations: good (pro-development)

---

<sup>43</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Idem.* 12.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Fountain and Petersen. "NGOs and Religion," 415.

<sup>47</sup> Matthew, Clarke, and Vicki-Anne Ware. "Understanding Faith-based Organizations: How FBOs are Contrasted with NGOs in International Development Literature," *Progress in Development Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): 37-48. 39-46; Fountain and Petersen. "NGOs and Religion," 425.

<sup>48</sup> Clarke and Ware. "Understanding Faith-based Organizations," 46.

<sup>49</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 17 & 23-24.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem.* 25.

religion and bad (anti-development) religion.<sup>51</sup> For Fountain, religion is thus being instrumentalised, with research on FBOs seemingly being done only to prove that they can be useful to the secular agenda, and not to genuinely explore how FBOs function.<sup>52</sup>

Following Fountain's reasoning, it can thus be inferred that substantive definitions are one of the main reasons for religion being misunderstood within the context of FBOs and academia. This is because such definitions result in a dichotomy between religion and the secular which promotes studies on FBOs to marginalise, privatise, and instrumentalise the religious nature of FBOs. How one chooses to define religion is therefore critical, as it can influence the work both done *on* and done *by* FBOs.

Fountain ends his work by discussing potential solutions to the issues he raised. Citing Ortner's work, he states that substantive definitions can be 'best countered through studies that privilege "richness, texture and detail",'<sup>53</sup> and that, as referred to in the Rationale, such studies should focus on how the religious-secular dichotomy is shaped and experienced in practice.<sup>54</sup> In further allusion to the discussion from the Rationale, Fountain and Petersen's work indicated that more should be taken into consideration when attempting to re-envision this dichotomy. In regards to this dichotomy within academia, the authors identify two issues related to substantivist definitions of religion, stating that the first problem with such an approach is that it treats FBOs and the role of religion within them as static points in space and time.<sup>55</sup> The second problem is that it paints FBOs as functioning on a 'distinctly and uniquely "religious" spectrum',<sup>56</sup> which is completely separated from secular matters and organisations. As a result, these approaches create a fixed notion of what religion is, what it does, and where it can be found. The authors therefore suggest the approach that was mentioned in the Rationale: when studying FBOs, one should not just analyse and question the distinction between religion and the secular, but should do so by focussing on religion in FBOs as a phenomena that transforms based on context.<sup>57</sup>

According to the academic discourse, there is hence an issue with how authors have approached and conceptualised religion in FBOs, an issue which has contributed to the

---

<sup>51</sup> Idem. 22 & 24.

<sup>52</sup> Idem. 24.

<sup>53</sup> Sherry B., Ortner. "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 1 (1995): 173-193. 173-174. **As cited in** Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 26.

<sup>54</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 27.

<sup>55</sup> Fountain and Petersen. "NGOs and Religion," 417.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

problematic situation in which FBOs currently find themselves in. From this, it can thus be seen why this thesis' research question is relevant to the field; it enables an analysis to be done that steers away from the dichotomous definitions that plague existing literature, choosing instead to conceptualise religion and its role from the perspective of those involved.

## 2.2 Determining the Scope of the Thesis

Although the dichotomy between religion and the secular was shown to be central to the field of FBOs, the main focus of this thesis is not to analyse this dichotomy and its associated problems directly within the Isaiah Church. Instead, the research will focus on how the role of religion is understood by the volunteers, and through this reflect on whether or not this involved conceptualisations of religious and non-religious elements in the volunteers' refugee aid. It is then only based on these findings that this thesis will connect the research to the larger academic discourse. In addition, since this thesis' scope is limited to exploring the personal perceptions and experiences of the volunteers, any references made to what religion is and to how religious and non-religious factors of refugee aid are distinguished are a reflection of the volunteers' own experiences, and not the researcher's attempt to take a stance on the dichotomy between religion and the secular within academic discourses.

## 2.3 Defining Key Terms

Seeing how definitions can play an essential role in how research on FBOs is done and interpreted, the following section explain how this thesis chose to define and conceptualise the key terms it used.

### 2.3.1 Secular

Definitions of "secular" will be kept brief as it is not the main focus of the thesis, but rather a backdrop for the existing debate in the literature. The definition used to conceptualise secularism within this research came from Ager and Ager's descriptions of Taylor's *A Secular Age*, because the authors' arguments about the issues of definitions were based on Taylor's work. One of his definitions that Ager and Ager refer to is the secular as 'a form of

organization of the state.’<sup>58</sup> Although there are other definitions, this one was chosen because it was used by authors to allude to a separation of religion from other societal areas as a distinct category. Since this reflects the problems of marginalisation, privatisation, and instrumentalization that were identified in the literature, it is thus a relevant definition for this thesis’ context. In addition, when discussing the interview findings, the term “non-religious” will be favoured over the term “secular” as it is a simpler reflection of what the volunteers experienced as non-academics.

### 2.3.2 Religion

Defining “religion” is a near-impossible task, as there are many approaches and interpretations, which is why there are often issues in the field.<sup>59</sup> However, since this thesis aims to analyse the role of religion, it must also offer an understanding of what religion is. It will do so not by providing a fixed definition, but rather by explaining how religion was conceptualised within this research.

After much consideration and research on different approaches such as functionalism and substantivism, this thesis has opted for a lexical definition. Defined by Wilson, lexical definitions are ‘vague and elastic, partaking of the semantic slipperiness of everyday speech.’<sup>60</sup> They are ‘constructed through denotation,’ meaning that they define religion by ‘simply pointing out members of the class (eg. Religion is Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.).’<sup>61</sup> In other words, lexical definitions are the common definitions that are taken for granted by the population.

The lexical understanding of religion used in this research will be based on Clarke and Ware’s suggested definition: religion as the belief in a higher reality with which it is important to have a good connection to.<sup>62</sup> Such beliefs can be both social and private, and can be found through worship and scriptures which provide a form of moral code. Religion hence ‘provides a meaning for existence through which adherents interpret their own circumstances

---

<sup>58</sup> Charles, Taylor. *A Secular Age*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2007. **As cited in** Ager and Ager. *Faith, Secularism*. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Emmanuel Williams, Udoh. "The Religious Response to Migration and Refugee Crises in Cross River State, Nigeria," *Fahsanu Journal* 1, no. 2 (2018). 3; Lyck-Bowen and Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe," 27.

<sup>60</sup> Brian C., Wilson. "From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion," in *What is Religion?* ed. Thomas A. Idinopulos, and Brian C. Wilson ( Brill, 1998), 141-162. 143.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Clarke and Ware. "Understanding Faith-based Organizations," 39.

and make decisions on how to act and interact within wider society based on religious teachings.<sup>63</sup> In addition, so as to ensure that the focus was not just on personal beliefs, the understanding of the term religion also includes Lehmann's three-level model. These levels are the micro-level, which consists of individual spirituality; the meso-level which includes religious organisations and movements; and the macro-level which refers to general discourses on religion.<sup>64</sup>

The reason for why this approach to defining religion was chosen was because functionalist definitions may not reflect how lay people perceive religion,<sup>65</sup> and substantivism approaches have been widely criticised in the field of FBOs. Lexical definitions, on the other hand, enable wider interpretations to be made on behalf of the subjects. Additionally, since the research question focuses on individual experiences, it is likely that the understanding of the term "religion" is influenced by the volunteers' own experiences and not necessarily by academic definitions. Using a broader, lexical approach would therefore offer more space for the volunteers' personal interpretations. As a result, a lexical definition, although less concrete, may be more suitable. The wide range of this approach would also mean that interpretations will not be restricted to defining religion as just private beliefs, which is often the case in Western Literature.<sup>66</sup> Instead, it will enable factors such as culture, community, symbolism, meaning and connections to other societal areas to be taken into consideration.<sup>67</sup>

Lastly, this thesis will also be using the terms "faith", "belief", and "religiosity" when referring to the volunteers' religion. Although certain authors have debated the use of these terms due to their connotations<sup>68</sup>, the decision to use a lexical approach as well as the fact that the terms were used interchangeably both throughout the literature and by the interviewees meant that it was still deemed appropriate to refer to these terms. In addition, discussions on religion will also be referring to Christianity, more specifically reformed Protestantism, when discussing the case-study findings. This is because the case-study was done about a Protestant Church.

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Karsten, Lehmann "Religiously Affiliated NGOs," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations* ed. Thomas Davies ( New York: Routledge, 2019), 397-412. 399.

<sup>65</sup> Wilson. "From the Lexical to the Polythetic," 154.

<sup>66</sup> James S., Bielo. *Anthropology of Religion: The Basics*. Routledge, 2015. 17-18; Lyck-Bowen and Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe," 27.

<sup>67</sup> Lyck-Bowen and Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe," 27.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid; James S., Bielo. *Anthropology of Religion*. 17.

### 2.3.3 Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)

Alluding to Ball and Dunn, Clarke and Ware describe FBOs as ‘[sharing] the same basic characteristics as “secular” NGOs: independence, being not-for-profit, voluntary and altruistic,’<sup>69</sup> and that ‘they are distinguished through their affiliation with a religious structure, doctrine or community.’<sup>70</sup> Although this definition seems reasonable, it fails to explain what “religious affiliations” consist of. However, determining the nature of such affiliations is complex. This thesis will hence attempt to provide a definition by steering away from comparisons made to secular NGOs and instead focus on what organisations can be considered as FBOs. For this, Kraft’s and Dzananovic’s definitions will be used.

For both authors, “FBO” can be viewed as an umbrella term under which different entities fall, including faith communities and networks, religious institutions, and organisations that are affiliated with a religion, such as through values or social connections.<sup>71</sup> Despite not all authors agreeing with this definition, due to the limited availability of literature, it was deemed appropriate to aim for a wider understanding so as to have access to more research. Additionally, having a broader approach would also allow space for the personal interpretations of the entities involved.

### 2.3.4 Refugee

Before defining “refugee”, there are other related terms that equally need to be defined, namely “migrant (immigrant)” and “asylum-seeker”.

According to the UNHCR (NL), asylum-seekers are individuals who fled their countries and are seeking refuge in another country. Since they are applying for asylum, they are not yet recognised as refugees. It is only once they have been granted asylum (which in the Netherlands happens after receiving a residence-permit) that they gain the status of refugee.<sup>72</sup> “Refugees”, as stated by the UNHCR, are officially defined and protected under the

---

<sup>69</sup> Colin, Ball and Leith L. Dunn. "Non-Governmental Organisations: Guidelines for Good Policy and Practice," *The Commonwealth Foundation*, 1996. **As cited in** Clarke and Ware. "Understanding Faith-based Organizations," 40.

<sup>70</sup> Clarke and Ware. "Understanding Faith-based Organizations," 40.

<sup>71</sup> Dario, Dzananovic. "Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations," in *Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations*. Brill Nijhoff, 2021. 5; Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 396.

<sup>72</sup> UNHCR (NL). "Begrippenlijst: Veelgestelde Vragen over Vluchtelingen," UNHCR Nederland, July 19, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/nl/media/begrippenlijst/vluchtelingen/>.

1951 Refugee Convention, which refers to refugees as ‘someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.’<sup>73</sup> Once they have this status, they are protected under the law as a refugee which grants them rights as a status holder and enables them to apply for citizenship.

Migrants, on the other hand, are not as easily defined. The IOM states that “migrant” is ‘an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.’<sup>74</sup> Although the reason for moving is not specified, the UNHCR NL does clarify that a migrant is different to a refugee because a refugee is forced to leave their country, whereas a migrant chooses to do so.<sup>75</sup>

Nonetheless, despite their differences, the literature analysed in this thesis frequently used the terms interchangeably because NGOs often help both refugees and migrants, with the integration processes for both being similar. Therefore, when referring to existing literature, this thesis will use the same terminology used by the authors. When alluding to the case-study, however, the term “refugee” will be used. Although the majority of people coming to the Isaiah Church for help were asylum-seekers and hence not officially “refugees”, this term was chosen because it is common for people to use them interchangeably, and this was also the case for the interviewees. Additionally, despite assisting mostly asylum-seekers, the church alluded to the help as “refugee-aid”, and some of the people using the church’s services already had a residence-permit and were thus “refugees”. Therefore, using the term “refugee” was deemed suitable as it reflected the terminology used by the interviewees, and included a wider range of individuals at the church.

---

<sup>73</sup> UNHCR. “What Is a Refugee?” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, The UN Refugee Agency, accessed April 7, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9Csomeone%20who%20is%20unable%20or,group%2C%20or%20political%20opinion.%E2%80%9D.ADD>

<sup>74</sup> IOM. “About Migration,” International Organization for Migration, accessed April 7, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/about-migration>.

<sup>75</sup> UNHCR (NL). “Begrippenlijst: Veelgestelde Vragen over Vluchtelingen.”

### 2.3.5 Integration and Refugee Aid.

According to Kortmann, “integration” is both a desired goal and also the process towards the goal.<sup>76</sup> Within the scope of this research, it is integration as a process that is being explored, with this section defining what this process is.

Within the Dutch context, the integration process has been described by various authors as being assimilation.<sup>77</sup> This means that migrants are expected to adopt the Dutch culture in a one-directional effort.<sup>78</sup> However, in order to achieve this, there are multiple factors that must be taken into account. For this, Ager and Strang’s model for integration can be used, as it divides these factors into four levels with ten domains: the foundation, facilitators, social connections, and markers and means. The foundation consists of rights and citizenship; facilitators consists of language and culture, safety and stability; social connections consists of social bridges, social bonds, and social links; and markers and means consists of employment, housing, education, and health.<sup>79</sup>

These factors can be found back in the Dutch integration process. For instance, after being allocated housing at an asylum-seeker centre (ASC), people coming to the Netherlands must first receive approval and a five-year residence permit from the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Services (IND) before receiving the official status of refugee. Once this status has been acquired, refugees can start applying for permanent residency and gain access to welfare arrangements (the same as for Dutch citizens), the right to work, social housing, health care, and social services allowances.<sup>80</sup> Based on Ager and Strang’s model and the Dutch integration policies, the definition of “integration” within this thesis hence refers to the process during which migrants are able to gain access to, participate in, and become part of the Dutch society.

Lastly, when it comes to the term “refugee aid”, in this thesis, it was interpreted as the aid given to refugees starting from the moment they arrive in the country, ranging from

---

<sup>76</sup> Matthias, Kortmann, "Asking Those Concerned: How Muslim Migrant Organisations Define Integration. A German-Dutch Comparison," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 16 (2015): 1057-1080. 1060.

<sup>77</sup> Han, Entzinger. "The Growing Gap Between Facts and Discourse on Immigrant Integration in the Netherlands," *Identities* 21, no. 6 (2014): 693-707. 699.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid: Alison, Strang, Helen Baillet, and Elodie Mignard. "‘I Want to Participate,’ Transition Experiences of New Refugees in Glasgow," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 2 (2018): 197-214. **As cited in** Darinka, Czischke, and Carla J. Huisman. "Integration Through Collaborative Housing?" *Urban Planning* 3, no. 4 (2018): 156-165. 159.

<sup>79</sup> Alastair, Ager, and Alison Strang. "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 166-191. 170.

<sup>80</sup> Darinka, Czischke, and Carla J. Huisman. "Integration Through Collaborative Housing?" *Urban Planning* 3, no. 4 (2018): 156-165. 159; Maja, Korac. "Integration and How We Facilitate it: A Comparative Study of the Settlement Experiences of Refugees in Italy and the Netherlands," *Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2003): 51-68. 55.

offering emergency shelter to helping refugees socialise within the local community. Since all of these aspects lead up to refugees integrating into the country, they were thus also considered as being part of a refugee's integration process. Therefore, when using the term "refugee aid", this thesis is also referring to helping with integration.

## 2.4 Context for the Case-study: The Isaiah Church

This thesis' research will be done within the context of the Isaiah Church. As aforementioned, the Isaiah Church is a GKV church which has dedicated attention to helping refugees. The following section will explain how the refugee aid looked like within the context of the church.

In order to help the refugees, the church offered a variety of services, with some catering more towards religious needs and others towards integration needs. Since the Isaiah Church first started helping refugees after being asked about Christianity, one of the first services offered were Bible studies. These consisted of praying and discussing the Bible, serving the purpose of deepening one's faith and relationship with Christ. These classes were organised especially for refugees and were run by the volunteers. Another type of service was baptism-catechism. During this, refugees could learn more about Christianity and the church's creed. Following these classes was also necessary for those who wanted to be baptised.

In terms of practical matters, the church offered translations for sermons and Bible studies. Initially, these involved having post-sermon discussions with translators. However, due to the church's financial situation, these efforts were replaced by volunteers sharing translations from Google Translate through chatting-applications. The church also helped refugees with transportation. This was done by purchasing a van which was driven by volunteers and served the purpose of bringing people from the ASC to the church for Sunday services or other activities. Other forms of assistance included housing refugees whose permits were denied, as well as hosting social activities, either independently or with other churches. The latter ranged from celebrating religious festivities, to hosting communal meals or simply having coffee after a church sermon. These events were often not organised solely for refugees, but rather for the community as a whole. Nonetheless, refugees were still encouraged to join, even those who did not usually attend the church. After requests, the church also started offering Dutch lessons which were taught by church volunteers. Lastly, the church offered assistance with residence-permit procedures. It is possible to apply for a

residence-permit in the Netherlands, and thus to gain the status of refugee and the right to stay in the country, on the grounds of religious persecution. For example, a Christian fleeing a country that is hostile towards Christianity could apply for a permit on these grounds. However, considering how some people have lied about their religion in order to acquire a residence-permit, the IND asks for proof of people's religious identities. Therefore, in order to get a permit, the Christian seeking refuge would need to argue their case with the IND to prove that they are truly Christian. This is where the Isaiah Church's refugee aid comes into play, as the volunteers at the church often acted as witnesses to a person's Christianity. This was frequently done by writing letters with witness statements.

Another important aspect of the church's refugee aid was the GKV federation to which the Isaiah Church belonged. Connecting 267 churches throughout the country,<sup>81</sup> this federation, or network, meant that different churches could communicate and cooperate, including on refugee aid. For example, communal events were often organised between different churches. Additionally, some of the volunteers at the Isaiah Church were members of different churches but helped the Isaiah Church through the network. This cooperation thus meant that although the Isaiah Church's refugee aid mainly operated individually, the church could also act within a larger network. The interviewees also talked about the church being part of interdenominational workgroups, which were organised by different religious foundations and encouraged interdenominational cooperation for refugee aid. Therefore, in addition to being connected to GKV churches, the Isaiah Church's also functioned within a larger, interdenominational body of churches.

Moreover, describing the church's refugee aid would not be complete without looking at the creation of the Isaiah Foundation. This foundation offered refugee services alongside the church, although it had not been very active due to corona. It was set up by the church after an external NGO wanted to donate to refugee aid but refused to donate directly to the church. The reason for this was that it feared that the donations would go into the communal church fund and be used for other purposes. With assistance from the NGO, the Isaiah Church hence created the Isaiah Foundation as a way to access donations through other means. The foundation turned out to be beneficial not only in regards to the NGO, but also when it came to collecting donations in general. This was because non-religious people tended to be more comfortable donating to a foundation than to a church.<sup>82</sup> Despite the church and the

---

<sup>81</sup> "GKV." Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt), accessed 7 April, 2023, <https://www.gkv.nl/>.

<sup>82</sup> Dylan, Interview by Researcher, Zoom, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

foundation being two separate entities, the Findings and Discussions chapter will also be alluding the foundation where necessary since some elements of the church's refugee aid were also connected to the foundation.

In addition, a larger issue within the Dutch context is that social integration has been difficult for refugees.<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, authors have argued that the Dutch state does not offer enough in terms of social integration, meaning that when it comes to helping refugees in a social sense, there is a gap left that needs bridging.<sup>84</sup> Assisting refugees with social integration was therefore an integral part of the church's refugee aid. For example, the interviewed volunteers expressed their desire to improve socialisation on multiple occasions, and often mentioned needing to host more social events to help refugees with this. Nonetheless, the importance of helping with social integration was also reflected in how the volunteers talked about the challenges of achieving this, specifically in relation to overcoming social thresholds. One example of a threshold that had a significant impact on the church's refugee aid was between the churchgoers and locals who did not attend the church. This threshold was problematic because it meant that it was complicated for the church to help refugees socialise with the local community outside of the church. It therefore hindered their help with social integration into the wider Dutch society, which was unfortunate considering how many refugees needed this type of help.

Finally, it should also be acknowledged that the context of the research can influence and limit its findings. As argued by Kohlbacher, the prevalence of religion in integration 'depends on the personal and political context in the host country.'<sup>85</sup> Although according to certain scholars the Netherlands is known to be one of the more secular nations in Western-Europe<sup>86</sup>, there is no direct reference to the division between church and state in the Dutch constitution<sup>87</sup>. Additionally, the majority religion in the Netherlands is Christianity, and

---

<sup>83</sup> Czischke and Huisman. "Integration Through Collaborative Housing?" 159-160; Korac. "Integration and How We Facilitate it," 54-55 & 62; Ayşe, Şafak-Ayvazoğlu, Filiz Künüröğlu, Fons Van de Vijver, and Kutlay Yağmur. "Acculturation of Syrian Refugees in the Netherlands: Religion as Social Identity and Boundary Marker," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 1 (2021): 555-578. 572.

<sup>84</sup> Korac. "Integration and How We Facilitate it," 54-55, & 61-62; Czischke and Huisman. "Integration Through Collaborative Housing?" 159.

<sup>85</sup> Josef, Kohlbacher. "Steps on the Way to Social Integration," **As cited in** Buber-Ennser, Isabella, Anne Goujon, Judith Kohlenberger, and Bernhard Rengs. "Multi-layered Roles of Religion Among Refugees Arriving in Austria Around 2015," *Religions* 9, no. 5 (2018): 154. 11.

<sup>86</sup> Han, Entzinger. "The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands," in *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-states* ed. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 59-86. 59.

<sup>87</sup> Sophie, Van Bijsterveld, "Religion and Law in the Netherlands," *Insight Turkey* 17, no. 1 (2015): 121-41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26299720>. 139; Cora, Schuh, Marian Burchardt, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr.

according to some authors, the country can be described as secular and culturally-Christian. Considering how the Isaiah Church is a Christian institution, this means that observations made on religion, refugee aid, and religious-secular distinctions will most likely not be the same as for other cases.<sup>88</sup> For example, performing the same research on a Muslim FBO would most likely provide very different findings. Therefore, any insights on the role of religion or the distinction between religion and the secular are only applicable within this context.

---

"Contested Secularities: Religious Minorities and Secular Progressivism in the Netherlands," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5, no. 3 (2012): 349-383. 375.

<sup>88</sup>Josip, Kešić, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. "The Nation Under Threat: Secularist, Racial and Populist Nativism in the Netherland," *Patterns of prejudice* 53, no. 5 (2019): 441-463. 448; Olivier, Roy. "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," *The International Spectator* 48, no. 1 (2013): 5-19. 11-12; Evelien, Tonkens, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. "Introduction: The Culturalization of Citizenship," in *The Culturalization of Citizenship Belonging and Polarization in a Globalizing World*, ed Jan Willem Duyvendak, Peter Geschiere, and Evelien Tonkens (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1-20. 10.

## Chapter 3: Presenting The Analytical Framework

The analytical framework was created via a thorough analysis of different studies chosen based on their relation and relevance to this thesis' themes: FBOs (with the term FBO serving as an umbrella-term), religion, and integration. How these studies provided insight into the different roles of religion, the manifestations of these roles, and their relevance, will all be explained in the following chapter, using the three different subheadings of the framework: religion as a source of motivation, religion for accessing resources, and religion influencing activities.

In addition, due to the scarcity of research available, studies were used that extended beyond the Western-European context. The lack of available research also meant that the majority of the studies focused mainly on Christian FBOs, meaning that the range of contexts was limited. Unfortunately, this could not be avoided and demonstrates why it is important to keep contributing to the body of existing literature. Nonetheless, the studies were still deemed suitable for the framework as they could provide general insights into the role of religion in FBOs.

### 3.1 Religion as a Source of Motivation

The role of religion as motivator was chosen to be part of the analytical framework because it was a frequent observation made throughout the literature. To better understand what this role consisted of, this section will explain the different ways in which it was brought up in the studies and then discuss the authors' various interpretations on the significance of religion for motivation.

#### 3.1.1 Motivation on an Individual Level and on an Organisational Level

One way through which the literature hinted at religion playing a part in motivation was on behalf of the individuals volunteering at FBOs. A clear example of this can be found in Eby et al.'s study on the impact of faith communities for refugee resettlement in the USA.<sup>89</sup> In their work, the authors argued that a benefit of religious communities helping refugees is the

---

<sup>89</sup> Jessica, Eby, Erika Iverson, Jenifer Smyers, and Erol Kekic. "The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 586-605.

‘strong motivation for service based on core beliefs and values enshrined in various religious traditions.’<sup>90</sup> They later also stated that the ‘energy and passion’ from actors motivated by such means ‘can be powerful resources to leverage in humanitarian work.’<sup>91</sup> The literature also provided insight into what these values and core beliefs could entail. For instance, Sanchez et al.’s work on missionary-refugee relations discusses the importance of hospitality as a motivating value. Hospitality, according to the interviewed missionaries, was ‘part of the Christian lifestyle,’<sup>92</sup> and was described by Sanchez et al. as ‘a framework through which faith-based personnel are motivated to care for the “other”.’<sup>93</sup> Likewise, Dzananovic concluded from his research on FBOs that ‘various Biblical passages were relevant motivation for most of the FBOs’ representatives with regard to their decision to assist unauthorized stayers,’<sup>94</sup> and connected this to how Bible passages promoted values of equality, solidarity, and liberty.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, another way through which religion influenced motivation according to the literature was in terms of the organisation itself. Nawyn’s work on FBOs in American refugee resettlement offered insight into this, as she found that many FBOs in her study used religion as a ‘motivation and rationale’<sup>96</sup> for the different services they offered. She also commented on how ‘religious doctrine and language’ could be used to ‘guide the mission of [an organisation’s] activities.’<sup>97</sup> A more specific example came from Kirmani and Khan’s research on Muslim refugee aid, as they elaborated on the connection between religious values and an organisation’s values. The authors referred to Islamic values in the Qur’an, explaining how ‘the issue of forced displacement has a particular resonance in Islam, especially in view of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad was himself a refugee who fled Mecca with his followers.’<sup>98</sup> There was therefore an ‘importance given to the concept of the

---

<sup>90</sup> Idem. 587.

<sup>91</sup> Idem. 594.

<sup>92</sup> Jamie N., Sanchez, Leanne M. Dzubinski, and Jacqueline Parke. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe: Understanding Missionary-Refugee Relationships," *Transformation* 38, no. 4 (2021): 344-358. 355.

<sup>93</sup> Susanna, Snyder. "Un/settling Angels: Faith-based Organizations and Asylum-seeking in the UK," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 565-585, **As cited in** Sanchez et al. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe," 355; Erin, Wilson. "Much To Be Proud Of, Much To Be Done: Faith-based Organizations and the Politics of Asylum in Australia," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 548-564. **As cited in** Sanchez et al. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe," 355.

<sup>94</sup> Dzananovic. "Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations," 77.

<sup>95</sup> Idem. 19-24.

<sup>96</sup> Stephanie J., Nawyn. "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement," *American Behavioral Scientist* 49, no. 11 (2006): 1509-1527. 1516.

<sup>97</sup> Idem. 1511.

<sup>98</sup> Kirmani and Khan. "Does Faith Matter," 42.

protection of refugees and the provision of asylum in Islam,'<sup>99</sup> which in turn 'guided [the FBO] in its work with refugees.'<sup>100</sup>

Based on the literature, religious values were thus a source of motivation for both individual volunteers and for the organisations themselves.

### 3.1.2 Limitations and Significance of Religious Motivation

Nevertheless, it is possible to question the significance of this role. A good starting point for this is Lant's work, which explores how organisations choose to frame themselves as secular or religious.<sup>101</sup> Her insights suggest that such framing is also applicable to the rationale behind an organisation's services.<sup>102</sup> For instance, Lant argues that 'every non-governmental organization makes a choice about its founding principles,'<sup>103</sup> and that 'for some the choice is clear as to whether those founding principles are secular or religious,'<sup>104</sup> and that for others 'the choice is less obvious.'<sup>105</sup> Combining these statements, it is possible to infer that founding principles by themselves can be both secular or religious, it is just the organisation who chooses to present itself in a specific way.

In addition, Lant uses the organisation she used to work at as an example of this. She describes that it presents itself as secular and 'uses language of human rights,'<sup>106</sup> for its principles. However, these values 'would not be unfamiliar to the Anglo-Catholic priests.'<sup>107</sup> She then reflects on how she also holds those values but understands them through her faith.<sup>108</sup> Lant's comments imply that religious and secular values may be the same, with the only difference being how an individual or organisation chooses to interpret them. From this, she suggests that the dichotomy between secular values of human rights and religious values is not as distinct as it is often portrayed to be.<sup>109</sup> Her work thus opens up the question of what motivating values are. If they can be both secular and religious, it would imply that it is more

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Lant. "Praxis Community Projects: a Secular Organization?"

<sup>102</sup> Idem, 55-56.

<sup>103</sup> Idem. 57.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Idem. 55.

<sup>107</sup> Idem. 58.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Idem. 56-58.

about the values themselves rather than where they come from. This would reduce the significance of the role of religion as a source of motivation because it indicates that it is not religion specifically that motivates people, but rather a general value for helping those in need.

Furthermore, Lant is not the only one doubting the religiosity of motivation. Despite initially arguing the importance of scripture, Dzananovic's research led to him stating that 'scripture appeared to have a more limited role in influencing FBOs' work in assisting unauthorized stayers than may have been assumed.'<sup>110</sup> This conclusion was drawn because his research indicated that some FBO representatives were 'motivated by general humanistic ideals to help those in need,'<sup>111</sup> rather than religious values. Additionally, even if representatives were familiar with the scriptures, they 'could not always identify whether it was scripture that influenced them, or a broader notion of doing "what's right" from a humanistic viewpoint.'<sup>112</sup> As was the case with Lant, Dzananovic's findings hence suggest that values can be interpreted as both secular and religious.

Nonetheless, Kartas and Silvas' work on FBOs in human-development can be used to offer an alternative perspective.<sup>113</sup> According to their research, although both religious and non-religious organisations can be motivated by general ideals of well-doing, those who are driven by religious motivation tend to have a more intense desire to help.<sup>114</sup> This is because, as seen in the authors' discussion of Mourier's work, they have a 'different level of willingness to sacrifice their labour and assets for the benefit of the community on the part of the FBO members.'<sup>115</sup> By suggesting that religiously-driven actors have a stronger sense of motivation than actors who are not motivated by religion, the authors are implying that there actually is a difference between both types of values.

The question would thus be how this can be the case if religious and secular values are the same, and the answer to this can be found in Lant's discussion on personal framing.

---

<sup>110</sup> Dzananovic. "Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations," 89.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Moncef, Kartas, and Kalinga T. Silva. "Reflections on the Role of Religion and Faith in Development Discourse and Practice," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2013), 209-219.

<sup>114</sup> Idem. 217.

<sup>115</sup> Elliott, Mourier. "Religion as a Social Substitute for the State: Faith-Based Social Action in Twenty-First-Century Brazil," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013), 79-94. **As cited in** Kartas and Silva. "Reflections on the Role of Religion and Faith," 217.

According to her, the same motivational values can be both religious or secular depending on how they are framed. This would suggest that when Kartas and Silvas talk about religious motivation being stronger, they may actually be referring to the religious framing of values. The idea of personal framing can also be observed in Sanchez et al.'s and Dzananovic's studies. When describing how hospitality as a Christian concept motivated people to help, Sanchez et al. referred to it as a framework, implying that for their participants, motivation was framed within Christianity. This is especially interesting considering how hospitality can also be perceived as a non-religious value in other situations. Likewise, Dzananovic found that FBO representatives did not know if the values that motivated them came from scripture or humanistic ideals of doing good. These values could therefore potentially be framed as either religious or non-religious, depending on how the representatives perceived them. Using this approach, it can hence be argued that it is more about religious framing than religious values themselves. Therefore, although religion may not be significant in terms of shaping the values, it can play an important role in framing them.

From this section, three conclusions can therefore be drawn. The first is that it is not the nature of values that matters, but the framing of them, with religion hence playing a motivational role through the religious framing of values. The second is that whether or not religion is significant to motivation depends on this framing, thus also implying that it depends on the religiosity of the person framing the values. The last conclusion, although perhaps more of an observation for future research, is that based on Kartas and Silva's work, the religious framing of values can potentially result in a stronger sense of motivation. However, why this could happen remained unclear within the literature.

### 3.2 Religion for Accessing Resources

According to the literature, FBOs have been crucial for their ability to mobilise and provide resources to help those in need,<sup>116</sup> which is why this subheading was added to the analytical framework. Additionally, the literature revealed that not only could religion facilitate access to resources, it did so in two ways: through values (in other words, religiously-framed values) and through shared religion. These roles, as well as their significance, will be investigated in the following section by analysing them in regards to material resources, human resources,

---

<sup>116</sup> Eby, et al. "The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States," 590; Lyck-Bowen and Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe," 22.

and social resources. Within the context of this thesis, material resources will refer to inanimate resources including physical items like food, clothes, shelter, basic-needs items, and financial resources; human resources will refer to staff as well as to the sub-category of human capital, which consists of opportunities such as education, employment, and health; and social resources will refer to networking, and the creation of social connections and community-building.

### 3.2.1 The Role of Religiously-Framed Values

As has already been discussed, religiously-framed values were found to act as a source of motivation. A deeper look into the literature shows that this motivation also influenced how resources could be accessed by FBOs. One obvious way through which this can happen is by encouraging donations to be made, with a good example of this being Sanchez et al.'s observations on hospitality. The authors found that their participants donated food and clothing as a way of manifesting the value of hospitality.<sup>117</sup> Since it was previously established that the participants framed it within Christianity, it is thus an example of how religiously-framed values can lead to donations.

Moreover, the concept of “conviction” can also be used to understand this. In their analysis on the charitable behaviour of Dutch churches, Bekkers and Schuyt describe how existing literature has identified two reasons for why donating can be inspired by religion, with one of these being Wuthnow’s concept of “conviction”.<sup>118</sup> “Conviction”, the authors explain, refers to how ‘religious teachings, social norms and cultural traditions’<sup>119</sup> can ‘[shape] people's opinions about what is right and wrong.’<sup>120</sup> Bekkers and Schuyt also emphasise that it is about the ‘endorsement of prosocial values’<sup>121</sup> as well as about specific religious beliefs within a religious community<sup>122</sup>. The notion of “conviction” is an example of religiously-framed values facilitating access to material resources because the religious community’s setting can be argued to frames prosocial norms, such as donating, within religious beliefs. Lant makes a supporting observation when commenting on how FBOs can

---

<sup>117</sup> Sanchez, et al. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe," 349.

<sup>118</sup> Robert, Wuthnow. *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991. **As cited in** Bekkers and Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor?" 76 & 91.

<sup>119</sup> Idem. 78.

<sup>120</sup> Idem. 76.

<sup>121</sup> Idem. 78.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

access funds, mentioning that ‘appealing to the shared beliefs about the way one treats others and one’s responsibility as a person of faith is a powerful tool.’<sup>123</sup> Bekkers and Schuyt’s, as well as Lant’s research can thus be used to explain how religiously-framed values encourage donations: within religious settings, they can be imposed as behavioural norms that promote making donations.

The same can be said for accessing human resources. When discussing contributions in terms of money, Bekkers and Schuyt also talk about contributions of time-in other words, volunteering. Therefore, in the same way that religiously-framed values can encourage donations, they can also encourage people to volunteer.<sup>124</sup> This argument reflects the discussion presented in Chapter 3.1, in which religiously-framed values were found to motivate people to help at FBOs.

The role of religiously-framed values was also found in relation to accessing social resources, with Sanchez et al.’s findings on hospitality offering insight once again. Exploring how hospitality was a framework for charitable behaviour, the authors found that for their participants, ‘hospitable acts extended beyond events to the development of personal relationships.’<sup>125</sup> This was emphasised by the fact that their participants saw hospitality-related events as ways to ‘deepen friendships with refugees.’<sup>126</sup> With hospitality being considered a Christian value, this hence shows how religion can foster social connections. Additionally, an observation from Menjívar’s case-study about Catholic churches and Salvadoran immigrants further supports this.<sup>127</sup> One of her participants who was a pastor mentioned that his work was ‘truly, fundamentally community-oriented,’<sup>128</sup> and Menjívar described this as him ‘[invoking] his religion’s “communitarian ethic”.’<sup>129</sup> From this, it can be

---

<sup>123</sup> Lant. “Praxis Community Projects: a Secular Organization?” 57.

<sup>124</sup> Bekkers and Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor?" 76 & 77.

<sup>125</sup> Sanchez, et al. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe," 355.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. 355

<sup>127</sup> Cecilia, Menjívar. "Religious Institutions and Transnationalism: A Case Study of Catholic and Evangelical Salvadoran Immigrants," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (1999): 589-612.

<sup>128</sup> Idem. 600.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid; Greeley, Andrew. "Protestant and Catholic: Is the Analogical Imagination Extinct?" *American Sociological Review* 54: 485-502. 486. **As cited in** Menjívar. "Religious Institutions and Transnationalism," 600.

inferred that the church's focus on community-building was connected to its religious values, illustrating how religiously-framed values can encourage the creation of social connections.

### *3.2.1.1 Limitations and Significance of Religiously-Framed Values for Resources*

As this section has illustrated, the existing literature connected resource collection to religiously-framed values that encouraged people to donate, volunteer, and form social ties. However, because this relates to religiously-framed motivations, it means that the limitations mentioned in Chapter 3.1 also apply to the significance of religion within this context. Since these limitations have already been discussed, this section will not elaborate further on the matter other than re-iterating how the significance would depend on the religiosity of the person framing the values

### *3.2.2 Accessing Resources Through Shared Religion*

The influence of shared religion refers to how having the same religion as other individuals/organisations was a common point through which access to resources could be facilitated. Furthermore, according to the literature, social resources acted as a gateway for accessing other resources. For this reason, the following section will begin by exploring why social resources (divided into networking and community/social ties) were important for material and human resources, and will then present an analysis on how shared religion was involved in this.

#### *3.2.2.1 Networking via Shared Religion*

The networks of FBOs facilitated access to other resources, such as staff and human capital. For example, Eby et al. discussed how faith communities and faith-based actors can increase the local integration prospects of refugees by enhancing social connections and networks through which employment opportunities can be found.<sup>130</sup> Allen made a similar statement in his research on religious institutions and social integration in non-gateway areas.<sup>131</sup> He explained that religious institutions facilitate networking, thus increasing 'access to information about jobs and other important aspects of [the refugees'] local contexts that can

---

<sup>130</sup> Eby, et al. "The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States," 587.

<sup>131</sup> Ryan, Allen. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles of Religious Institutions for Refugees in a Non-Gateway Context," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 6 (2010): 1049-1068.

help them get ahead.’<sup>132</sup> This was further supported by his findings which showed that refugees were able to receive additional assistance through a church’s network.<sup>133</sup> In a similar fashion, staff was also accessed through religious networks. For instance, according to Ager and Ager, religious communities helped to provide access to volunteers.<sup>134</sup> Likewise, whilst describing the advantage of FBOs functioning on lower costs, Kraft stated that this was because they can ‘tap into significant volunteer resources, use existing facilities for running operations, and access other types of practical support through their religious communities.’<sup>135</sup> The literature also indicated that religious institutions could use their networks to collect material resources. An example of this came from Nawyn’s research, who found that the FBOs in her research ‘received some assistance [donations] from local churches or synagogues.’<sup>136</sup> Similarly, Kraft comments on how an advantage of faith-based actors is their ability ‘to mobilize flexible funds at short notice through their religious networks both locally and beyond.’<sup>137</sup>

What can be seen from this is that human and material resources could thus be accessed through an FBO’s networking abilities. Religion can be found to play a role in this when looking at what these networks consisted of, namely, organisations of the same religion. For instance, when discussing multi-religious refugee aid, in their research on multi-religious assistance for refugees, Lyck-Bowen and Owen reflect on how it is complicated to achieve this because it is ‘difficult to establish contacts with organisations from other faiths.’<sup>138</sup> They blamed this on the lack of shared knowledge, communication, and experiences between the different faith organisations.<sup>139</sup> Likewise, Nawyn found that ‘for the most part, these relationships [the networks for accessing material resources] tended to be co-religious; Catholic [FBOs] maintained relationships only with Catholic parishes, Jewish [FBOs] only with synagogues, and Protestant [FBOs] only with Protestant churches.’<sup>140</sup> This observation

---

<sup>132</sup> Carl L., Bankston III, and Min Zhou. "The Ethnic Church, Ethnic Identification, and the Social Adjustment of Vietnamese Adolescents," *Review of Religious Research* (1996): 18-37. **As cited in** Allen. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles," 1052; Michael W., Foley, and Dean R. Hoge. *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Form Our Newest Citizens*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. **As cited in** Allen. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles," 1052.

<sup>133</sup> Allen. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles," 1057.

<sup>134</sup> Ager and Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement*. 37.

<sup>135</sup> Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 402.

<sup>136</sup> Nawyn. "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement," 1524.

<sup>137</sup> Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 402-402.

<sup>138</sup> Lyck-Bowen and Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe," 34.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Nawyn. "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement," 1524.

can be further supported by Lant, who stated that ‘in terms of fundraising, a faith-based organization has an obvious community of supposedly like-minded people from whom to solicit funds.’<sup>141</sup> She followed this statement by saying that ‘knowing your targets will probably be in touch with faith institutions makes them easier to locate and to reach.’<sup>142</sup> Both her comments imply that FBOs rely on their shared religious affiliations with faith-communities/institutions to get funding. It can thus be inferred that religion played a role in accessing material and human resources because the necessary networks were based on shared religion

### *3.2.2.2 Building Social Connections and Community Based on Shared Religion*

Another way through which social resources facilitated access to human and material resources was through community and social-connections. As previously mentioned, Bekkers and Schuyt identified two reasons for why people donated and volunteered, with the first reason being “conviction”. The second reason was through Wuthnow’s concept of “community”, which can be used to better understand the role of social connections.<sup>143</sup> The idea behind “community” is that as a member of a religious community, people are exposed more frequently to requests for donations or volunteering, such as through church sermons or from other church members who already help.<sup>144</sup> Bekkers and Schuyt hence argue that strong involvement within a religious community can increase the likelihood of conforming to its norms, with contributions of money and time being examples of such religious group-norms.<sup>145</sup> The concept of “community” thus suggests that social ties and membership within religious communities can help to access human and material resources.

Moreover, in a parallel manner to networking, having a shared religion was also found to influence community-building and the creation of social ties, with Bekkers and Schuyt’s “community” being an example of this. This is because “community” refers to membership within communities of the same faith. Additionally, Allen’s work also provides insight into this as it focuses on the differences in social integration for refugees of a majority faith (Catholicism) versus of a minority faith (Islam). One of the concepts addressed in his research

---

<sup>141</sup> Lant. “Praxis Community Projects: a Secular Organization?” 57.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Wuthnow. *Acts of Compassion*. **As cited in** Bekkers and Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor?" 76-77, & 91.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

was the concept of bridging, which he alluded to as the transcending of different cultures which enables refugees to connect and integrate with locals.<sup>146</sup> Based on his findings, it could be concluded that it was more likely for bridging to occur for refugees of a majority religion than for refugees of a minority religion.<sup>147</sup> A reason for this was that refugees who were Catholic had better access to social resources due to the larger infrastructure of the majority Catholic congregations.<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, the Muslim infrastructure was smaller and thus was not able to produce similar results.<sup>149</sup>

Furthermore, Allen refers to Stanczak (2006) to explain that worshipping within multi-ethnic congregations made it easier for immigrants to bridge with locals.<sup>150</sup> This would make sense considering that multi-ethnic congregations would consist of individuals from different cultures, hence likely also including the host culture. In Allen's research, it was apparent that the Catholic congregations tended to be more multi-ethnic than the Muslim congregations.<sup>151</sup> For the mosques, he explained that less than 10% of attendees were not of refugee origins.<sup>152</sup> As a result, the participants from the mosques reflected on how they barely had friends who did not come from the same country of origin as them (Somalia).<sup>153</sup> This finding suggests that as a minority, there were less locals in the area who joined mosques, so the mosques tended to be less multi-ethnic. For the Catholic churches, however, there were more people who could join because it was the majority religion. Consequently, it meant that the churches could be multi-ethnic, hosting both locals and refugees. What these findings imply is that in comparison to the Muslim refugees, it was easier for Catholic refugees to form cross-cultural connections because there were more people to connect through the shared-Christian community.

Although Allen's research addresses larger issues of minority and majority religions, it can be inferred from his findings that shared religion played a role in the refugees' ability to bridge. This was because both groups of refugees were studied in the same location, yet only one group was able to bridge successfully, which was the Catholic group. Since the argument

---

<sup>146</sup> Allen. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles," 1050.

<sup>147</sup> Idem. 1062-1064.

<sup>148</sup> Idem. 1063.

<sup>149</sup> Idem. 1063-1064.

<sup>150</sup> Gregory C., Stanczak. "Strategic Ethnicity: The Construction of Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic Religious Community," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 5 (2006): 856-881. **As cited in** Allen. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles," 1052.

<sup>151</sup> Allen. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles," 1053 & 1062.

<sup>152</sup> Idem 1062.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

was that they were better at bridging due to there being more Catholics, it thus implies that the difference in bridging between both groups was because they did not have the same access to shared religion with locals. In turn, this therefore suggests that sharing religion played a role in how the refugees were able to connect with the host society, illustrating how social resources can be accessed through shared religion.

### *3.2.2.3 Limitations and Significance of Shared Religion*

Shared religion was identified as an important part of networking, yet when looking at several studies, some findings challenge this. For instance, throughout their work, Eby et al. mention that religious organisations can collaborate and network with organisations that are secular or of different faiths.<sup>154</sup> This was also reflected in the FBOs studied by Nawyn. Part of the FBOs in her study were religious VOLAGS, which are organisations that are contracted by the state and have ties to the government.<sup>155</sup> These types of FBOs were hence part of a larger network within the state. Likewise, one of the FBOs in Džananović's research was initially funded by other churches. However, after a new law was implemented which resulted in these churches donating less, the FBO started receiving funding from the municipality.<sup>156</sup> In this example, not only did the FBO receive funding through other means than a religious network, it did so because the religious network itself failed to sustain them. Having a shared religion was hence not sufficient for collecting resources, and networking with other sources proved to be more beneficial. This can also be supported by Lyck-Bowen and Owen, who despite saying that achieving multi-religious cooperation was challenging, stated that these collaborations were increasing and better than networks within the same faith community.<sup>157</sup>

What this implies is that whilst sharing a religion can be beneficial for accessing social resources in some cases, it is not a precondition for building networks. In turn, this demonstrates that the earlier argument about religion playing a role in networking through shared religion is not as accurate as initially believed.

Furthermore, to analyse the significance of shared religion for community-building, it is useful to refer back to Allen's research. The argument based on Allen's work was that the difference in bridging between the two groups of refugees could be traced back to their access

---

<sup>154</sup> Eby, et al. "The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States," 590-592, & 603.

<sup>155</sup> Nawyn. "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement," 1512-1523.

<sup>156</sup> Džananović. "Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organization," 73.

<sup>157</sup> Lyck-Bowen and Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe," 22, & 28-36.

to shared religion. However, upon closer inspection, Allen's research hints at a more important factor, namely interactions. Perhaps the difference between both groups was not about sharing faith, but rather about being exposed to a wider selection of people. As part of a larger Catholic congregation, the Catholic refugees were exposed to more people than the Muslim refugees were within their Mosques. Through this exposure, the Catholic refugees could interact more frequently with locals than their Muslim counterparts, hence building their social capital outside of their cultural communities. Using Allen's findings, it is thus possible to infer that developing social connections is likely related to having interactions, rather than to sharing religion.

In addition, an argument that could be made is that shared religion was a necessary factor for these interactions to occur. After all, Allen's research did illustrate how these interactions only took place within the same religious groups. Nonetheless, findings from the other studies suggest that this is not the case. For example, whilst analysing her findings, Nawyn stated that 'in many cases, [she] found that religious homogeneity was not a prerequisite to engaging in religious activity.'<sup>158</sup> This is further supported by findings from Kraft's work, who found that non-Christian refugees frequently joined Sunday church services because they enjoyed the social aspect of it.<sup>159</sup> As she stated, going to church was a 'means of further strengthening relational ties, both between volunteers and beneficiaries, and between refugees themselves,'<sup>160</sup> regardless of the refugees' faith. In like manner, one of the participants from Eby et al.'s research said that refugees freely joined activities at the church because they 'want to develop relationships with the church people even though they are not of the same faith.'<sup>161</sup> These observations suggest that the activities offered by the FBOs were open to all and were therefore not restricted to people of the same faith. In turn, this implies that contrary to the earlier conclusion, shared religion is not a prerequisite for interactions, even during religious activities.

In summary, shared religion may not have been as significant as originally anticipated. The literature illustrated that although networking could be based on shared religion, it could also exist beyond these ties, with certain authors hinting that this was more beneficial for the FBOs' ability to access resources. Similarly, for community-building and the creation of social ties, the studies indicated that in general, these were formed based on shared

---

<sup>158</sup> Nawyn. "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement," 1522.

<sup>159</sup> Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 414-415.

<sup>160</sup> *Idem*. 414.

<sup>161</sup> Eby, et al. "The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States," 595.

interactions, and not through shared religion. Therefore, although shared religion could play a role for accessing resources, it was not a significant factor.

### 3.3 Religion as Influencing Activities

The final way through which the literature found religion to impact FBO help was by influencing the activities used for providing refugee aid. Activities refer to any form of activity, service or programme that was organised by the FBO to help refugees. For instance, these could consist of hosting communal meals, donating food packages, helping to find employment and so forth. Additionally by influencing, what is meant is that religion could influence how an activity came to be, how it functioned, how it was experienced, and what its nature was (religious versus non-religious). This section will therefore analyse what types of activities were portrayed as being religious, and how the reality of determining if religion played a role in activities was debated in the literature.

The most obvious example of a religious activity would be church asylum, which is an important element of FBO engagement in the Netherlands. It consists of churches providing basic needs and housing to asylum-seekers whose residence-permit applications were rejected, and who as a result found themselves cut-off from state-support and at risk of deportation.<sup>162</sup> As explained by Džananović, church asylum practices are based on different parts of Christian scriptures. For example, he mentions Exodus 21:13 from the Old Testament, and refers to different passages in both the Old Testament and the New Testament to explain how they can promote the good treatment of migrants.<sup>163</sup> In addition, certain aspects of church asylum benefit from a form of immunity against authorities. This is because churches sometimes organise sermons in which asylum-seekers can take refuge to avoid being deported. Since authorities are reluctant to enter churches during sermons because of their religious nature, it means that the asylum-seekers are safe for the time being. Church asylum is hence an example of an activity influenced by religion because it is based on Christian scriptures and is benefitted by its religious nature.

---

<sup>162</sup> Džananović "Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations," 3, 55, & 237-238; Katharyne, Mitchell. "Freedom, Faith, and Humanitarian Governance: The Spatial Politics of Church Asylum in Europe," *Space and Polity* 21, no. 3 (2017): 269-288. 270.

<sup>163</sup> Džananović "Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations," 25.

Moreover, another example of religious activities are religious rituals. Both Udoh and Ager and Ager refer to such activities, commenting on how rituals and traditions such as pastoral care, counselling, prayer, and worship can be used by religious organisations to help refugees.<sup>164</sup> This is because having such religious practices can help refugees with their 'mental health and psychosocial well-being.'<sup>165</sup>

Furthermore, other types of religious activities are religious gatherings and celebrations. These can support refugees by creating opportunities for to enhance social integration. For example, in Petersen's research at a Danish church, she observed how people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds interacted with each other during the Christian celebration of Shrovetide the church.<sup>166</sup> Her findings revealed that the communal meal organised for the festivity enabled the relationship between migrants and locals to become more equal. This meant that there were more interactions taking place between both<sup>167</sup>, hence demonstrating how a religious celebration can help migrants with socialising. Similarly, Kraft found that refugees enjoyed going to church, regardless of their faith because it was a 'means of further strengthening relational ties, both between volunteers and beneficiaries, and between refugees themselves.'<sup>168</sup>

In all three types of activities, it can thus be seen that activities organised by FBOs can have a religious basis, either through religious values, rituals, celebrations, or even through the setting (ie. Church building in church asylum) in which it is hosted.

### 3.3.1 Limitations and Significance of Religion for Activities

Nonetheless, the analysis of the different studies uncovered that although some authors did refer to such activities, the general consensus seemed to be that religious activities were not common ways of helping in FBOs. Instead, multiple studies reflected on how the services offered were often non-religious, and that the only reason an FBO could be considered religious was through its religiosity and the religiosity of those working within it.

---

<sup>164</sup> Emmanuel Williams, Udoh. "The Religious Response to Migration and Refugee Crises in Cross River State, Nigeria,". 10; Ager and Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement*. 37.

<sup>165</sup> Ager and Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement*. 37.

<sup>166</sup> Laura Bjørg Serup, Petersen. "Intertwined Hospitalities in a Danish Church," in *Contested Hospitalities in a Time of Migration: Religious and Secular Counterspaces in the Nordic Region* ed. Synnøve Bendixsen & Trygve Wyller (Routledge, 2019), 146-161.

<sup>167</sup> Idem. 153 & 157.

<sup>168</sup> Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 414.

This distinction can be found back in Nawyn's work. One of her findings was that the integration services offered by both secular and religious NGOs were similar, despite their different relations towards religion.<sup>169</sup> This was because the presence of religion in the religious organisations was independent from the services. Instead, Nawyn explained that religion could be found in religious NGOs mainly through its role as motivator and reasoning for the services offered by the organisation.<sup>170</sup> Likewise, in Lant's argument about whether or not it was beneficial to differentiate between religious organisations and non-religious organisations, she argued that regardless of the framing of the organisation's motives, the services offered were the same: non-religious.<sup>171</sup> Although she did acknowledge that FBOs could offer additional religious activities, she stated that 'what attracts most clients is the offer of practical help', and that whether an NGO identified as secular or religious, they all 'play on the same playing field.'<sup>172</sup> The implication that the activities at FBOs were mainly secular thus suggests that although religion can play a role in some activities, it tends to be insignificant to the services offered.

However, this perspective can be criticised. In her work, Kraft discusses how FBOs are only appreciated based on how they can help in material terms, rather than on how they can help in terms of psychosocial or spiritual help.<sup>173</sup> She also reflects on whether or not material support should be differentiated from spiritual needs.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, Ager and Ager make similar reflections on the importance of psychosocial help. They comment on how within Western discourses, the different types of help offered by NGOs can be split into different categories, with spiritual/religious help being separated from other types of help.<sup>175</sup> Nevertheless, Ager and Ager argue that for religious refugees and volunteers, this differentiation may not be experienced in the same manner.<sup>176</sup> What both Kraft and Ager and Ager are hinting towards is that in current Western-secular discourses, there is a strict division between non-religious material/physical help and religious help, a division that may not exist elsewhere. This would imply that when authors such as Lant or Nawyn argue that FBO help is non-religious, they might only be looking at the help from the perspective of such discourses.

---

<sup>169</sup> Nawyn. "Faith, Ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement," 1516.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Lant. "Praxis Community Projects: a Secular Organization?" 56.

<sup>172</sup> Idem. 57.

<sup>173</sup> Kraft. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response," 403.

<sup>174</sup> Idem. 419-420.

<sup>175</sup> Ager and Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement*. 34-37.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, it could be possible that religion does play a larger role in the activities offered, it just is not interpreted as religion by the authors.

To summarise, this section has discussed how religion can influence activities for refugee aid. However, the significance of this role is left open for questioning, with some authors arguing that FBO activities are mainly secular, and others arguing that religious help can actually be part of what is categorised as “secular” help, just from a non-secular-Western perspective. The importance of religion hence once again appears to be dependent on the personal interpretations of those involved.

### 3.4 Concluding Observations on the Analytical Framework

From the previous three subheadings, it became possible to see how in the current literature, three areas were identified within which religion could play a role in FBO aid: as source of motivation, as facilitating access to resources, and as influencing activities. Nevertheless, the analysis of the studies debated whether or not these roles were essential. The conclusion that was agreed upon for all three subheadings was that this depended on the religiosity of the those involved. Therefore, when analysing the case-study’s findings within the framework, it is important to constantly take the personal perceptions and experiences of the volunteers into account as these have a heavy influence over whether or not religion can be found to play a decisive role in FBO aid.

## Chapter 4: Methods, Limitations, and Ethical Considerations

After examining the existing literature on FBOs, it became clear that the chosen method for this thesis needed to prioritise detailed findings. As this chapter will explain, using a case-study approach was hence considered to be an appropriate method for the research. In addition to offering this explanation, this chapter will also elaborate on how data was gathered and processed for the research, and what the ethical considerations and researcher positionality were. The limitations of the research will also be reflected upon throughout the different parts of the chapter.

### 4.1 Choosing a Case-study Approach

Using Yin's description, case-studies are:

'an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon [...] in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.'<sup>177</sup>

Since case-studies enable a deep analysis to be made, they are beneficial for answering "how" and "why" questions when there is limited access to data.<sup>178</sup> During the timeframe of this research, there was the unfortunate Russian invasion of Ukraine, which led to many Ukrainians seeking refuge in the Netherlands. As a result, it became challenging to find organisations for the case-study because their newly-directed attention on helping Ukrainian refugees understandably left them with little time for interviews. These challenges, as well as the nature of the thesis' research question, therefore made the case-study approach a highly suitable research method. Moreover, despite case-studies being limited by their narrowness and inability to generalise findings, Yin argues that the aim of case-studies is to expand on existing theories, and not on applying findings to the world in general.<sup>179</sup> Considering that existing literature was shown to be lacking, collecting data through a case-study could actually prove to be practical for broadening the existing body of literature.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>177</sup> Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2018. 50-51.

<sup>178</sup> Yin. *Case Study Research and Applications*. 47.

<sup>179</sup> *Idem*. 58.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*.

The data was gathered for this case-study through semi-structured interviews and online research of the church's website. It was then analysed and processed within the analytical framework developed from an examination of the existing literature.

#### 4.2 Using Semi-Structured Interviews, Sampling Methods, and Introducing the Interviewees

The original plan was to perform fieldwork. However, during the planning phases of the research, there was a global pandemic. The resulting travel restrictions as well as the research's timeframe thus meant that performing extensive fieldwork was no longer a possibility. Since interviews could be done online within a shorter period, semi-structured interviews therefore became the preferred method for data collection.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were also chosen because their nature made them beneficial for collecting the type of data required to answer the research question. This was because semi-structured interviews consist of a set of main questions whilst still leaving space for participants to answer freely. As a result, they enabled participants to freely elaborate on their answers whilst still ensuring that similar topics are covered per individual, allowing comparisons to be made across interviews.<sup>181</sup> The types of questions asked through semi-structured interviews also gave space for the interviewees to interpret religion and their views on religion openly. Such an approach was hence advantageous for this thesis.

The semi-structured interviews took place through Zoom and were recorded in order to be transcribed. The questions for the interviews were inspired by this thesis' sub-questions as well as by the analytical framework. They therefore consisted of topics such as motivation, the activities that were offered, problems that were experienced, and the participants' own experiences with religion.<sup>182</sup> Once the interviews were finished, transcriptions were made of the recordings, which were then analysed within the framework. Since the interviews were held in Dutch, all of the direct quotes referenced within the Findings and Discussion chapter were translations of the transcripts made by the researcher, who cross-referenced her translations to ensure they were accurate reflections of the interviewees' responses.

---

<sup>181</sup> James, Moyer, James Ambrose, Jane Ritchie, and Jane Lewis. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage, 2003.11.

<sup>182</sup> See Appendix 3 for the Interview Guides

The participants for the interviews came from the Isaiah Church and its church network, and were recruited through snowball-sampling. This method consists of recruiting participants through other participants<sup>183</sup> and is useful when researching perceptions of specific populations in situations where access to participants is limited.<sup>184</sup> However, snowball-sampling does come with its limitations, which are that the sample may have a bias-risk. This is because participants are chosen by participants themselves. As a result, they may have similar experiences and perspectives, or may have been selected with the knowledge that they would provide favourable answers for the organisation.<sup>185</sup> Despite this, it was still the preferred sampling-method considering the nature of the research question as well as due to the fact that finding participants, especially when limited to being online, was challenging. It was also advantageous because recruiting participants through each other created social connections, hence easing the communication between them and the researcher.

Initially, the aim had been to find 6-8 participants, with an equal mix of volunteers and refugees, as this could create a well-balanced representation of refugee aid from both sides. Nevertheless, as became a recurring theme for this research, it was difficult to find people who were able to participate. These difficulties also meant that the timeframe for the data collection was becoming narrower. As a result, only five interviews could be conducted, of which four were with volunteers and one with an ex-refugee who had been helped by the Isaiah Church. Additionally, out of the four volunteers, one of them helped at another church. Although this may not seem like an ideal sample due to its size and variety, the five interviews were still sufficient to give a varied and detailed insight into the situation at the Isaiah Church. The smaller size also meant that more attention could be dedicated per interview. In addition, despite one of the volunteers helping at a different church, the church was part of the same GKV network as the Isaiah Church. Since the Isaiah Church also operated through this network, and that the help offered by the other church was similar to the Isaiah Church's, the volunteer's contributions to the interviews were thus still deemed suitable for this research. Likewise, because it was only possible have one interview with a refugee, the findings were limited to only one perspective. Nonetheless, the (ex)refugee's insights and

---

<sup>183</sup> Anna, Davidsson-Bremborg. "Interviewing," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* ed. Stausberg, Michael, and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2011), 310- 322. 314.

<sup>184</sup> Irina-Maria, Dragan, and Alexandru Isaic-Maniu. "Snowball Sampling Completion." *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2013). 60-61; Chaim, Noy. "Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, no. 4 (2008): 327-344. 330.

<sup>185</sup> Davidsson-Bremborg. "Interviewing," 314.

experiences with refugee aid proved to be useful for understanding how the volunteers' perceptions of refugee aid translated into reality for those who were receiving the help. Therefore, although the main focus of this thesis remains the volunteers' experiences, the (ex)refugee's responses will still be referred to in the Findings and Discussion chapter, albeit in a less central manner than the other interviewees.

Finally, for the sake of clarity, this section will end by giving a brief overview of the interviewees. In order to ensure anonymity, the names presented are pseudo-names and hence not the real identities of the participants.

Dylan: chair of both the foundation and of the church council, he is also a pastor at the Isaiah Church. He began volunteering when the Isaiah Church first started refugee aid, and described his role as doing administrative work, filling in where needed, and giving emotional support to volunteers.

Nina: a member of the Isaiah Church who volunteered with baptism catechism, Bible studies, and offered her home to refugees. She started helping after being asked by the church.

Irene: volunteers at the Isaiah Church despite being a member of a church in a neighbouring village. She started helping after attending an evening organised by local churches about supporting refugees. Over the years, she has helped with the children's club, Dutch lessons, Bible studies, writing letters, translating sermons during covid, and has had refugees stay at her home.

Matthijs: the only volunteer who is not directly involved with the Isaiah Church. He is the pastor of a church in another village within the area, which also started helping refugees in response to the refugees' requests. As part of refugee aid, Matthijs helped mostly as a witness for residence-permit procedures, taught Bible studies, and had refugees live with him.

Mohsin: the only participant who came to the church as an asylum-seeker and who is now an (ex)refugee. He came from Pakistan with his wife and was allocated to the ASC near the Isaiah Church. Since Mohsin grew up Christian, he found the Isaiah Church when looking for a church to attend. Once joining the church, Mohsin and his wife received help from the church with legal matters for integration.

### 4.3 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The focus of the research question meant that the research dealt with different individuals and communities associated with refugee aid. As a result, it was necessary that the researcher presented the people and communities well and ensured that they were being portrayed in the

manner they desired. In order to achieve this, the researcher paid attention to how the participants talked about themselves and tried to include this in her own perspectives.

Additionally, some of the topics discussed were emotional for the participants, as they included the stories of refugees and the hardships they faced. There were also responses which focussed on personal faith, which can be an intimate topic. The researcher hence tried to ensure that the interview gave participants the space to elaborate if they wanted to, and did not push if the participants looked uncomfortable. For this reason, the questions were also proof-read by the supervisor prior to the interviews so as to make sure that they were appropriate. The researcher also ensured that the participants were aware of their rights to withdraw from the research and/or to remove given information that they no longer wished to be disclosed. These points were also part of the briefing that interviewees received prior to the interviews, which was given through an information letter, verbal explanations, and a consent form. Lastly, none of the interviews were performed before consent forms were signed.

Furthermore, due to sensitive nature of the topics discussed in the interviews, it was critical to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the interviewees. Their responses were thus anonymised by using pseudo-names and by leaving out or changing personal details that may hint at the person's identity. The church's name and the foundation's name were also anonymised, and although the church and foundation websites were used for data-gathering, their full links were not fully referenced in the citations, nor in the bibliography. This decision was taken in regards to how the links contained the name of both organisations, so referencing them would reveal their true identities. In addition, considering that the church community is small and that the participants were found through snowball-sampling, there is a chance that they may recognise each other within the research. Unfortunately, there is little that can be done to avoid this, meaning that although the findings were anonymised as much as they could, full anonymity was not possible.

Finally, since the interviews were done through Zoom, it was necessary that they were done in a private manner. For this, an encrypted laptop provided by UiO was used for all the interviews. Likewise, because the interviews were recorded, they needed to be transcribed and stored safely where they could not be accessed by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor. An encryption programme named TSD was hence used to store and transcribe the interviews. The consent forms were also registered through TSD as they contained personal information as well. Once this research is finished, the interviews and all personal details that were not anonymised will be deleted. It is also necessary to emphasise that this research,

under the project number 983506, was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) after being carefully reviewed.

#### 4.4 Positionality

The positionality of the researcher is also an important factor to discuss: a white Dutch female who does not identify strongly with any religion. Having grown up in the Netherlands in a mostly secular environment, the researcher had pre-existing notions of what religion should consist of, especially in terms of charity. It was therefore necessary to ensure that the researcher's personal views were not imposed, and instead shift the focus to listening to how participants talked about these topics. In order to achieve this, the researcher reflected on how interview questions were phrased and potentially interpreted, as well as remaining aware of influences of the word-choices used. Throughout the analysing and writing process, the researcher also maintained this critical reflection and repeatedly questioned where the answers and interpretations were coming from. Although some bias could not be avoided, the researcher did her best to not be blinded by it and kept reflecting on it throughout her work.

## Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

This chapter will analyse the case-study findings under the three subheadings of the analytical framework presented in Chapter 3 (religion as source of motivation, religion for accessing resources, and religion as influencing activities), exploring the volunteers' perspectives on the roles of religion and whether or not it was a significant part of their work. It will also present the fourth subheading (the religious identities of the refugees) which was added to the framework after the interview data had been examined. The chapter will then end on a summary of the discussion, linking it to the larger themes within the literature on how religion can be conceptualised and how the distinction between religious and non-religious aspects of FBO aid are 'imagined and practised.'<sup>186</sup>

### 5.1 The Relationship Between Motivation and Religion at the Isaiah Church

The discussion presented in Chapter 3.1 concluded that in the existing literature, religion played a motivational role through the religious-framing of values, and the significance of this was argued to be dependent on the religiosity of those involved. Based on the case-study findings, a similar connection could be found between the volunteers' reasons for working at the Isaiah Church and their personal religiosity. This connection will be explored in the following section, with a focus on what it consisted of for the volunteers and the church, as well as how relevant it was for their experiences with refugee aid.

#### 5.1.1 Individual Motivations and Religious Obligations

The volunteers' relationship between their motivation and religion can best be summarised through Matthijs' statement on why he helped refugees:

'My faith plays a very big role, and I think even a decisive role. Yes, I even think that if I didn't believe, if Christ was not my lord, I think I would be in a camp like FvD or PVV<sup>187</sup> fairly quickly, who have an aversion towards strangers [refugees].'<sup>188</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGO," 27.

<sup>187</sup> The FvD and PVV are both right-wing populist political parties in the Netherlands, known for having strong stances against immigration.

<sup>188</sup> Matthijs, Interview by Researcher, Zoom, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

Albeit a more extreme statement in comparison to the other volunteers, Matthijs attributing motivation to his religion was far from being unique. When asked what motivated the volunteers to help refugees, all of their answers referred to religion. For example, Nina alluded to Matthew 28:20 and God being everywhere<sup>189</sup>, Irene to how Jesus teaches us to love each other<sup>190</sup>, and Dylan to how God purposefully created one world for everyone to live in together<sup>191</sup>. However, what is interesting when looking at their responses is how and why this connection was made by them, with the answer to this lying in the notion of religious duties. The explanation for why Matthijs believed he would not have volunteered had he not been a follower of Christ sheds further light onto this. His direct answer to the question ‘How would you describe your motivations and goals for helping refugees?’ was as follows:

‘Matthew 25: “I was a stranger and you took me into your home,”. Christ orders you to look after those who are weaker, not because you enjoy it [...] but you do it, you are driven because it is the Lord who says, who desires you to do this.’<sup>192</sup>

His response indicates that the reason for why he associated volunteering with having Christ as his Lord was because he experienced it as a duty towards God; without a Lord to obey, there was less sense of duty to provide help. The theme of duty and obeying God was also reflected in the other volunteers’ answers to the same question. For instance, Irene’s answer consisted of saying:

‘It [the motivation] is very clearly from the Bible, because Jesus also teaches us to not be busy with ourselves all the time but to also love our close ones, our neighbours, like we do ourselves. And that’s written in different places in the Bible, that it is our duty to help people who live in lesser circumstances, to help strangers.’<sup>193</sup>

Likewise, although Dylan first responded with saying that for him and the church ‘the underlying goal is that they [the refugees] are not alone, that there are people who empathise with them,’ he then linked this to how:

‘In faith I also feel a certain assignment to it; the Lord placed us in this world as people, and not alone. He sometimes places people on our life path, whom we meet,

---

<sup>189</sup> Nina, Interview by Researcher, Zoom, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

<sup>190</sup> Irene, Interview by Researcher, Zoom, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

<sup>191</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>192</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>193</sup> Irene, Interview.

whom we can walk with for a bit or whom can walk with us for a bit, [...] and so I also see an assignment in it, to treat the people well who are placed on our paths.’<sup>194</sup>

Additionally, when relating this to how the refugees came to the church for help, Dylan said, ‘we didn’t search, it was placed on our paths, and then you can say “well, I would rather not,” yes, [but] we can’t get away with it that easily.’<sup>195</sup> Throughout these answers, it can hence be seen how the volunteers referred to their motives in terms of duties and assignments, implying that the connection between religion and motivation came from a sense of obligation they experienced towards God.

Furthermore, when elaborating on the volunteers’ responses, one can see a link between this sense of duty and being a Christian, and it is through this link that Lant’s concept of religious framing can be found. As previously mentioned, Matthijs credited his motivation to Christ being his Lord; in other words, his motivation to help came from him identifying as a follower of God. The idea that motivation was connected to the Christian identity was also alluded to in the other interviews. For example, expanding on her response on motivation, Irene discussed how:

‘In the Old testament God tells the people of Israel [...] that they had to be good to strangers, and that they shouldn’t chase or suppress strangers. And in the New Testament, Jesus very clearly agrees that people who say they are Christians but meanwhile are harsh towards strangers and refugees-[well, it’s a bad thing], it’s very bad if you are harsh to refugees.’<sup>196</sup>

She also mentioned through private communication that according to the Bible, ‘if you do not want to help those close to you, God does not see you as Christian.’<sup>197</sup> The connection Irene makes between helping refugees and her religion is made plain in her remarks: to identify as a true Christian, one should support others, including refugees. Her stance is further reflected in Nina’s interview, who whilst talking about wanting to improve social integration for refugees, explained that this desire came from ‘[her] being [a] practical Christian.’<sup>198</sup>

The volunteers comments imply that they associated following God’s Word, especially in regards to helping refugees within this context, to being Christian. This would

---

<sup>194</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>197</sup> Irene, Email Message to Researcher, 21st August 2022.

<sup>198</sup> Nina, Interview.

explain why they experienced their motivations as duties, because obeying God was part of their Christian identities. From these examples, it can therefore be argued that expressing motivation in terms of religious duties is an example of religious framing because the desire to help was framed within the volunteers' identities as followers of God.

This form of religious framing is not surprising, considering how the volunteers attributed great significance to their Christianity within their daily lives. For example, when asked if religion played an important role in her volunteer work, Irene answered saying 'yes of course, because there it's just- for me, [it's]the most important in life.'<sup>199</sup> In addition, answering a question on whether or not she believed she would help if she had not been a Christian, Irene responded saying that 'it is not easy for me to imagine how I would have been. I was raised with the Christian faith my whole life. I cannot imagine how it would have been in practice if it had not been that way.'<sup>200</sup> Likewise, whilst explaining how religion influenced her personal work with refugees, Nina said that 'God's Word is so comprehensive [...] you just have to go back to the source [God's Word].'<sup>201</sup> This is in line with her earlier referral to Matthew 28:20, as this passage mentions God being present everywhere alongside people. Irene and Nina's reflections hence suggest that a reason for why refugee aid was framed within the volunteers' Christianity was because it was such an inherent part of their lives in general.

Moreover, the interviews also revealed how the volunteers' religious framing of motivation resulted in them perceiving themselves as well-suited for refugee aid. Since the interviewees explained they volunteered out of religious reasons, they were also asked about their thoughts on non-religious people helping. In Dylan's and Matthijs' answers, both acknowledged that non-religious people can still be motivated to help, despite not being Christian. For example, Dylan said that 'of course there are also people who do not have that [religious] motivation and who also help refugees,'<sup>202</sup> and Matthijs responded with 'I don't think so [that religious people are faster to offer help than non-religious people] because I see that also a lot of people who do not believe are very willing to offer help.'<sup>203</sup>

Nevertheless, the volunteers also indicated that they believed their Christian motivation to be different and stronger. For instance, although Dylan stated that people

---

<sup>199</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>200</sup> Irene, Email.

<sup>201</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>202</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>203</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

without religious motivation could still help, he reflected on how it was a different type of motivation. The example that he gave was that for him as a Christian, his motivation ‘also [felt] like a calling and all [to] help our brothers and sisters.’<sup>204</sup> This perspective was also shared by Irene, who when asked through private communication if she thought religious people were more inclined to help, explained that ‘I do think so, because it’s the base ingredient of the Christian faith, to love and help your neighbour.’<sup>205</sup> Although her answer did not state that non-religious people could not help, it did indicate that she believed there to be a difference in volunteering levels based on being Christian.

A deeper look into the interview findings uncovered the reason behind why the volunteers thought that their religiously-driven motivation made them well-suited for refugee aid. It was because they were able to find perseverance through their religion. After pondering on his answer about whether or not he believed that religious people were more inclined to help, Matthijs wondered out loud, saying that actually:

‘I do think that Christians, through their faith, can be more steady in offering help because it isn’t rose-scent and moon-shine. Refugee aid, it’s very tricky [...] and you need something deeper for that than “I think this is nice,” or “I like this”. In the long run it isn’t fun, in the long run it’s also very tedious and then there needs to be a deeper motivation through which you keep persevering [...], and I think that faith gives that to me [...] and I wonder, it’s more of an open question I’m asking, how that is for people who do not believe.’<sup>206</sup>

This idea was also brought up by Nina during her discussion on how her faith was important to her work as she reflected on how ‘you can also find your strength in it [faith], because you deal with a lot of opposition.’<sup>207</sup> According to the volunteers, faith was hence considered to be an important source of perseverance.

Moreover, further remarks made by Irene and Matthijs can be used to understand how this is another example of framing motivation within the Christian identity. One way through which Irene assisted refugees was by teaching Dutch classes, and she recalled how one of her students had been having difficulties learning. Although she admitted that this was

---

<sup>204</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>205</sup> Irene, Email.

<sup>206</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>207</sup> Nina, Interview.

bothersome, she said that she had ‘Jesus’ patience at the back of [her] mind,’<sup>208</sup> which helped her overcome her frustrations. She then explained that exerting this patience was important for her because in accordance with the Fruits of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, there are ‘attributes you need to show if you want to belong to Jesus,’ with ‘one of those attributes [being] patience.’<sup>209</sup> Likewise, in Matthijs’ description of his motivations, he talked about helping refugees despite it being difficult as ‘you are driven because it is the Lord who says, who desires you to do this.’<sup>210</sup> Analysing both observations, it becomes possible to notice the similarities in the volunteers’ reasoning: they associated their perseverance with the need to follow God. The desire to follow God was previously argued to come from a sense of obligation experienced by the volunteers due to their being Christians. It can therefore be inferred that perseverance was also a manifestation of this. As a result, this would mean that when volunteers referred to having stronger motivation than non-religious volunteers, it was because of their Christian identities and its associated obligations. Succinctly, this thus implies that for the volunteers, their Christian identity was a significant aspect of refugee aid not only because it motivated them, but also because they saw it as making them more suitable for volunteering.

It must however be noted that the volunteers associated “religious” with being Christian, and “non-religious” with not being religious at all. In terms of their perspectives on Christian volunteers versus volunteers with other religions backgrounds, the volunteers offered limited insight other than occasionally mentioning other denominations helping or that they did not know how refugee aid functioned within non-Christian institutions.<sup>211</sup> Therefore, the statements about Christian volunteers being better suited for refugee aid are only applicable in the comparison to non-religious volunteers, and not to volunteers from other religions.

Furthermore, alluding back to Chapter 3.1, Kartas and Silvas similarly mentioned religious motivation being more intense.<sup>212</sup> The chapter then concluded that it was the religious framing of values which may have made the motivation stronger within the context of Kartas and Silvas’ work. However, why this was the case remained unclear. Using the findings from the case-study, a potential answer to this can be put forwards; it was because

---

<sup>208</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>211</sup> Matthijs, Interview; Dylan, Interview; Irene, Interview.

<sup>212</sup> Kartas and Silva. “Reflections on the Role of Religion and Faith,” 217.

the religious framing of motivation was connected to volunteers experiencing a sense of obligation. This obligation made them more likely to persevere, hence creating a stronger sense of motivation. Nonetheless, this answer can only be argued within the case of the Isaiah Church and its volunteers. Whether it stands for other FBOs, such as the one in Kartas and Silva's work, remains open for future research to discover.

The case-study findings hence revealed that for the volunteers, religion played a role in their motivations, and this role could be identified through two elements: religious obligations and being a Christian. The reason for this was because they framed their desire to volunteer within their Christian identities, resulting in the motivation being experienced as a religious obligation. In turn, this was perceived to be significant by the volunteers because it made them feel better adapted for refugee aid, and because they could not imagine their motivation separately from their faith.

### 5.1.2 The Religious Motivations of the Church

Similar findings to the previous section were found in relation to the Isaiah Church's motivations and goals. When asked about the aims of the church, Dylan explained that the Isaiah church did not have any aims for helping. This was because the church did not actively set out to help refugees, but rather started to offer services based on the demands from the refugees themselves. As Dylan mentioned, 'we didn't have a plan at the start like "we want to do this or that," but people came with questions.'<sup>213</sup> Matthijs made a similar comment about his church's aims, stating that they did not have 'crystallised goals,' but that someone needed to assist the refugees who needed help.<sup>214</sup> In both cases, the churches only started to offer help based on demand. Nonetheless, when people started asking for help, both churches obliged because in like manner to the volunteers, there was a sense of duty associated with being a church. For instance, whilst talking about the church's response to refugee requests, Dylan stated that 'if we [the church] say no now, then we can close the church, because I think that's precisely our calling as a church.'<sup>215</sup> Although it is unclear if Dylan was referring to the church's duty in the sense of bringing people closer to God, or if he was referring to helping refugees in general, both cases connect the Isaiah Church's desire to help with its duties as a church. Likewise, when comparing the church's motivations to her own, Irene said that they

---

<sup>213</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>214</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>215</sup> Dylan, Interview.

were the same: ‘as in that you belong to Jesus.’<sup>216</sup> She also commented on how the church’s motivations came ‘directly from the word of Jesus,’ and that ‘looking after people who have it worse are core [...] duties of the church.’<sup>217</sup> Although not the Isaiah Church, Matthijs’ comments about his church can still be helpful as they were the same as Dylan’s and Irene’s. For example, he explained that the decision to respond to the refugees’ requests for help was ‘coloured by faith’ because ‘they [the church people] have to [help] according to God, it has to happen, it comes to us, so then we just have to do it.’<sup>218</sup> Parallel to the volunteers’ motivations, the church was thus encouraged to help because of its religious duties, duties which the volunteers associated with the religious identity of the church and its role in following Christ.

Furthermore, from other comments by Nina and Dylan, it was found that the church was also motivated by its desire to be welcoming to refugees. When asked how she would describe the church’s motivations and goals, Nina answered with ‘I have noticed that they gave a lot of love and attention[...] also giving them [the refugees] the feeling that they are welcome and that they belong.’<sup>219</sup> She later referred to this love and warmth as ‘pastoral work,’<sup>220</sup> and mentioned the importance of the ‘pastoral warmth that they [refugees] receive in the church,’<sup>221</sup> as part of refugee aid. The fact that her answers on the church’s motivation consisted of discussing the church’s warmth implies that for her, ensuring that refugees felt welcomed was part of the church’s motivations. Dylan made a similar remark, because as previously mentioned, when talking about his and the church’s motivations, he had said that the underlying goal had been to help refugees not feel alone. Being welcoming to the refugees was thus a motivating factor for the church.

An interesting observation about this in relation to religiously-framed values can be found on the Isaiah Church’s website, which emphasised the importance of being together. Under the title “Our visions on the Community”, it stated that ‘we are given to each other and therefore one in Christ. That is why we want to respect each other with love.’<sup>222</sup> In addition, the website introduced important GKV values, including statements like ‘because we belong

---

<sup>216</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>219</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> “Welkom”, accessed through the Isaiah Church’s website.

to God together, we also want to belong to each other,’ and ‘we feel responsible for the society and the people around us.’<sup>223</sup> In terms of growing closer to God together, the page also stated that ‘everyone is welcome to this.’<sup>224</sup> Since these values were presented as GKV values, it suggests that the Isaiah Church’s desire to be warm and welcoming was related to it being essential to its role as a GKV church.

Exploring the church’s motivations and aims, both through the interviews and through its website, was thus revealed how these were connected to its church identity and its related duties. The same conclusions can hence be drawn as for the volunteers’ personal motivations, namely, that the religious framing of motivation within the Christian-church identity resulted in the church experiencing its motivation through religious obligations.

## 5.2 How Resources Were Accessed Through Religion

From the discussion presented in Chapter 3.2, it was found that religion played a role in accessing resources through religiously-framed values and shared religion. When exploring if religion played a similar role for resource collection at the Isaiah Church, the analysis revealed that although it did to a certain extent, the manner in which it did varied from the existing literature. This section will hence not only present the volunteers’ perspectives on the matter, it will also examine how the role of religion differed.

### 5.2.1 Accessing Resources Through Religiously-Framed Values

In the existing literature, religiously-framed values were credited for the collection of material resources. However, the interviews gave limited insight into whether or not this was also the case at the Isaiah Church. The only example that can be used was that Nina, Irene, and Matthijs all opened their homes to refugees who needed shelter. Since the previous section indicated that their motivations for helping were framed within religion, it would therefore be an example of religiously-framed values resulting in access to material resources.

When it came to accessing human resources, the previous section on motivation can also be used to show the relation between values and resources. The volunteers joined the church’s refugee aid as a result of their religious motivations. Therefore, it can be said that the

---

<sup>223</sup> “Wie Zijn Wij?” accessed through the Isaiah Church’s website.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

church could access human resources (staff) through religiously-framed values. However, this is only from the perspective of the interviewed volunteers themselves. Although their perspective is the main focus of this research, it is still interesting to look at the matter in relation to the other church members, as it uncovered some of the challenges experienced by the church. Throughout the interviews, the volunteers mentioned on multiple occasions that they noticed a threshold for some of the other churchgoers when it came to assisting refugees. For example, Irene said that ‘in all the churches there is a big group of people who find it difficult to be involved with this [refugee aid].’<sup>225</sup> She also explained how her the church she usually attended had organised a church sermon that focused on refugees and refugee aid, recalling how:

‘It was a lot of fun but it was still a specific group that stayed, and you could also see that certain people stayed away from the church that day because they thought it was all a little bit weird. So I do find it unfortunate, because I would like for there to have been a slightly bigger group that was slightly more involved.’<sup>226</sup>

Dylan shared a similar observation within the Isaiah Church, commenting that:

‘I also unfortunately notice that there are a lot of people who have something like, “yes, the threshold is so high,” and who do not want to help. And in the church I have also experienced that people were jealous, like “well yes, but they are getting attention and we are not”.’<sup>227</sup>

According to Irene and Dylan, there was thus a distinct threshold preventing certain churchgoers from helping refugees. It is interesting to compare these remarks to the concept of “conviction”, which as described in Chapter 3.2, refers to religiously-based norms within a religious community resulting in donations and volunteering.<sup>228</sup> For the interviewed volunteers, it can be argued that the notion of norms did influence their decisions to volunteer, because they experienced a sense of duty related to God’s Word. Arguably, a difference would be that “conviction” within Bekker and Schuyt’s work alludes more to the social elements reinforcing these norms, whereas according to the answers from the volunteers, they experienced it more in relation to God, and not to the community. Nonetheless, regardless of

---

<sup>225</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>228</sup> Bekkers and Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor?" 76-77.

where this reinforcement came from, the concept of “conviction” still refers to these norms existing within a religious community. Therefore, a question that arises is that if the community at the Isaiah Church shared the same norms as the volunteers, why did some members still not help? Was it because religiously-framed values were not sufficient?

An attempt to answer this can be made in relation to the volunteers’ responses about donations. Whilst talking about receiving donations from church members, Dylan commented on how he was ‘surprised [...] [that] people [were] involved in that way after all,’<sup>229</sup> alluding to how many church members usually did not participate in refugee aid. A reason for this, according to an observation made by Irene, was because making donations had a lower threshold. As she described, aside from the couple of churchgoers who directly helped, ‘there is a big group around that have a type of threshold-fear.’<sup>230</sup> This group, she elaborated ‘do want to listen to stories and do also want to give some money but who find visitations [of refugees] very difficult.’<sup>231</sup> Donations were therefore low-threshold methods for contributing to refugee aid. This is an important detail because as previously discussed, the interviewees volunteered out of a sense of religious duty. Referring to Sanchez et al.’s work from Chapter 3.2, the authors found that material donations were made as a way of manifesting the religiously-framed concept of hospitality.<sup>232</sup> It could thus be possible that the other church members at the Isaiah Church experienced the same religious duties as the interviewees, but manifested these through financial donations due to the high thresholds. In this case, it can be argued that religiously-framed values did play a role in accessing resources, and that “conviction” is still applicable to a certain extent. Unfortunately, there is no further evidence for this inference because there were no interviews done with church members who only helped through donations. Nonetheless, it creates an interesting perspective on how thresholds can interfere with religiously-driven motivation and hence impact resource collection. It also hints at thresholds having a greater influence than religious norms and duties when it comes to people’s behaviours towards refugee aid.

Furthermore, when analysing religiously-framed values in relation to social resources, the findings also did not give clear insights into the matter. That developing social connections and helping with belonging was an important aspect of the church’s refugee aid

---

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Snyder. "Un/settling Angels," **As cited in** Sanchez et al. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe," 355; Wilson. "Much To Be Proud Of, Much To Be Done," **As cited in** Sanchez et al. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe," 355.

was no secret, as discussed in Chapter 2.4 and Chapter 3.1. For instance, the discussion on the church's motivations revealed that the church was driven by its desire to be warm and welcoming to refugees. This desire was then traced back to the church's GKV values, suggesting that it was through religiously-framed values that access to social resources like community was facilitated. Nonetheless, when it comes to understanding this in regards to the volunteers themselves, things became more complicated. The volunteers all expressed a desire to improve social connections. For example, both Irene and Nina mentioned this when asked what could be improved within the church's refugee aid. In their responses to the question, Irene talked about how it was unfortunate that there were not more people who visited refugees at the ASC<sup>233</sup>, and Nina said that interactions between refugees and Dutch locals 'can be improved [...] by eating communally and by just showing interests towards each other.'<sup>234</sup> The desire to increase social opportunities was also expressed by Dylan, who said that post-covid, they 'do want more [of the social elements] again, the promoting of drinking coffee and [having] food [together].'<sup>235</sup> Through such events, Dylan believed that 'the threshold decreases because they [the refugees] are no longer those strange people at a distance.'<sup>236</sup> Likewise, Matthijs also recalled that 'what could have been done better [at his church] was to offer more meals, offer more communal meals to refugees,' as it was 'a really easy way to make contact with each other.'<sup>237</sup> For all four volunteers, it was therefore important to improve social relations and host more social events to achieve this. However, whether or not this desire stemmed from religiously-framed values was unclear. It can be argued that when the volunteers were motivated because God taught them to take care of strangers, this included being kind and friendly with refugees. From this approach, building social connections could hence be linked to religious beliefs. Nevertheless, because the volunteers gave no further insight into why they wanted to foster social ties other than to help with social integration and overcome thresholds, it cannot be concluded that this was actually the case.

To summarise, other than through the volunteers' motivations for helping and the church's desire to be welcoming, the role of religiously-framed values for accessing resources and its significance remains up for debate. This is because in terms of material and human

---

<sup>233</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>234</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>235</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

resources, it was found that thresholds had a larger impact on resource collection than religiously-framed values. In addition, when it came to social resources, it was not made clear whether or not the volunteers' religious motivations also included motivation for building social connections. Therefore, what can be concluded is that for the volunteers and the church, religiously-framed values played a moderate role in accessing resources, moderate because of how it depended on whom was being asked, how they experienced thresholds, and how they interpreted God's word in regards to being kind to strangers. This is in line with the analysis presented in Chapter 3.2, which concluded by saying that the influence of religiously-framed values depended on the individuals involved. However, what the analysis in Chapter 3.2 did not take into consideration and that the findings did was how other factors, like thresholds, could affect access to resources.

### *5.2.2 Shared Religion for Accessing Resources*

Shared religion was identified as a way for religion to play a role in resource collection, yet determining the significance of this proved to be complicated according to the analysis presented in Chapter 3.2. Therefore, by investigating the matter within the Isaiah Church, more clarity can hopefully be found. In addition, the discussion from the Analytical Framework was structured by first establishing how material and human resources could be found through social resources, and then analysing how access to the latter was influenced by shared religion. This section will thus take a similar approach when exploring the topic.

#### *5.2.2.1 Relying on the Church Network*

In Chapter 3.2, Bekkers and Schuyt's allusion to "community" was used as an example of how churches could access material and human resources through social resources.<sup>238</sup> This was because "community" consisted of how membership within a religious community of the church increased exposure to requests for help. Bekkers and Schuyt also mentioned how frequent participation within the community could increase the chance of people following religious norms, including donating and volunteering. Nonetheless, as was previously established, the other churchgoers within the Isaiah Church community did not frequently

---

<sup>238</sup> Bekkers and Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor?" 76-77.

help, other than through occasional donations. In this case, it appeared that the threshold experienced by churchgoers overcame the community's influence to help. Due to there being limited information about the church members who did not offer help, it is difficult to analyse how significant Bekkers and Schuyt's concept of "community" was at the Isaiah Church. However, based off of the volunteers' earlier responses about the thresholds, it can be inferred that it probably was not essential to how the church accessed resources. It is therefore necessary to look into how the church made use of its networks instead.

Being a smaller church with a low capacity meant that the Isaiah Church still struggled to have sufficient financial resources. For instance, Dylan described how the church was 'already short on money for the normal expenditures [they] have,'<sup>239</sup> so getting by with the additional costs of refugee aid was even more challenging. He therefore discussed how the Isaiah Church relied on the other churches for money, explaining that 'it is really going to take a bit of searching , and then not only with the Isaiah Church, but also people in the surrounding area of other churches, who then also make contributions.'<sup>240</sup> Additionally, after sharing an anecdote about noticing another church asking for donations to support the Isaiah Church's refugee aid, Dylan recalled how he found it 'nice that it is also a bit broader, because yes, the Isaiah Church is a very small church, we can't make it without each other.'<sup>241</sup> His remarks hence indicate that the church was dependent on its networks with other churches for funding.

Furthermore, a notable observation on the matter was made in relation to the Isaiah Foundation. As aforementioned, the foundation was set up so that an external NGO could donate money for the church's refugee aid without having to donate directly to the church. Its creation in and of itself already hints at the importance of shared religion for funds, because an outside organisation did not want to directly donate to the church. In addition, over time, the foundation became useful for collecting extra donations:

'As a church,' Dylan explained, 'we can ask other churches if they want to help us with [donating money], but sometimes it is useful if there is an external foundation, because there are still people who would rather not donate to a church, which still is a threshold.'<sup>242</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

The purpose of the foundation thus illustrates how for the Isaiah Church, it was difficult to access material resources outside of the church network. In turn, this meant that they had to depend on the foundation to access funds from sources outside of the network.

Unfortunately, the foundation's financial capacities were also low. According to the foundation's Current Policy-Plan for 2022-2023, 'the assets of the Foundation are not big,' and they 'are happy when [they] can pay the necessary costs every year.'<sup>243</sup> Similarly, the Budget Report of 2021/2022 stated that the foundation would like to keep assisting refugees but that 'given the lack of ample financial resources, this is often not possible.'<sup>244</sup> Both documents also describe a need for finding new sources for financial donations.<sup>245</sup> Since the Isaiah Church relied on the foundation to gain money from external sources, the foundation's financial struggles indicate that the Isaiah Church was becoming even more dependent on the church network for funding. This illustrates that for the Isaiah Church, having a network built on shared religion was crucial for accessing material resources.

The importance of the church network was also reflected in how the church accessed human resources. This was because the volunteers at the church were found through this network. Irene is a good example of this as she started volunteering after attending a church service within the network that asked for volunteers.<sup>246</sup> Additionally, as was explained in the Contextual Background chapter, the church experienced high thresholds with people outside of the church community. It can therefore be inferred that for the Isaiah Church, finding volunteers outside of the church was considered a difficult task. It is also possible that the church did not look for volunteers outside of the church community, as the volunteers never referenced to wanting to achieve this. However, in both cases it implies that staff could only be accessed through church networks and religious communities stemming from shared religion. Nevertheless, the previous section indicated that there were still a lot of churchgoers who did not help with refugee aid. This suggests that similarly to the influence of religiously-framed values, the significance of shared religion was impacted by thresholds, both internally between churchgoers and refugees, as well as externally, between the church and non-churchgoers.

Moreover, in terms of accessing human capital, the Isaiah Church helped refugees with accessing schooling and legal procedures. For education, Dylan explained that the Isaiah

---

<sup>243</sup> *Actueel Beleidsplan 2022-2023*, downloaded from the Isaiah Foundation's website.

<sup>244</sup> *Verslag 2021/Begroting 2022*, downloaded from the Isaiah Foundation's website.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*; *Actueel Beleidsplan 2022-2023*.

<sup>246</sup> Irene, Interview.

Church had communicated with the ASC about allowing refugee families to send their children to a Protestant school in another village. However, the communication with the ASC had been problematic because the ASC did not want the children to attend that school.<sup>247</sup> In like manner, volunteers implied that there were problems with the IND when it came to assessing a refugee's faith. Matthijs was adamant about this, discussing how he believed that the 'IND somehow also suspects the church of having as many refugees as possible in the Netherlands, and would therefore rather not involve the church [in residence permit procedures].'<sup>248</sup> Nina further supported this premonition when jokingly saying 'sometimes I also think that the IND-it's as if they get a bonus if they reject someone. [They're] a little bit biased, negatively biased, dealing with conversions.'<sup>249</sup> Matthijs' and Nina's comments imply that the relationship between churches and the IND was not smooth. The problems experienced by the church throughout both cooperations suggest that it was often challenging to work with institutions of different faiths in order to help refugees access human capital. In regards to accessing both material and human resources, the findings have thus revealed that the church was heavily dependent on the church networks.

It is interesting to compare this to the discussion on shared religion presented in Chapter 3. According to the discussion, shared religion was eventually deemed to be unimportant for accessing material and human resources because FBOs often collaborated with networks and organisations that were not dependent on shared religion. However, within the case-study findings, the volunteers' experiences indicated that shared religion was essential because they could not access resources outside of their religious network. A reason for why there was a difference between the literature and the case-study could be because the Isaiah Church was hindered in its attempts to expand beyond the church network, even if it did want to expand. This offers an additional insight that was not discussed in Chapter 3: that religion can have a significant role, albeit a negative one. This can be concluded from the fact that it was the church's religious identity that prevented it from being able to seek out sources from outside the network.

Nevertheless, before moving on it is important to acknowledge that the Isaiah Church did manage to cooperate with religious organisations that were not GKV. As explained in Chapter 2.4, the church sometimes participated and organised events together with

---

<sup>247</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>248</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>249</sup> Nina, Interview.

interdenominational groups. When stating that the church could not cooperate with organisations that did not share the same faith, it could actually be more about being Christian in general versus being non-religious. This is because the people and groups that the Isaiah Church struggled to work with/collect funds from tended to be non-religious and were hesitant to collaborate because of the church being a church. Therefore, when discussing shared religion, this includes Christianity in general, and not only the GKV.

#### *5.2.2.2 Building Social Ties and Community on Shared Religion*

Another debate presented in the Analytical Framework chapter was about the importance of shared religion for creating social connections. After analysing the different literature, it was eventually settled that social resources were not accessed through shared religion but rather through shared interactions. In addition, whether or not these interactions required shared religion depended on the context. Since the findings from the interviews demonstrated that shared religion did play a role in networking, it is intriguing to analyse if this was also the case for fostering social connections and community-building.

As aforementioned, the Isaiah Church was keen on aiding with social integration. It therefore organised a lot of activities with the hopes of socialising and increasing interactions. To better understand how shared religion may have influenced this, it is good to look at whether or not the activities were limited to only Christians, and from the interviews it was found that this was not the case. For example, Nina commented on how there were Muslims joining Bible studies.<sup>250</sup> Moreover, another example was Dylan's enthusiasm about having Muslims join Christmas celebrations. Whilst describing a communal Christmas event between the local churches, Dylan mentioned that there had been many people from the ASC who attended. Some of these, he enthusiastically pointed out, were Muslim.<sup>251</sup> His excitement implied that not only were non-Christians welcome to join, it was considered to be a positive scenario.

In addition, since it was a positive scenario, the volunteers also explained how they tried to overcome the threshold between non-churchgoers and churchgoers by restricting religious elements from some activities. For instance, Dylan wanted to use the foundation for social

---

<sup>250</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>251</sup> Dylan, Interview.

events as a way of lowering the social thresholds.<sup>252</sup> He also brought up a similar point when talking about limiting religious elements in social events in general, explaining that aside from having a prayer and occasionally reading a Bible passage ‘it [religion] is restricted to this, and is other than that a social meeting.’<sup>253</sup> Irene also talked about how she did not want to use religious texts in her Dutch lessons, stating that ‘Dutch lessons shouldn’t become disguised evangelism-if you keep using churchly examples, you repel non-religious people.’<sup>254</sup> These examples show the volunteers’ attempts at including everyone, suggesting that they did not intend to limit activities to purely people of the same faith. On the contrary, it even became a goal to make interactions easier between Christians and people who were not Christian.

Nonetheless, the interviews also revealed that in most cases, the people who were involved in the activities still had ties to Christianity. Following Nina’s previous comment, she then explained that Muslim refugees were often looking to build a relationship with Christ.<sup>255</sup> In addition, Dylan expressed that the church was not able to re-create such attendance at more recent celebrations, and said that ‘there are few Muslims who come to us in the church services.’<sup>256</sup> Likewise, for Irene’s Dutch lessons, she said most attendees were the same refugees who came to the church.<sup>257</sup> Therefore, despite the church being seemingly open to non-Christians joining activities, those who participated tended to be Christians. This suggests that the creation of social ties at the church was still limited to people of the same faith, because those were the only people with whom to interact.

A question that arises from this is hence why this was the case, when being Christian was clearly not a prerequisite for joining the church’s activities. The answer to this points towards the church’s context, with thresholds being a direct example of this. For instance, in order to have more people outside of the church join social events (both locals and refugees), Dylan mentioned using the foundation to host these, as the foundation had already been used to access material resources from outside the church. However, he explained that outsiders still did not join ‘because those meals that we had were still done in a church building because

---

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Irene, Email.

<sup>255</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>256</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>257</sup> Irene, Email.

[...] it was easier to organise, but then you still find yourself within church walls.’<sup>258</sup>

Likewise, when explaining how the church, along with other local churches, was going to organise a communal church-sermon under an open-tent, Dylan described how they saw the tent-location as a way to ‘[try] to lower the threshold- to also invite people who otherwise would not go to church.’<sup>259</sup> For Dylan, there was thus a threshold associated with the church that prevented non-churchgoers from joining. In a parallel manner, when Irene described that it was mostly the church refugees who joined her Dutch classes, she said that ‘going to a small room in the church is in practice, of course, quite a threshold. For example, for Muslims.’<sup>260</sup> The reason for why the volunteers could not connect beyond the church walls was hence because of external factors: the thresholds experienced by non-Christians.

Following through, the reason for why the majority of refugees who did go to the church were engaged in Christianity was thus because the Isaiah Church was a Christian Church. As Irene said, ‘the people who come to us at the church are of course Christians, otherwise they wouldn’t come to the church.’<sup>261</sup> Similarly, when reflecting on there not being many Muslim refugees joining the church, Dylan said that ‘this is of course, well, that’s a bit obvious,’<sup>262</sup> meaning that it was to be expected that Muslims would not join the church. Mohsin’s interview also gives evidence for this, as he explained that he joined the Isaiah Church because as a Christian, he wanted to join a church. It was once he had joined the church that he received further help from them.<sup>263</sup> Therefore, because of the context in which mostly Christian refugees joined the church and in which outsiders of the church and Muslim refugees wanted limited interactions, most interactions were shared between Christians. As a result, socialising and community-building hence occurred through shared religion.

What can be seen from these examples is that the context of the Isaiah Church had a significant influence on the social resources available for building connections. An intriguing remark that can be made about this is that the context was linked to the church’s limited capacities: thresholds with non-churchgoers limited how the church could network, and the religiosity of the refugees limited who joined the church. It was thus due to the context that there was a difference between how the volunteers envisioned the creation of social ties

---

<sup>258</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Irene, Email.

<sup>261</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>262</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>263</sup> Mohsin, Interview.

versus how they actually experienced it. From this, it can therefore be inferred that the Isaiah Church relied on shared religion for accessing resources because of its limited capacities. To link this back to Chapter 3.2, a difference between the case-study's findings and the existing literature is that contrary to the Isaiah Church, the majority of the existing literature implied that limited capacities were the reason for why FBOs collaborated with organisations with different beliefs. As a result, shared religion was not deemed significant. However, for the Isaiah Church, shared religion became essential *because* of the limited capacities. It would hence be interesting for future research to explore these opposing findings by looking into the relationship between capacity and the dependence on shared religion.

Overall, this section has investigated how shared religion could play a role in accessing resources, and it was discovered that according to the volunteers' experiences, it played a significant role, even if they had not intended for it to do so. This was because despite the church wanting to expand its network and shared religion not being a prerequisite for accessing social resources, the church's limited capacities resulted in the church becoming almost entirely reliant on connections based on shared religion. What these findings reveal is that in addition to shared religions, the context of the church also had a significant influence on resource collection.

### 5.3 How Religion Influenced the Church's Activities

Chapter 3.3 discussed how FBOs organised different types of activities, and how religion may have played a role in them. However, the literature on the matter was divisive, with some findings indicating that religion played a role and others stating that FBOs used secular activities. Additionally, Kraft and Ager and Ager argued that there was a perceived distinction between religious and non-religious refugee aid based on Western secular standards. This meant that when authors interpreted activities as secular, they may not have perceived them in the same way as they were experienced by those involved. Since the Isaiah Church offered a wide range of activities, this section will thus analyse how religion influenced these and how the volunteers made distinctions between the types of help offered.

### 5.3.1 Perceived Distinctions Between Religious and Non-religious Activities

Irene's description of the church's activities reflects the distinction made by the volunteers: 'some activities are really for belief and others are indeed for integration, because that is also very important.'<sup>264</sup> The activities that were for belief can be listed as Sunday church services, Bible studies, baptism catechism, and religious celebrations. Although not explicitly stated, these activities were named by the volunteers when talking about how they helped the refugees with their religion. For example Dylan and Irene both referred to Bible studies and baptism catechism as activities organised in response to the refugees' requests for help with religion.<sup>265</sup> Furthermore, the activities for integration included Dutch classes, help with legal matters and witness-letters, offering shelter, and social events. Examples for these can be found from Irene and Nina, with Irene stating that 'language activities are of course for integration,'<sup>266</sup> and Nina referring to contacting lawyers and socialising over coffee/communal meals when asked about which activities were hosted for integration.<sup>267</sup> For the volunteers, there was thus a distinction between the two types of help offered by the church: help with religion and help with integration.

Additionally, based on Irene and Dylan's interviews, it can be inferred that this distinction was further distinguished into religious activities for religious needs and activities without religion for integration. For instance, the discussion on shared religion in the previous section indicated that Dylan wanted to limit certain religious elements within social activities, such as communal meals. In like manner, Irene did not want there to be religious aspects to her Dutch lessons because these classes 'are of course primarily about Dutch lessons.'<sup>268</sup> The activities that were categorised by Irene and Dylan as being for integration needs were thus also seen as activities that should not include religious elements.

However, when analysing why they wanted to limit the role of religion for these activities, it becomes possible to argue that the volunteers' distinction was not based on pre-conceived notions of secularity, as was suggested in Chapter 3.3. Instead, the reason for limiting the influence of religion was because they wanted to maintain a low threshold for people to join. As discussed in Chapter 2.4, the volunteers believed that it was difficult to create social ties between refugees and non-churchgoers because the threshold to joining

---

<sup>264</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid; Dylan, Interview.

<sup>266</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>267</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>268</sup> Irene, Interview.

church activities was too high. By limiting religion, especially during events aimed at social integration, the volunteers hence hoped to make the activities more accessible.

Moreover, an interesting finding from the case-study was that in practice, these distinctions were not always experienced as strictly. For instance, although the church offered activities specifically for integration, it did not mean that its other activities were only limited to religious assistance. On the contrary, the volunteers mentioned on multiple occasions that religious activities were great for refugees to socialise. When asked if there was a social aspect to Bible studies and church sermons, Matthijs mentioned that ‘yes, of course,’ and explained how refugees found it ‘very pleasant do join [them] at the church’, especially because as a smaller church, there was ‘more personal contact.’<sup>269</sup> Likewise, Dylan commented on how ‘at all the churchly activities there’s a social element, even at Bible study. In the way that you come together, especially for Bible study, then you’re still sitting there, as a form of encounter.’<sup>270</sup> For Nina, the same perspective was reflected in her anecdote on how the prayer points during Bible studies and baptism catechism enabled refugees to relate to each other’s traumatic experiences. These moments, she explained, ‘bonded them,’ because refugees were able to ‘sympathise with each other.’<sup>271</sup> Similarly, religious celebrations and festivities were also examples of this. Dylan described how before covid, there had been a Christmas celebration which consisted of having a one-hour long Christmas service followed by a shared meal. Nonetheless, Dylan also discussed how aside from being a religious festivity, there was also an important social element to it, as the church had invited everyone. He concluded by saying that during these celebrations, the religious and social aspects were ‘very connected to each other,’<sup>272</sup> demonstrating how religious activities could be used to encourage the creation of social ties. Another findings was that religious activities could also help with language needs. On multiple occasions, Mohsin referred to how going to church, such as for church services or Bible study, was a way for him to practice his Dutch. This was because these activities offered him the social opportunities to listen to and speak with others.<sup>273</sup> Therefore, despite certain activities being targeted towards assisting refugees with religious needs, they were also able to cater towards integration needs. In turn, this illustrates

---

<sup>269</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>270</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>271</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>272</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>273</sup> Mohsin, Interview.

how the volunteers perceived the different religious and integration elements to be intertwined throughout the range of activities offered.

In addition, the opposite phenomena of religious elements being experienced in integration services was also mentioned by the volunteers, despite their earlier claims about wanting to limit this. The most obvious example of this was through the religiosity of the volunteers. For instance, as aforementioned, Irene made it clear on several occasions that she wanted to restrict the presence of religion in her Dutch classes. However, after being asked if her faith influenced her work, she said religion ‘is not the main part but it is always in the back of your head.’<sup>274</sup> This was because she relied on her faith to find patience, similarly to how the other volunteers also attributed their faith to their perseverance. It is thus possible that religion did play a role in how volunteers were able to offer help, even if it was not at the forefront of the integration activities.

Furthermore, social meals are another example. As aforementioned, social meals started with a prayer and sometimes even with Bible passages. Despite the volunteers saying this was limited, it still shows that there were religious aspects to integration activities. Additionally, when asked about their experiences with religion and social events, Dylan and Matthijs both commented on how social and religious aspects were closely related. Dylan said that the two did ‘indeed sometimes run through each other,’<sup>275</sup> and Matthijs reflected on how religion was ‘very speckled’ throughout the different services offered, and that it would be ‘unthinkable without.’<sup>276</sup> The connection that Matthijs and Dylan saw between religious and social aspects in activities therefore implies that despite having different purposes, the volunteers experienced religion within all the services.

Nonetheless, these observations imply that religion exists in activities only through the staff’s own religiosity. This was an argument made by Lant and Nawyn in Chapter 3.3, and was criticised for framing the actual services as either secular or religious based on pre-conceived Western notions. It thus still remains to be seen if religion in integration activities was only limited to the volunteers’ own religiosity or if religion could also exist in these “secular” activities in other ways. Fortunately, further findings from the interviews provided a deeper insight into this. One of these is the example of writing witness-letters for the residence-permits. For these, volunteers had to observe and assess the refugees’ religiosity in

---

<sup>274</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>275</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>276</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

order to argue in their favour at the IND. In this example, there were religious elements in integration aid that were not limited to the staffs' own religious motivations. Moreover, this was also apparent within the context of Dutch lessons. Answering a question about where she perceived religion to be present in integration activities, Nina made the connection clear, saying that:

'learning Dutch also has to do with being able to better understand what is said in the church and what is being preached [...] so I do think that Dutch lessons play a clear task function in this.'<sup>277</sup>

In this case, the religious element of the integration activity was that the activity was perceived to be helpful for understanding religious matters, hence helping refugees with religion as well. Similarly to the example about the letters, the religious elements were not limited to the volunteers' personal religiosities, instead expanding to the religiosity and religious needs of the refugees. Therefore, when religion was present within integration activities, it was not always through the volunteers themselves.

### 5.3.2 How Distinctions Differed in Practice

The findings have demonstrated that although the volunteers visualised a distinction between religious activities for religious needs and non-religious activities for integration needs, they did not experience it as strongly in practice. Instead, religious activities could help with social integration, integration activities could help with religion, with religious and social elements being intertwined throughout all the activities. A potential reason for this difference could have to do with the volunteers' own religiosities. As was discussed in the section on motivation, Christianity was a core part of Nina and Irene's lives. It was therefore suggested that this was the reason for why they framed their motivations within their religion. In addition, whilst discussing how religious values were found back in refugee aid, Nina shared examples of how God's Word should be referred to in all situations in life.<sup>278</sup> From this, it can be argued that the same applied to the activities as for their motivation, namely, that the volunteers' experiences with the activities were also framed within their Christianity. In this case, religion was present across the different activities because it was also consistently present in the volunteers' daily lives. It can hence be inferred that although the volunteers

---

<sup>277</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

intended for there to be a distinction between religious activities for religion and non-religious activities for integration, these distinctions became blurred because religion was already incorporated into other aspects of their lives. Another reason for this difference could be because as aforementioned, the desire to have distinctions was to lower external thresholds for other people, suggesting that for their own experiences within the activities, the distinction may not have been as important.

Furthermore, the findings from this section also indicated that the perceived role of religion in activities varied per context, hence supporting Fountain and Petersen's argument that religion is non-static. According to the volunteers, the activities at the Isaiah Church could meet both religious and integration needs at the same time, suggesting that they were neither purely religious nor purely non-religious. Irene's case with her Dutch classes is a good example of this, as she did not want religion to play a role in them but still implied that religion was significant to the classes via her patience. Religion hence did not play a role in content, but did in teaching. Similarly, in Nina's example, it can be argued that non-Christian refugees who learn Dutch would not consider the Dutch lessons as an opportunity to improve their faith. The relation between religion and language comprehension would thus depend on the religiosity of the refugees. The activities should therefore perhaps not be looked at in terms of "one or the other", but rather as being both, with the role of religion in them depending per situation and on whom is being asked.

Moreover, it is not only a matter of religion playing a role in different places for different people. The findings also showed that the role of religion could shift throughout activities. For example, during the social meals or religious celebrations, religion was involved at the start during the prayers. However, as the meals continued, the focus shifted towards socialising. Likewise, during church sermons, the attention was on God, but before and after the sermons, there were opportunities for people to interact, making the events social. Therefore, the findings from the interviews have shown that even for the volunteers themselves, the distinctions between religious activities and non-religious activities were not clear cut and varied depending on time and on who was being asked/was involved.

### 5.3.3 Concluding Remarks on Religious and non-Religious Activities

In conclusion, this section has discussed how the Isaiah Church hosted different activities for refugees. These ranged from activities for religious needs, to activities for integration needs. Initially, the volunteers perceived there to be a distinction between these types of activities based on the desire to lower thresholds, and hence expressed that integration activities

should not contain religious elements. Nonetheless, as they spoke more about the activities and their faith, the volunteers indicated that they actually perceived religion to be present in all the activities. As a result, distinctions between religious and non-religious activities were experienced as being blurred, with a potential reason for this being how the importance of religion to the volunteers' daily lives made it harder for them to differentiate. The observations from this section can be used to support Fountain and Petersen, as they demonstrated how the division between religious and non-religious activities is not static and should therefore not be analysed through Western notions of the secular as these do not reflect the real perceptions and experiences of the volunteers.

#### 5.4 The Religious Identity of Refugees

The analytical framework focused mainly on the role of religion from the side that was providing the help. Nonetheless, throughout the interviews, another role was identified which instead came from the side of those receiving the help. Although this may not seem relevant to the research question, a deeper analysis of the findings revealed that it actually was as the refugees' faith influenced the volunteers' experiences with refugee aid. Additionally, this influence proved to be significant to the volunteers as it was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Therefore, this section will investigate how the religious identities of the refugees were an example of religion playing a role in refugee aid on behalf of the volunteers.

##### 5.4.1 Refugees Faking their Christianity

As previously mentioned, the Isaiah Church helped refugees with their residence-permits by acting as witnesses to their religiosity. This was because refugees could obtain residence-permits on the basis of religious persecution if they could prove their faith to the IND. As a result, the topic of refugees being real or fake Christians was often mentioned during the interviews. For instance, when asked if the refugees who received assistance were mostly Christian, Irene responded that this was indeed the case and explained that occasionally, the refugees who joined were actually faking their Christianity.<sup>279</sup> She described that 'people say that they are Christians but they are not really, it's not in their hearts, and then they sometimes get a residence permit and then after that they don't go to church anymore.'<sup>280</sup> Likewise, Nina

---

<sup>279</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

answered that there were people ‘who didn’t really do it [convert] out of religious convictions [but that it] had more to do with their getting a residence permit than with their heart.’<sup>281</sup> Fake conversions were also a problem at Matthijs’ church, who recalled how it could be hurtful for volunteers to feel used for a residence-permit.<sup>282</sup>

The volunteers therefore tried to find ways to determine the refugees’ sincerity. For example, whilst describing what should be written in the witness-letters, Irene said that the content ‘consists of what you see how they behave at Bible study.’<sup>283</sup> This was also a method used by Dylan before deciding if a refugee could be baptised. He explained that he would ask other volunteers about their impressions of the refugees based on the contact they had with them during the different activities.<sup>284</sup> Dylan and Irene’s descriptions hence imply that church activities also served as opportunities to observe the refugees’ sincerity. In turn, this suggests that the issue of fake conversions was prevalent for them across different facets of refugee aid.

Moreover, in both Dylan and Matthijs’ interviews, this concern also further translated into baptising refugees. As Matthijs said, it could be possible that ‘a fiery passion to be baptised, for the correct reasons, [...] could of course have some influence for what you say in a witness statement.’<sup>285</sup> For this reason, it was also necessary to know if refugee baptisms were genuine. Dylan thus recounted that if refugees wanted to be baptised at the Isaiah Church, they would first need to pass a baptism-conversation with Dylan and the church council.<sup>286</sup> They would also need to follow a baptism trajectory which consisted of learning about Christianity and being involved in church activities.<sup>287</sup> Baptism was hence also used as a way to identify if refugees were using their faith as a means to acquire a residence permit.

These examples reveal that determining the genuineness of a refugee’s faith played an integral role in how the volunteers provided refugee aid. This was not only because acting as witnesses was a form of aid, but also because the other activities were used for making observations for this.

---

<sup>281</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>282</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>283</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>284</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>285</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>286</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

#### *5.4.1.1 The Problematic Side of Fake Conversions*

Not only could it be hurtful to the volunteers if refugees lied about their religion, it was also problematic because it impacted the church's refugee aid. For instance, Irene mentioned that 'it is in part due to this [refugees faking their religion for a permit] that procedures here are strict [...] so there might be an individual who [pretends] to be Christian and that's why the organisation, the IND, deals with all Christians very sternly.'<sup>288</sup> This impacted the church because helping refugees getting a residence-permit was a form of refugee aid. Failing to do so thus meant they could not help as much as they would like to.

Additionally, fake conversions also affected the church's position in residence-permit procedures. Dylan's discussion on baptism can be used as an explanation for this. He discussed how different churches baptised people at different speeds. The Isaiah Church, however, was known to be very strict about its baptism-trajectory and was hence viewed as more trustworthy in terms of who it allowed to be baptised. According to Dylan, this therefore meant that the IND knew that if a refugee was baptised at the Isaiah Church, they were genuine about being Christian.<sup>289</sup> Nonetheless, if the Isaiah Church were to become less strict, this reputation could dissolve. Although this may not be a problem currently, comments made by Matthijs and Nina imply that this could have serious consequences. As discussed in the section on shared religion and networking, it was mentioned how the two believed that the IND held a mistrust towards the church, and that as a result, it was sometimes difficult to cooperate. According to their theories, it thus suggests that it is important to ensure that witnessing work is done accurately, as it would otherwise worsen relations with the IND. In turn, this could impact the church's ability to help refugees acquiring residence-permits.

Determining a refugee's religious convictions was therefore a core element of the volunteers' experiences with refugee aid because failing to do so accurately could have serious repercussions for the church's refugee aid.

#### *5.4.2 The Implications of the Refugees' Religiosity*

The discussion presented in this section covered the problems related to refugees faking being Christian. However, the question remains if it mattered to the volunteers if a refugee was Christian, as long as they were being genuine about it. It was previously mentioned that the volunteers did not seem to mind if a refugee was Christian or not. However, this did not

---

<sup>288</sup> Irene, Interview.

<sup>289</sup> Dylan, Interview.

reveal anything on whether or not being a Christian refugee influenced how the volunteers provided help in comparison to non-Christian refugees. Since this was often a stereotype attributed to churches, this section will thus explore this in greater depth.

#### *5.4.2.1 The Relevance of Christianity for Receiving Help*

As established in the discussion on shared religion, the volunteers did not mind if refugees were Christian or not. Nonetheless, most of the help was still directed towards Christian refugees. This was because the majority of the refugees who joined the Isaiah Church were either already Christian or interested in becoming Christian. From this, one can see that the religiosity of refugees did play a role in who received help, not because of conditions set by the church, but rather because it influenced who chose to attend the church.

In addition, further findings revealed that being Christian also influenced how a refugee received help from the volunteers once at the church, even if the volunteers may not have intended for this to happen. Matthijs' interview provided useful insights into this. When discussing stereotypes about churches only helping refugees who convert, Matthijs reflected on whether or not he would help refugees during legal procedures if they did not have a relationship with Christ.<sup>290</sup> He then concluded that helping refugees was not necessarily about them being Christian, but rather about the fact that his church was small and did not have a high capacity to help. As a result, his church could not help everyone and thus only helped people who joined the church. He explained that this was because 'you go a lot further [for people who participate frequently], also for material help, than people that go to Bible Study once in a while.'<sup>291</sup> Additionally, when discussing if being baptised influenced the help refugees received, Matthijs initially said that it should not. However, upon further consideration, he stated that he actually did believe it would make a difference because once a refugee is baptised:

'[they] really get taken in by a community, and that therefore also means that we as community members really have a duty to help that person when they need it, and that's a more solid duty than the general duty to help people in need, because [they] are a brother or sister.'<sup>292</sup>

---

<sup>290</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

Dylan made a similar comment when talking about the Isaiah Church's motivations, as he said that it 'felt like a calling and all,' and that '[they wanted] to help [their] brothers and sisters.'<sup>293</sup> In like manner to Matthijs, his answer implied that the help offered was influenced by a sense of familiarity and duty experienced amongst Christian members.

Both of these examples hence seem to indicate that contrary to the volunteers' expectations, in practice, being Christian did impact the help refugees received. This difference can be linked to the role of shared religion, because it was due to the shared religion and shared participation in religious activities that stronger social ties were created. In turn, it was because of these ties that the Isaiah Church and Matthijs' church were more inclined to offer help, especially when capacities were limited. Therefore, using Matthijs' remarks, it becomes possible to see that the religiosity of refugees can have an impact on the degree to which they are helped, even if this is not initially the volunteers' intent.

#### *5.4.2.2 Conversions and Helping Refugees Find God*

Matthijs' observations raise another point of interest, which is conversion. Matthijs stated that although a refugee's faith should not matter, showing interest and engaging in church activities meant they were more likely to receive help.<sup>294</sup> This implies that although being a Christian is not a prerequisite for getting help, becoming more involved with Christianity can have a positive influence. In addition, a negative stereotype about FBOs is that they only offer help if the person receiving it converts.<sup>295</sup> The question is therefore if potential conversions also influenced who received help at the Isaiah Church. To answer this, it is useful to look at the volunteers' perspectives on conversion.

As part of the interview, the volunteers were asked about the stereotypes of churches pressuring refugees to convert. In most interviews, this question led to a discussion about conversion being a goal of helping refugees. Nina responded with 'winning souls, no, that actually doesn't really play a role.'<sup>296</sup> Dylan similarly stated that 'conversion is not our main goal,' and that 'even if people don't convert we also want to help them.'<sup>297</sup> In addition, Dylan also went as far as to explain that the Isaiah Church had to pay membership fees for all of its

---

<sup>293</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>294</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>295</sup> Lyck-Bowen, and Mark Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe," 33.

<sup>296</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>297</sup> Dylan, Interview.

church members.<sup>298</sup> Having more refugees converting would therefore become more expensive. Although he stated that this should not have an influence over who can join the church, his mentioning of it does support the fact that conversions were not his main aim as it would be financially impractical. Likewise, Irene commented on not wanting to use religious texts in Dutch lessons because the classes could not become ‘disguised evangelicalism,’ and because ‘you cannot impose belief.’<sup>299</sup>

Matthijs, on the other hand, was more insistent on conversion. He clearly stated that it would not be incorrect to think that the church wants to convert refugees, and that ‘that is the reason why [he gets] into the car and [goes] to the asylum seekers centre.’<sup>300</sup> One of his answers for what motivated to help also supports this, as his answer was to ‘serve Christ [...] and his missionary work.’<sup>301</sup> However, despite this being his main aim, Matthijs did say that whether or not a refugee was baptised-and hence converted- did not influence if he would help them.<sup>302</sup>

Moreover, despite initial claims that conversion was not important, references were made to bringing people closer to God. For example, after saying that conversion was not the main goal, Dylan added that ‘of course, we are also happy if people do find peace with the Lord, and yeah, we are not ashamed of that of course, we’re also happy about that.’<sup>303</sup> Additionally, Nina mentioned that one of her motivations to help refugees came from Matthew 28:20, which is in part about how ‘the Gospel is very important to pass on, and that the bringing to Christ means healing.’<sup>304</sup> Irene made a similar comment about the motivations of the Isaiah Church, mentioning that amongst other motivations, ‘trying of course to bring them [the refugees] to Jesus,’<sup>305</sup> was one reason for why the Isaiah Church helped. For the volunteers, their contribution to refugee aid thus did include missionary elements, even if conversion was not the main aim. Yet when analysing the wording used by Irene, Nina, and Dylan in their descriptions of missionary work, it can be seen that they were referring to enhancing relationships with Christ, and not to conversion per se. The same can be seen for Matthijs, who expressed that it was less about converting, and more about ‘letting them grow

---

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Irene, Email.

<sup>300</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Dylan, Interview.

<sup>304</sup> Nina, Interview.

<sup>305</sup> Irene, Interview.

in their relation with Christ.<sup>306</sup> From this, it can be inferred that conversion was not a prerequisite for receiving help. Instead, getting people in touch with Christ was seen as a form of help itself. It can thus be concluded that the volunteers at the Isaiah Church did not expect refugees to convert in exchange for helping them.

#### 5.4.4 Concluding Observations

This section has discussed how the religious identity of refugees influenced how the church and its volunteers experienced refugee aid. Initially, the volunteers indicated that the refugees' religiosities should not impact their work. Nonetheless, from the findings it was discovered that in practice, it did have an important influence on the help provided. One way was through determining the sincerity of a refugee's faith, as this both affected the volunteers' participation in different activities as well as impacting the church's ability to continue their legal assistance. The other way was through the connection between Christian refugees and the help they received. This connection was present both in the sense that refugees who were Christian were more inclined to go to the church for help, and in the sense that Christian refugees tended to receive more help because of their connections with the volunteers at the church. Lastly, it was also found that the volunteers wanted to help bring refugees closer to God, and that they therefore also considered part of refugee aid to include assisting refugees in their relationships with God. From these examples, it can therefore be concluded that the volunteers experienced religion to play a role in their refugee aid through the religious identities of the refugees.

#### 5.5 Summary and Reflections on the Findings and Discussion Chapter

Having examined the case-study findings, this section will present a summary of what has been discussed, reflecting on the implications of the findings and how they can contribute within the field of FBO studies.

Through the analysis of the findings, it was possible to infer that religion played a prominent role for the volunteers. This was especially prevalent during the discussions on motivation, where it was revealed that the interviewees volunteered as a result of the duties they experienced as followers of God. Additionally, by doing so, the volunteers indicated that

---

<sup>306</sup> Matthijs, Interview.

they found it difficult to separate their religion from their motivations, with Matthijs even stating that he would not have volunteered if it were not for his relationship with God. Religion was hence a core ingredient to the volunteers' reasons for helping.

The difficulties of separating their faith from their work was also reflected in how the volunteers experienced the activities organised for refugees. Although they originally mentioned that there was a distinction between religious activities for religious needs and non-religious activities for integration needs, a deeper look into the interviews uncovered that the volunteers themselves did perceive religion to be interlaced throughout all the activities, regardless of their purpose. The given reason for this was because religion already played an essential role in the volunteers' daily lives, so it thus also played a large role in their refugee aid.

Additionally, another role of religion according to the framework was in relation to accessing resources. Nevertheless, when it came to understanding how this role was perceived and experienced by the volunteers, the findings were less clear. For example, where the existing literature identified religiously-framed values as being useful for accessing resources, the responses from the interviews indicated that this was more limited within the Isaiah Church. In terms of accessing human resources, religiously-framed values did not appear to have a significant effect other than for the interviewees' own motivations. In addition, although it was argued that donations were a way of enacting religiously-framed values without having to overcome high thresholds, this was merely an inference made without having been able to further enquire why some churchgoers chose to only donate. In a similar fashion, when it came to social resources, the volunteers expressed being motivated to help refugees socially, however they never clarified if this was related to their religious motivation. The only indication that religiously-framed values could have influenced social resources was through the church's mission statements on its website and through the assumption that since God's Word included being kind to strangers, it could be interpreted as religious motivation for community-building. Therefore, although religiously-framed values may have had some impact on resource collection, the volunteers themselves did not attribute great significance to this role. Likewise, perceptions on the role of shared religion were also complex. Initially, the volunteers did not perceive shared religion to be necessary for accessing resources especially in terms of social resources. Nonetheless, from their experiences it was seen that it did play a greater and more important role than intended. This was not because it was important to them personally, but rather because shared religion was one of the only ways through which resources could be accessed due to the church's context.

An unexpected finding from the research was that the volunteers also perceived religion to play an essential role through the religiosity of the refugees. Examples of this included how determining a refugee's faith was a key part of the volunteers' experiences with refugee aid, and how in practice, a refugee's religiosity could influence the help given by the volunteers. The volunteers also considered helping refugees grow closer to God as a form of assistance. The refugees' religious identities therefore influenced both how the volunteers provided help and how they experienced doing so.

Throughout the different subheadings, one can hence see the different ways through which the volunteers perceived and experienced the role of religion in the church's help for refugees.

### 5.5.1 Conceptualising Religion and Distinctions between Religious and Non-religious Elements of Refugee Aid

Part of the academic discourse on FBOs concerned itself with the problems associated with conceptualising religion, and the suggested solution to counter these was to focus on lived experiences. The aim of this thesis was thus to explore this by analysing the role of religion at the Isaiah Church. Through the analysis of the findings, it was found that when the volunteers talked about their religion and the influence it had on their work, they often referred to it in terms of following God's Word. What can be inferred from this is that the volunteers conceptualised religion in terms of their Christian identity as followers of God. Through this identity, the volunteers were hence able to experience religion across multiple facets of refugee aid, such as in their motivation and throughout the different activities. As a result, it can therefore be concluded that the way in which the role of religion and its significance was perceived and experienced by the volunteers was a consequence of how they conceptualised religion: through their Christian identity.

Furthermore, another topic of concern in the academic discourse was how distinctions were made between religion and the secular, and how these should also be analysed from lived perspectives. By examining how the volunteers talked about the role of religion, new insights could be gained into how this distinction was experienced in practice, albeit through the simpler distinction of "religious" and "non-religious" elements of refugee aid. For instance, the volunteers distinguished between religious activities for religious needs and non-religious activities for integration needs, with there being a conscious attempt at restricting the influence of religion in the latter. Nonetheless, the volunteers still described perceiving

religion to be present across the activities and that it was difficult to separate religion from the work they did. They therefore made a distinction between religious and non-religious parts of refugee aid, but at the same time experienced religion within all of the activities. A similar observation can be made, although in an opposite manner, when looking at whom attended the church. The volunteers said that the religious identity of refugees did not matter for who received help. In this case, there were no differentiations being made between Christians and non-Christians/non-religious refugees. However, in practice, the majority of community building was done with Christians, and refugees who were Christian were more likely to be helped. In this example, the volunteers did not want there to be a distinction but in reality still experienced one.

In both cases, what can be seen is that there were two levels of distinctions at play: the intended distinctions and the experienced distinctions. However, what is remarkable about this is that both of these distinctions could seemingly exist at the same time, with Irene's Dutch classes being a prime example of this. As discussed, in her classes, religion did not play a role in the lessons themselves but did for her teaching. The distinction of Dutch classes as a non-religious activity was still intact, whilst at the same time religion was still being experienced by Irene. Religion therefore both played and did not play a role in the activity, depending on who was asked and where one looked. The fact that the two levels of distinction could happen at the same time illustrates Fountain and Petersen's argument that religion fluctuates over time, existing in different places at the same time with different purposes. Their work can therefore also be used to understand why there were two levels of distinctions. The authors discussed how conceptualisations of religion differ across space and time because of the context,<sup>307</sup> and at the Isaiah Church this was also found to be the case, especially in regards to thresholds. For example, it was argued that the distinction made between activities stemmed from the volunteers trying to reduce thresholds. This leaves one to wonder if the activities would have been distinguished if there had not been the issue of thresholds. Likewise, when the volunteers did not intend for there to be a differentiation in who joined the church, the reality of this was different because of the thresholds for non-churchgoers, the church's limited capacities, and because of the religious identities of the refugees who joined. Both examples hence suggest that volunteers experienced different levels of distinctions because of external factors.

---

<sup>307</sup> Fountain and Petersen. "NGOs and Religion," 417 & 425.

Furthermore, the significance of religion in refugee aid was impacted by these distinctions. This was because they either restricted the influence of religion, as was the case for activities, or increased its relevance, as was the case for shared religion. Considering how external factors influenced the distinctions, it can therefore be inferred that they also influenced the role of religion. This is interesting because as argued by Lant and Nawyn, the religiosity of an FBO came from the staff's own religiosity and motivations. Although this was the case at the Isaiah Church since the role of religion was conceptualised through the volunteers' religious identities, the level of religiosity at the church was also impacted by external factors. What can be inferred from this is that how volunteers perceived and experienced religion to play a role at the church, and what this role consisted of for them, was not only determined by their own religiosity but also by external factors. As a result, this led to the volunteers experiencing the role of religion and its significance as frequently changing.

In summary, by approaching the case-study from Fountain and Petersen's perspectives on religion as a fluctuating phenomenon<sup>308</sup>, as well as from Fountain's suggestion of studying how distinctions are 'imagined and practiced',<sup>309</sup> this thesis' findings have shown how the role of religion and its significance was impacted by two components: the volunteers' own religious identities, and external factors. What is intriguing about these two components is that the distinctions experienced by the volunteers between religious and non-religious elements of refugee aid were a result of the two components combining. For instance, whether or not an activity was religious was impacted both by the volunteers' own religiosity and the external factors like the thresholds. Unfortunately, due the scope of the research and the limited sample size, this thesis was only able to investigate the role of religion through the religious identities of the volunteers. It would thus be interesting for future research to conduct in-depth research on the context of the FBO, especially in regards to the influence of external thresholds.

---

<sup>308</sup> Fountain and Petersen. "NGOs and Religion," 417 & 425.

<sup>309</sup> Fountain. "The Myth of Religious NGOs," 27.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis' purpose was to explore how volunteers perceived and experienced the role of religion in the Isaiah Church, basing the analysis on the lived experiences of the volunteers rather than on a priori Western-secular conceptualisations of religion. In order to investigate this, a case-study was done on the Isaiah Church and its refugee aid, with the data being collected through semi-structured interviews and online research on the church and its foundation. These findings were then examined within the analytical framework that was developed by the researcher via an analysis of existing literature. Using the framework's three subheadings (religion as source of motivation, religion for accessing resources, and religion as influencing activities), as well as the fourth subheading that emerged from the interview findings (the religious identity of refugees), the research revealed that religion played an essential role for the volunteers because they conceptualised it within their religious identities as followers of God. This demonstrated how perceptions and experiences of the role of religion was influenced by the volunteers' own religiosity.

In addition, by analysing how their religiosity also impacted the distinctions that the volunteers experienced between religious and non-religious elements of refugee aid, the findings showed that there was another component that influenced the role of religion, namely external factors. Since these impacted how the distinctions were experienced, they also impacted the importance attributed to the role of religion by the volunteers. From the research, it can thus be concluded that the volunteers perceived and experienced religion to play a significant role in the church's refugee aid and their participation within it. It can also be concluded that their perceptions and experiences of this role were influenced by both their own identities as followers of God, and by external factors from the church's context.

Moreover, the findings from this thesis also reflected the limitations of the research. A core finding was that the external context of the church impacted the volunteers' experiences with the role of religion. However, the research was done within a specific socio-political context that may not be reflective of other FBOs. This, as well as the fact that the chosen method was a case-study, means that the findings from this thesis cannot be generalised. Additionally, the scope of the thesis limited its ability to investigate the Isaiah Church's context in more details. This therefore leaves space for future research to delve deeper into the roles of religion and how external elements can affect these, especially in regards to the influence of thresholds. Lastly, the analysis of the findings revealed that the case-study results did not all fit within the framework, which resulted in the fourth subheading being added to

the discussion. This opens the question on if there might be even more roles of religion that were not taken into account within this research. This would hence also be an interesting point for future research to explore.

Overall, what can be seen through this thesis is that religion played a significant role in the volunteers' experiences with refugee aid, a role which varied depending on personal factors and external contexts. As a result, this therefore also influenced how volunteers experienced distinctions between religious and non-religious elements of refugee aid. By better understanding religion within the Isaiah Church's help, these insights can hopefully influence future literature to re-develop its comprehension of FBOs, so that FBOs can finally assist with refugee aid in a more optimised way.

## Bibliography

Ager, Alastair, and Joey Ager. "Challenging the Discourse on Religion, Secularism and Displacement," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question* ed. Luca Mavelli and Erin Wilson, 37-52. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

Ager, Alastair, and Joey Ager. "Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 456-472.

**As cited in** Kraft, Kathryn. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response: Lessons from Lebanese Evangelical Churches Providing Food Aid," *International Review of the Red Cross* 97, no. 897-898 (2015): 395-421. 404.

Ager, Alastair, and Joey Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Ager, Alastair, and Alison Strang. "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 166-191.

Allen, Ryan. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles of Religious Institutions for Refugees in a Non-Gateway Context." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 6 (2010): 1049-1068.

Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.

**As cited in** Fountain, Philip. "The Myth of Religious NGOs: Development Studies and the Return of Religion," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier, 9-30. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013. 13.

Ball, Colin, and Leith L. Dunn. "Non-Governmental Organisations: Guidelines for Good Policy and Practice," *The Commonwealth Foundation*, 1996.

**As cited in** Clarke, Matthew, and Vicki-Anne Ware. "Understanding Faith-based Organizations: How FBOs are Contrasted with NGOs in International Development Literature," *Progress in Development Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): 37-48. 40.

Bankston III, Carl L., and Min Zhou. "The Ethnic Church, Ethnic Identification, and the Social Adjustment of Vietnamese Adolescents," *Review of Religious Research* (1996): 18-37.

**As cited in** Allen, Ryan. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles of Religious Institutions for Refugees in a Non-Gateway Context," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 6 (2010): 1049-1068. 1052.

Beaumont, Justin, and Candice Dias. "Faith-based Organisations and Urban Social Justice in the Netherlands," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 99, no. 4 (2008): 382-392.

Bekkers, René, and Theo Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor? Explaining Denominational Differences in Charitable Giving and Volunteering in the Netherlands," *Review of Religious Research* (2008): 74-96.

Bielo, James S. *Anthropology of Religion: The Basics*. Routledge, 2015.

Clarke, Matthew, and Vicki-Anne Ware. "Understanding Faith-based Organizations: How FBOs are Contrasted with NGOs in International Development Literature," *Progress in Development Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): 37-48.

Czischke, Darinka, and Carla J. Huisman. "Integration Through Collaborative Housing? Dutch Starters and Refugees Forming Self-managing Communities in Amsterdam," *Urban Planning* 3, no. 4 (2018): 156-165.

Davidsson-Bremborg, Anna. "Interviewing," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* ed. Stausberg, Michael, and Steven Engler, 310-322. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Dragan, Irina-Maria, and Alexandru Isaic-Maniu. "Snowball Sampling Completion," *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2013).

Dzananovic, Dario. "Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations," in *Migration, the State and Faith-Based Organizations*. Brill Nijhoff, 2021.

Eby, Jessica, Erika Iverson, Jenifer Smyers, and Erol Kekic. "The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 586-605.

"Eind Volgend Jaar 75.500 Opvangplekken Nodig." [www.coa.nl](http://www.coa.nl), November 4, 2022, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/nieuws/eind-volgend-jaar-75500-opvangplekken-nodig>.

Entzinger, Han. "The Growing Gap Between Facts and Discourse on Immigrant Integration in the Netherlands," *Identities* 21, no. 6 (2014): 693-707.

Entzinger, Han. "The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands," in *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-states* ed. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska, 59-86. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Fountain, Philip. "The Myth of Religious NGOs: Development Studies and the Return of Religion," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier, 9-30. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013.

Fountain, Philp, and Marie J. Petersen. "NGOs and Religion: Instrumentalisation and its Discontents," in *Handbook of Research on NGOS* ed. Aynsley Kellow & Hannah Murphy-Gregory, 404-432. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018.

Foley, Michael W., and Dean R. Hoge. *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Form Our Newest Citizens*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

**As cited in** Allen, Ryan. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles of Religious Institutions for Refugees in a Non-Gateway Context," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 6 (2010): 1049-1068. 1052.

“GKV.” Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt), accessed April 7, 2023, <https://www.gkv.nl/>.

Greeley, Andrew. "Protestant and Catholic: Is the Analogical Imagination Extinct?" *American Sociological Review* 54: 485-502. 486.

**As cited in** Menjívar, Cecilia. "Religious Institutions and Transnationalism: A Case Study of Catholic and Evangelical Salvadoran Immigrants," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (1999): 589-612. 600.

Green, M. "Religion and Development: Exploring Relationships in Development Paradigms in Tanzania," Unpublished Conference Paper Presented at the Religions and Development Conference, University of Birmingham, UK. 2010.

**As cited in** Fountain, Philip. "The Myth of Religious NGOs: Development Studies and the Return of Religion," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier, 9-30. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013. 27.

IOM "About Migration." International Organization for Migration, accessed April 7, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/about-migration>.

Kartas, Moncef, and Kalinga T. Silva. "Reflections on the Role of Religion and Faith in Development Discourse and Practice," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier, 209-219. Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2013.

Kešić, Josip, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. "The Nation Under Threat: Secularist, Racial and Populist Nativism in the Netherlands," *Patterns of prejudice* 53, no. 5 (2019): 441-463.

Kirmani, Nida, and Ajaz Ahmed Khan. "Does Faith matter: An Examination of Islamic Relief's work with Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2008): 41-50.

Kohlbacher, Josef. "Steps on the Way to Social Integration," in *From Destination to Integration—Afghan, Syrian and Iraqi Refugees in Vienna*, ed. Josef Kohlbacher and Leonardo Schiocchet, 167-193. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2017.

**As cited in** Buber-Ennsner, Isabella, Anne Goujon, Judith Kohlenberger, and Bernhard Rengs. "Multi-layered Roles of Religion Among Refugees Arriving in Austria Around 2015," *Religions* 9, no. 5 (2018): 154. 11.

"Komende Jaren Grote Toename Aantal Asielzoekers Verwacht." NOS.nl - Nieuws, Sport en Evenementen. NOS Nieuws, April 12, 2023. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2471187-komende-jaren-grote-toename-aantal-asielzoekers-verwacht>.

Korac, Maja. "Integration and How We Facilitate it: A Comparative Study of the Settlement Experiences of Refugees in Italy and the Netherlands," *Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2003): 51-68.

Kortmann, Matthias. "Asking Those Concerned: How Muslim Migrant Organisations Define Integration. A German-Dutch Comparison," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 16 (2015): 1057-1080.

Kraft, Kathryn. "Faith and Impartiality in Humanitarian Response: Lessons from Lebanese Evangelical Churches Providing Food Aid," *International Review of the Red Cross* 97, no. 897-898 (2015): 395-421.

Lant, Bethan. "Praxis Community Projects: a Secular Organization? Exploring the Boundaries between Religious and Secular Migration Support," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*, ed. Luca Mavelli & Erin K. Wilson, 53-60. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

Lehmann, Karsten. "Religiously Affiliated NGOs," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations* ed. Thomas Davies, 397-412. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Lyck-Bowen, Majbritt, and Mark Owen. "A Multi-religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe: A Preliminary Examination of Potential Benefits of Multi-religious Cooperation on the Integration of Migrants," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 1 (2019): 21-41.

Menjívar, Cecilia. "Religious Institutions and Transnationalism: A Case Study of Catholic and Evangelical Salvadoran Immigrants," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (1999): 589-612.

Mitchell, Katharyne. "Freedom, Faith, and Humanitarian Governance: The Spatial Politics of Church Asylum in Europe." *Space and Polity* 21, no. 3 (2017): 269-288.

Mourier, Elliott. "Religion as a Social Substitute for the State: Faith-Based Social Action in Twenty-First-Century Brazil," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier, 79-94. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013.

**As cited** in Kartas, Moncef, & Kalinga T. Silva. "Reflections on the Role of Religion and Faith in Development Discourse and Practice," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier, 209-219. Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2013. 217.

Moyer, James, James Ambrose, Jane Ritchie, and Jane Lewis. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage, 2003.

Nawyn, Stephanie J. "Faith, ethnicity, and Culture in Refugee Resettlement," *American Behavioral Scientist* 49, no. 11 (2006): 1509-1527.

Noordegraaf, Herman. "Aid Under Protest? Churches in the Netherlands and Material Aid to the Poor," *Diaconia* 1, no. 1 (2010): 47-61.

NOS Nieuws. "Zeventien Kerken vangen Komende Tijd 255 Asielzoekers Ter Apel Op," NOS Nieuws, August 30, 2022, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2442647-zeventien-kerken-vangen-komende-tijd-255-asielzoekers-ter-apel-op>.

Noy, Chaim. "Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, no. 4 (2008): 327-344.

"Opnieuw Puzzel Waar Honderden Asielzoekers Ter Apel Moeten Overnachten." NOS.nl - Nieuws, Sport en Evenementen. NOS Nieuws, August 27, 2022. <https://nos.nl/collectie/13898/artikel/2442247-opnieuw-puzzel-waar-honderden-asielzoekers-ter-apel-moeten-overnachten>.

Ortner, Sherry B. "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 1 (1995): 173-193.

**As cited in** Fountain, Philip. "The Myth of Religious NGOs: Development Studies and the Return of Religion," in *International Development Policy: Religion and Development*, ed. Gilles Carbonnier, 9-30. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013. 26.

Petersen, Laura Bjørg Serup. "Intertwined Hospitalities in a Danish Church," in *Contested Hospitalities in a Time of Migration: Religious and Secular Counterspaces in the Nordic Region* ed. Synnøve Bendixsen & Trygve Wyller, 146-161. Routledge, 2019.

Roy, Olivier. "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," *The International Spectator* 48, no. 1 (2013): 5-19.

Sanchez, Jamie N., Leanne M. Dzubinski, and Jacqueline Parke. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe: Understanding Missionary-Refugee Relationships," *Transformation* 38, no. 4 (2021): 344-358.

Schuh, Cora, Marian Burchardt, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr. "Contested Secularities: Religious Minorities and Secular Progressivism in the Netherlands," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5, no. 3 (2012): 349-383.

Snyder, Susanna. "Un/settling Angels: Faith-based Organizations and Asylum-seeking in the UK," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 565-585.

**As cited in** Sanchez, Jamie N., Leanne M. Dzubinski, and Jacqueline Parke. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe: Understanding Missionary-Refugee Relationships," *Transformation* 38, no. 4 (2021): 344-358. 355.

Stanczak, Gregory C. "Strategic Ethnicity: The Construction of Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic Religious Community," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 5 (2006): 856-881.

**As cited in** Allen, Ryan. "The Bonding and Bridging Roles of Religious Institutions for Refugees in a Non-Gateway Context," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 6 (2010): 1049-1068. 1052.

Strang, Alison B., Helen Baillot, and Elodie Mignard. "'I Want to Participate.' Transition Experiences of New Refugees in Glasgow," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 2 (2018): 197-214.

**As cited in** Czischke, Darinka, and Carla J. Huisman. "Integration Through Collaborative Housing? Dutch Starters and Refugees Forming Self-managing Communities in Amsterdam," *Urban Planning* 3, no. 4 (2018): 156-165. 159.

Şafak-Ayvazoğlu, Ayşe, Filiz Künüröğlu, Fons Van de Vijver, and Kutlay Yağmur. "Acculturation of Syrian Refugees in the Netherlands: Religion as Social Identity and Boundary Marker," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 1 (2021): 555-578.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Boston:Harvard University Press, 2007.

**As cited in** Ager, Alastair, and Joey Ager. *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 8.

Tonkens, Evelien, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. "Introduction: The Culturalization of Citizenship," in *The Culturalization of Citizenship Belonging and Polarization in a Globalizing World*, ed Jan Willem Duyvendak, Peter Geschiere, and Evelien Tonkens, 1-20. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Udoh, Emmanuel Williams. "The Religious Response to Migration and Refugee Crises in Cross River State, Nigeria," *Fahsanu Journal* 1, no. 2 (2018).

UNHCR "What Is a Refugee?" United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, The UN Refugee Agency, accessed April 7, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9Csomeone%20who%20is%20unable%20or,group%2C%20or%20political%20opinion.%E2%80%9D>.

UNHCR (NL) "Begrippenlijst: Veelgestelde Vragen over Vluchtelingen." UNHCR Nederland, July 19, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/nl/media/begrippenlijst/vluchtelingen/>.

Van Bijsterveld, Sophie. "Religion and Law in the Netherlands," *Insight Turkey* 17, no. 1 (2015): 121–41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26299720>.

Wagenvoorde, Renée. "How Religion and Secularism (Don't) Matter in the Refugee Crisis," in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question* ed. Luca Mavelli and Erin Wilson, 61-74 Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

Wilson, Brian C. "From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion," in *What is Religion?* ed. Thomas A. Idinopulos, and Brian C. Wilson, 141-162. Brill, 1998.

Wilson, Erin. "Much To Be Proud Of, Much To Be Done: Faith-based Organizations and the Politics of Asylum in Australia," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 548-564.

**As cited** in Sanchez, Jamie N., Leanne M. Dzubinski, and Jacqueline Parke. "Ministry Amidst the Refugee Crisis in Europe: Understanding Missionary-Refugee Relationships," *Transformation* 38, no. 4 (2021): 344-358. 355.

Wuthnow, Robert. *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

**As cited in** Bekkers, René, and Theo Schuyt. "And Who is Your Neighbor? Explaining Denominational Differences in Charitable Giving and Volunteering in the Netherlands," *Review of Religious Research* (2008): 74-96. 76 & 91.

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2018.

# Appendix 1: NSD Approval

## Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number	Assessment type	Date
983506	Standard	13.12.2021

### Project title

Religious perceptions and NGO aid: An analysis of how perceptions of religion in Dutch NGOs that help immigrants and refugees may influence the support offered by the organisation.

### Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

Universitetet i Oslo / Det teologiske fakultet

### Project leader

Marianne Bjelland Kartzow

### Student

Marie Claessen

### Project period

01.05.2021 - 31.07.2025

### Categories of personal data

General

Special

### Legal basis

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

Explicit consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 9 nr. 2 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 31.07.2025.

[Notification Form](#)

### Comment

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 13.12.2021, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

### TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION

The project will be processing general categories of personal data and special categories of personal data regarding ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, and philosophical beliefs until 31.07.2025.

The information letter states that it is possible that the master's thesis extends into a doctoral thesis for which the data may also be used. Please consult with your institution that they will take on the responsibility for the processing of the personal data until 31.07.2025, and make sure that you let us know if the project ends earlier than expected.

### LEGAL BASIS

The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

The legal basis for processing general categories of personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a).

The legal basis for processing special categories of personal data is explicit consent given by the data subject, cf. art. 9.2 a), cf. the Personal Data Act § 10, cf. § 9 (2).

### PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection

**Regulation regarding:**

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

**THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS**

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19) and data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

**FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES**

NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

Zoom is a data processor for the project. NSD presupposes that the processing of personal data by a data processor meets the requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation arts. 28 and 29.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

**NOTIFY CHANGES**

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

**FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT**

NSD will follow up the progress of the project underway (every other year) and at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data is being carried out in accordance with what is documented.

Contact person at NSD: Silje Fjelberg Opsvik  
Good luck with the project!

## Appendix 2: Information Letter and Consent Form

(translated into English from Dutch)

### Information Letter For Master's Thesis

**Are you interested in participating in the research project “Perceptions of Religion in Dutch Religious Organisations”?**

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to better understand how religion plays a role in religious organisations. In this letter I will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will consist of.

#### **Purpose and responsibility of the project**

This project is part of a master's thesis, and its purpose is to understand how religion is present and how religion is perceived in the organisation. The project will then analyse how these perceptions may impact the help offered by the organisations.

The scope of the project extends to organisations in the Netherlands that are mainly involved with immigrants and refugees. The purpose is to research how important religion is to these organisations in regards to their work.

Although the data collected in this project is used for a master's thesis, it is possible that the master's thesis extends into a doctoral thesis for which the data may also be used.

### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

The University of Oslo (Universitetet i Oslo, UiO) is the institution responsible for the project.

### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

For this research, we are looking for people who are involved in a religious organisations that helps refugees and immigrants. Participants consist of staff/volunteers at the organisation, and people who have used the services offered by the organisation.

### **What does participation involve for you?**

If you choose to partake in this project, this will involve that you participate in an interview that will take approx. 30-60 minutes. The interview will include questions about your involvement and experience with the organisation, your experiences with religion in the organisation, and your experiences and perceptions of religion. The interview will be recorded (sound and video) and I will be taking notes. The interviews will be done online through Zoom.

### **Participation is voluntary**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

### **Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data**

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. Your data will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

In addition, other than by the researcher, the data may also be accessed by the project manager (the researcher's supervisor) in relation to the project.

In order to ensure that no unauthorised persons are able to access the personal data, all data will be stored through an encrypted programme. Lastly, any personal information that may hint towards a person's identity will be anonymised within the final project.

### **What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end on 31/07/2025. Personal data that has not been anonymised and digital recordings of the interview will be then be deleted at the end of the project.

### **Your rights**

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

### **What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

We will process your personal data based on your consent. Based on an agreement with the University of Oslo (UiO), NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

**Where can I find out more information?**

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The University of Oslo (UiO) via mariecl@student.teologi.uio.no (Researcher) or contact Dr. Rosemarie Van Den Breemer via [rosemarie.breemer@vid.no](mailto:rosemarie.breemer@vid.no) (Supervisor)
- Our Data Protection Officer: Roger Markgraf-Bye via personvernombud@uio.no NSD
- The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Kind Regards,  
Marie Claessen

**Permission**

I have received and understood the information about the project “Perceptions of Religion in Dutch Religious Organisations”, and have also been given the opportunity to ask questions.

I gave consent:

- to participate in an interview
- to my personal data being processed until the end of the project circa. 31/07/2025.

.....

(Signature of participant, date)

## Appendix 3: Interview Guides

(translated into English from Dutch)

Although the majority of interviews were done with volunteers, the interview guide for sample 2 was also included as there was still an interview done with someone using the church's services.

### Appendix 3.1

#### **Sample 1: The Volunteers**

##### Section 1: Introduction

- How did you start working at the organisation/with refugee help?
- How would you describe your role in the organisation?
- How would you describe your motivations and goals for helping refugees?

##### Section 2: The Organisation

- What does refugee aid consist of at the organisation/ what help is offered?
- Who is being helped at the organisation?
- How would you describe the motivations and goals of the organisation?
- Are there things that you would like to improve at the organisation? And are there any upcoming projects in the works?

##### Section 3: Relevance of Religion

- Would you say that the organisation holds religious values?

-Do you find religion to be important to how the organisation offers help? And in what way?

-What does religion mean to you?

-Do you find religion to be important to how you offer help yourself? And in what way?

#### Section 4: The Connection between the Organisation/Volunteers' Help and Religion

-How would you describe the role of religion in your work with refugees, and do you find it to have a big influence on your work?

-How does religion influence the work done for refugees by the organisation?

-Do you believe that there should be more or less focus on religion in relation to refugee aid?

-Do you believe that religion has benefits for refugee aid/ do you think that non-religious people are less inclined to offer help?

-Have you had any negative experiences/ have there been any problems with the refugee aid? And do you think that religion influenced this?

### Appendix 3.2

#### **Sample 2: People who are using the programmes offered/ who are getting support from the organisation.**

##### Section 1: Introduction

-How did you come across this organisation/what brought you to it?

-What kind of services does the organisation offer, and which services you have been involved with?

-Is there anything particular that you are looking for in the services offered?

-So far, have you had a positive experience with the organisation? Why/why not?

-What were your thoughts on the organization and its community?

## Section 2: Religion of person and of organisation

- What does religion mean to you
- Does this play an important role for you within this organisation? Ie. Was you coming to this organisation influenced by your views and experiences of religion?
- What have your experiences with religion in this organisation been so far?
- Do you find that religion is very present in the organisation?

## Section 3: Link between Religion and the Organisation's Services

- Do you think that the organisation's values/religion are reflected through the services you are involved with?
- Do you feel like your religious beliefs/religion/perceptions of religion have made it easier/harder for you to feel included?
- Do you feel like the organisation's religion/values have made it easier/harder for you to feel included?
- Do you think that these types of organisations should place more focus on religion?
- Is there anything you think could be improved?

