

This dissertation focusses on fleeing from religious persecution and aims to answer three research questions: 1) For Christians from Egypt and Iraq, what external aspects or factors related to persecution play a role in their decision to flee their home country? 2) How do these religiously persecuted Christians from Egypt and Iraq internally process and evaluate their experience in relation to their flight from their home country? 3) What are the practical theological implications of the various stages of fleeing? It is a multidisciplinary study with original qualitative field research with an emphasis on connecting theoretical and practical parts. In the study I focus on BCBs = Believers of Christian Background and BMBs = Believers of Muslim Background.

In the first six chapters I lay theoretical foundations of what persecution means, including the definition, the dynamics, analysis of persecution in the Bible, and theological approaches to fleeing. I also provide a historical-demographic overview of Christians in Iraq and Egypt including an analysis of their persecution. The description of the research design is followed by a description of the five major themes that came out of the field research (coming out, fear for life, fleeing, price paid, and God as goal and means). These themes were then synthesized with the theoretical section and interpreted through three theological concepts. In the end I suggest four expected goals that build on the field research. The hope is that these goals would help decrease the amount of discovered converts, prepare the persecuted persons as well as their helpers for future persecution and so help them overcome it. The goals should also help provide adequate help in each stage of persecution, support individuals spiritually, and actively involve the believers in the Great Commission.