The Pope's Public Reason

A Religious yet Public Case for Welcoming Refugees

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◼ **ABSTRACT:** Since the beginning of Europe's "refugee crisis," Pope Francis has repeatedly argued that we should welcome refugees. This, he said, is an obligation for Christians who have "a duty of justice, of civility, and of solidarity." This religious justification is a problem for liberal political philosophers who are committed to the idea of public reason: state action, they argue, must be justified to all citizens based on public, generally accessible reasons. In this article, I argue that the claim that liberal public reason fully excludes religion from the public sphere is misguided; not all religious reasons are incompatible with the demands of Rawlsian public reason. Understanding how a religious reason can be public requires looking into both what makes a reason religious and what makes a reason public. I show that the pope's reason supporting the claim that we should welcome refugees is both religious and public.

◼ **KEYWORDS:** accessibility, comprehensive doctrines, public justification, public reason, Rawls, refugees, religion

Since 2015, an unprecedented number of men, women, and children crossed the Mediterranean Sea to find refuge in Europe. They came from the Middle East (especially Syria) and from Africa, and they were fleeing war, persecution, or poverty. All of them risked their lives to reach the European coasts in pursuit of a better life. Thousands died on the way.

This was quickly labeled a "refugee crisis." The refugee crisis in Europe is only one of many movements of migration occurring all over the world. The attention paid to this event in Europe tends to overshadow other movements of refugees and displaced people that are far less talked about, such as those of Rohingya fleeing persecution in Myanmar, of Venezuelans seeking refuge in neighboring countries, or of the forced displacement of South Sudanese. What makes the European refugee crisis particularly visible, however, is the significant impact that it had on European public debate and on European politics generally: it quickly became one of the most discussed political issues of the past few years. It is precisely the content of this debate and the nature of the arguments used that are the focus of this article.

In a nutshell, the overall reaction of European states was not one of hospitality (Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018a). Many of the arguments used in the public debate regarding the refugee crisis were in support of closing down the borders. It was argued that Europe was already facing an economic crisis and could not afford to welcome refugees; that terrorists were hiding among them, thus letting refugees into Europe was a serious threat to security; and that the religious or cultural values and practices of these refugees were incompatible with European culture. Such claims are problematic for several reasons, but they came to frame the way the

European public debate regarding the question of refugees was conducted: the refugee crisis has been continuously associated with issues of economic prosperity, security, and identity.

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, Pope Francis has been an influential advocate of the rights of refugees. He quickly became one of the leading voices in the attempt to reframe the public debate. Instead of economic prosperity, security, and identity, the pope appealed to values of justice, civility, and solidarity (Francis 2017), relying heavily on Christian doctrine and Catholic social teaching to justify the duty to welcome refugees.

The pope does not usually engage in political debates, and it is normally expected that he stays away from political affairs in general.[1] In this case, however, he repeatedly and explicitly urged European leaders to change their policies toward refugees. Pope Francis's various declarations regarding refugees and migrants are not limited to the specific case of Europe, but it is arguably in Europe that they most strongly affected the public debate on welcoming refugees. This does not seem to fit well with the kind of separation between church and state that contemporary liberal democracies are committed to. In particular, this does not seem to fit well with public reason, which is widely considered by liberal political philosophers as a condition of legitimacy.[2] Since political decisions should be supported by public reasons, should religious reasons, such as the ones used by Pope Francis to support more compassionate policies toward refugees, be avoided in the public debate? Is there a moral duty to bracket religious considerations when discussing politics? What, if anything, is the problem with the use of faith-based reasoning in democratic decision-making? More generally, what is the place of religion in the political sphere?

The objective of this article is to examine the role religion can play in assessing political proposals, from the perspective of liberal political philosophy. Many religious believers appeal to their religious beliefs to think about social and political issues. But what is the relevance of these religious beliefs when they enter the political sphere as citizens? To examine this question, I focus on the example of Pope Francis's religious reasons regarding our duties toward refugees. I first focus on the idea of public reason and on the place of religion in public reason. It appears that the difficulty in deciding whether religious reasons can be public reasons or not comes largely from a definitional issue: what is it that makes a reason religious, and what is it that makes a reason public? I argue that we should distinguish between four different ways a reason[3] can be religious: it has a religious vocabulary, a religious origin, a religious motivation, or religious content. None of these religious dimensions, however, necessarily makes the reason non-public. I then turn to the question of the definition of public reasons, and show that the pope's reason supporting the claim that we should welcome refugees is both religious and public. I conclude that the idea that liberal public reason fully excludes religion from the public sphere is misguided: under certain conditions, the appeal to religious reasons can be compatible with the requirements of Rawlsian public reason.

The Place of Religion in Liberal Public Reason

Liberal political philosophers have a notoriously complicated relationship with religion.[4] On the one hand, freedom of religion is considered one of the most basic liberal rights: for all liberals, it is crucial that people are allowed to have whatever religious beliefs they want, or to have no religious beliefs at all, and that they are allowed to practice their religion as much as possible, to the extent that it is compatible with the rights of others and with public interests of the state.[5] On the other hand, when it comes to the political role religion might have, the liberal position is very different. Liberals have argued that the liberal state should be a secular state. In order to

guarantee neutrality toward religion, there should be a separation between religious and political affairs: it is "necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other" (Locke 2003: 218).

The liberal tendency to exclude religion from politics appears particularly strongly in the recent debate on public reason. Following John Rawls, liberals have argued that religious reasons should be excluded from public reason because they are based on premises that not all citizens can accept (Audi 2011; Nagel 1987; Quong 2011; Rawls 1997). They have claimed, for instance, that the religious reasons often used to oppose the right to abortion or gay rights are problematic because they are inaccessible. Since the decisions that we make apply to everyone, then everyone should be able to engage with the reasons that support them: what matters is not that we all accept these reasons, but that we can all discuss them. Religious reasons are paradigmatic examples of reasons that can only be understood and assessed based on specifically religious beliefs that not all citizens share. This is why they are excluded from public reason.

Religious reasons are obviously not the only reasons excluded from public reason. All reasons that are based on comprehensive doctrines, that is, all reasons that rely on premises that not everyone shares, are excluded in a similar way. But it is the exclusion of religious reasons specifically that has been the focus of the main objection raised against liberal public reason. It has been argued that it unfairly and excessively burdens religious believers (Carter 1994; Smith 1997; Vallier 2014; Wolterstorff 1997). If religious reasons are excluded, then it means religious believers should refrain from appealing to such reasons, that they should refrain from appealing to the truth as they see it. This affects religious believers more than those who are committed to non-religious comprehensive doctrines because religious reasons are more recognizable and more easily identifiable as inappropriate political considerations.

In response, liberals have argued that public reason is actually not as exclusivist as it seems or as critics say it is, and they have emphasized what Rawls had called the "wide view" of public reason (Rawls 1997: 783–787). The point of this wide view is to say that although public reason excludes religious reasons, it does not apply to everyone in the same way, and it does not apply everywhere. For Rawls, for instance, "public reason applies more strictly to judges than to others" (Rawls 1997: 768) and, crucially, it "does not apply to the background culture with its many forms of nonpublic reason nor to media of any kind" (Rawls 1997: 768). In other words, public reason has to do with how we should justify coercive state action rather than, more generally, with how we should talk to each other.[6] The fact that public reason excludes religious reasons for the justification of political decisions does not entail that religion can play no role at all in the public sphere (Neal 2008). So although liberals exclude religion from the state, they do not exclude religion from society in general: religion should not be political, but it can be public.

Yet, in some cases, liberals seem to be open to the idea of using religious reasons to justify political decisions. For instance, Rawls claimed that the demands of public reason were respected in the cases of the Abolitionists and of the Civil Rights movement, where most of the arguments used in order to support the abolition of slavery and the recognition of equal civil rights were religious. Contrary to what could have been expected, Rawls argued that "the abolitionists and the leaders of the civil rights movement did not go against the idea of public reason" (Rawls 2005: 251) because, "however much they emphasized the religious roots of their doctrines, . . . these doctrines supported basic constitutional values" (Rawls 1997: 785–786).

One possible interpretation of this is that what liberals ultimately care about is not whether a reason is religious or not, but whether it supports something that they happen to agree with. In other words, if they do not like most religious reasons that are used in political debates, it is because these reasons support conservative views they reject. But if religious reasons were used to support gay rights, to support the right to abortion, or to support any other political view that

they endorse themselves, then maybe liberals would not complain so much about the religious dimension of these reasons.

This, however, would be an unfair interpretation. What cases like those of the Abolitionists and of the Civil Rights movement tell us is not that the liberal account of public reason is inconsistent, but that this liberal account of public reason is more complex than is usually assumed. Even Rawls's account of public reason does not exclude all religious reasons. Only some of them should be excluded. What we need to do, then, is to figure out how we can tell which religious reasons can be public and which cannot. In other words, we need to understand both what it means for a reason to be religious and what it means for a reason to be public. Only then can we have a clear idea of the exact role that religion can play in the assessment of political claims.

What Makes a Reason Religious?

What is it, then, that makes a reason religious? Consider the reason used by Pope Francis to support the rights of refugees. In his address to the participants of the International Forum on "Migration and Peace" held in February 2017 in Rome, Pope Francis insisted on our duty "to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate" (Francis 2017) all those "who, for various reasons, have been forced to leave their homeland" (Francis 2017). This, he claimed, is "a *duty of justice*, of *civility* and of *solidarity*" (Francis 2017). The pope's reason can be reformulated in the following way: We should welcome refugees because this is what our understanding of justice requires.

It is important to note that Pope Francis's claim does not apply only to the narrow category of refugees. In his 2018 message for the celebration of the 51st World Day of Peace, he explicitly mentions "the over 250 million migrants worldwide, of whom 22.5 million are refugees" (Francis 2018). Beyond the legal definition of refugees based on the UN 1951 Refugee Convention, Pope Francis is more broadly concerned with migrants defined as "all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands" (Francis 2018). Since the day Pope Francis traveled to the Italian island of Lampedusa in July 2013 to meet with migrants and pray for them, on his first papal visit outside of Rome, he has made refugee issues the hallmark of his pontificate (Guzik 2018). In 2016, he visited a refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos and brought back 12 Syrian refugees with him on his way back to the Vatican. In 2018, he explicitly criticized the Trump administration for its policy of separating migrant children from their families after they had crossed the US-Mexico border. In 2019, he unveiled a new sculpture on St. Peter's Square, representing migrants from diverse backgrounds. He continuously urges political leaders to adopt more welcoming policies toward migrants, to respect the rights of migrants, and to commit to "ensuring international cooperation, global solidarity and local commitment, leaving no one excluded" (Francis 2020).

Liberal philosophers share the pope's concern for refugees. The idea that states have a moral obligation to welcome refugees is one of the few things that liberals can agree on (Gibney 2015; Owen 2016). However, just because liberals agree with the claim that we have a duty to welcome refugees does not mean that they can deny the deeply religious dimension of this specific reason. The reason also does not become automatically public just because it is used to support a liberal policy. Before looking into whether the pope's reason can be understood as a public reason, it is important to see why it is a deeply religious reason, although it might not initially look like it.

There are four ways a reason can be religious: (1) a religious vocabulary, (2) a religious origin, (3) a religious motivation, or (4) religious content.

Religious Vocabulary

The first and most obvious way a reason can be considered religious is if it uses a religious vocabulary or clear religious references. If it includes, for instance, an explicit mention of God, or a quote from a religious text, then we can confidently say that it is a religious reason.

On the face of it, the pope's reason does not look particularly religious. Or at least we would probably not say that it is a religious reason, if we did not happen to know that it was a reason introduced by the pope in a speech that, unsurprisingly, uses specifically religious vocabulary, makes several references to religious texts, and explicitly bases the duty to welcome refugees on Christian commitments. Consider this much more clearly religious version of the exact same reason, from the same speech: "For us Christians, hospitality offered to the weary traveller is offered to Jesus Christ himself, through the newcomer: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Mt 25:35)" (Francis 2017). In this version, the reason would be clearly religious, and it would also be clearly inaccessible: as the pope very explicitly says, this is a reason "for Christians," and, one might argue, for Christians only. This is the opposite of a public reason, which is supposed to be a reason for all. A public reason is such that it suffices to make a particular claim justified for all individuals, whereas a religious reason based on religious premises that only some religious individuals accept will only have justificatory weight for those religious individuals.

Obviously, the way I reformulated the reason makes it look non-religious, and it might be objected that I am trying to hide the religious dimension of the rest of the speech. But the fact that a comprehensive doctrine is used is not incompatible with public reason. Rawls suggests we can "introduce into political discussion at any time our comprehensive doctrine, religious or nonreligious, provided that, in due course, we give properly public reasons to support the principles and policies our comprehensive doctrine is said to support" (Rawls 1997: 776). If we can introduce a comprehensive doctrine, then we can also use vocabulary that is specific to this comprehensive doctrine. In fact, Rawls explicitly claims that there are "no restrictions or requirements on how religious or secular doctrines are themselves to be expressed; these doctrines need not, for example, be by some standards logically correct, or open to rational appraisal, or evidentially supportable" (Rawls 1997: 784). So even if we do not take the narrow and secularized version of the reason that I use, even if we take into consideration the whole speech given by the pope, then there are still, in this text, religious and non-religious versions of the reason, in terms of the vocabulary used, and that is perfectly compatible with the wide view of public reason defended by Rawls.

This does not mean that we can conclude yet that the pope's reason is public. However, we can conclude that the mere fact that the pope also uses religious references in the rest of his speech is not enough to conclude that the reason is not public. No reason can be said to be inaccessible just because of the vocabulary that it uses.

Religious Origin

What a superficial focus on vocabulary tends to ignore is the ways some concepts can be traced back to specifically religious origins. This is the second way reasons can be religious. Reasons are rarely independent, self-standing statements, that are introduced out of nowhere for citizens

to assess. It matters where they come from, and what kind of philosophical, moral, or religious tradition they belong to or are associated with. The pope's reason appeals to the Christian tradition of hospitality, which has been developed based on specifically religious premises.[7] From the perspective of the pope, there is a continuity between being Christian and having a duty to welcome refugees.

But does this make the reason religious in a way that would make it incompatible with public reason? Not necessarily. Consider the example of Just War theory: it has very clear origins in Christian theology, but it is today discussed and justified independently of any kind of religious considerations. This means that some reasons "can be *detached* from the doctrine from which they originate" (Laborde 2017: 126). This is, of course, not the case for all religious reasons, but it is important to see that, just because a reason has religious origins does not mean that it cannot stand on its own without religious support.

That a reason has a religious origin is, in itself, compatible with the demands of public reason. In fact, liberalism itself, like many other philosophical traditions, has religious origins.[8] The point of Jürgen Habermas's argument about public reason, for instance, was to insist that religious reasons should not be reduced to their religious origins: if they can be translated into a "generally accessible language" (2006: 9), then it means they can be understood and discussed even by those who do not share the religious premises that they originally started from, and therefore that they can be introduced in public debate and used for the justification of state action. This should not come as a surprise: religious and non-religious philosophical traditions have always nourished and influenced each other, and a significant part of our liberal and secular language is in fact "secularized religious language" (Laborde 2017: 127), suggesting that just because something is originally religious, or has at some point been associated with religion, does not mean that it cannot also be non-religious. The pope's reason might have religious origins, but it can also make sense independently of these religious origins and therefore its religious origins do not make it a non-public, inaccessible reason.

Religious Motivation

There is a third, and much deeper, sense in which the pope's reason is religious: it is religiously motivated. The reason the pope thinks that this is how we should understand justice is itself religious, and the reason the pope believes that other Christians should endorse this reason is because of religious commitments they share.

But although it is true that the motivation of the pope is religious, it is not necessary to rely on such a religious motivation in order to endorse the reason: one can be committed to the kind of conception of justice that the pope is defending, with its implications for the rights of refugees and for our duties toward them, without a religious motivation. This means that secular considerations and secular values are sufficient to support the normative force of this reason. That the pope is endorsing this reason because he is religiously motivated does not make the reason non-public: one can have a religious motivation to endorse a public reason.

What about, then, reasons that can only be religiously motivated? Those, admittedly, would be a problem for public reason. However, they would not be a problem because of the religious motivation directly, but rather because if a reason can only be religiously motivated, then it means that the reason itself, its normative content, is itself religious and non-public, and that is what would be really problematic about it.[9] Requiring that people be genuinely, sincerely motivated by public considerations only goes well beyond what public reason demands: public reasons "may be supported by nonpublic values that give a person moral or ethical motivation"

(Schwartzman 2011: 389), as long as they do not need to be supported by such values. And they only need to be supported by non-public values when they are themselves, because of their content, non-public.

Religious Content

The last element of a reason that could make it religious is its content. It is the most important of the four dimensions identified because this is what tells us whether a reason is public or not. If we want to know whether a reason is public, we need to zoom in on that content and ignore the other dimensions.

Technically, a reason is constituted by a number of premises that lead to a conclusion. The premises are a combination of different claims, and these claims can be normative or descriptive. In our case, we could reformulate the reason in the following way:

P1—Refugees leave their homeland in order to be safe from serious harm.
P2—That every person has a right to be safe from serious harm is required by justice.
P3—The right of refugees to leave their homeland is only real if they are allowed to go to another country, and if they are granted legal protection there, which creates a duty (based on justice) for others to welcome them.[10]
P4—We should do what is required by justice.
C—Therefore we should welcome refugees.

The first premise is a factual, purely descriptive statement; the three other premises (P2 to P4) are normative claims that specify the conception of justice on which the conclusion is based. In this case, I take P1 to be a non-controversial claim. Disagreements will therefore focus on the other premises, P2, P3, and P4, which carry the full justificatory weight of the pope's reason. Is there something in these three premises that makes the reason religious?

It would be unreasonable to deny that, for some people and most likely for the pope himself, the content of this reason is religious. For many religious believers, the value of justice is a deeply religious value, and the specific conception outlined in premises P2, P3, and P4, is itself supported by religious principles. In other words, the pope's reason might be interpreted as an example of post-secular reasoning, in which the normative resources of a religious tradition are used to nourish non-religious debates about the interpretation of the value of justice (Habermas 2008).

However, the three premises are not merely religious. Many people would agree with these exact same premises and with the conclusion that they lead to for non-religious reasons. This means that, although the content of the reason can be considered religious, it can also be considered non-religious. If the content could only be religious, that is, if the justificatory weight of the reason relied on premises that only religious believers could accept, then the content of the reason would be necessarily and directly based on a religious comprehensive doctrine, which would make it non-public. This is not the case for the pope's reason supporting the rights of refugees, but it is the case for many other religious reasons.

The pope's reason could be considered a religious reason based on all four dimensions identified, even though it is important to note that a non-religious version of the reason exists, and the content of the reason is not necessarily religious. The fact that the pope's reason is religious does not suffice to conclude that it is a non-public reason; similarly, the fact that a reason is non-religious would be insufficient to conclude that it is a public reason. The next section focuses on how public reasons can be defined and identified.

What Makes a Reason Public?

Rawls's conception of public reason has two parts:

> a. first, substantive principles of justice for the basic structure; and
>
> b. second, guidelines of inquiry: principles of reasoning and rules of evidence in the light of which citizens are to decide whether substantive principles properly apply and to identity laws and policies that best satisfy them. (Rawls 2005: 224)

Public reasons, then, are those that respect both certain substantive commitments and certain epistemic commitments. The substantive test excludes reasons that are fundamentally incompatible with the liberal conception of justice because of the values that they appeal to. The epistemic test excludes reasons that violate shared rules of reasoning such as logic, inference, common sense or science. This makes reasons public in the sense that they are accessible to all citizens, in other words, they can be assessed based on common standards of evaluation: everyone can understand them, discuss them, and engage with them.

This means that, ultimately, whether a reason is public or not depends on the kinds of premises it is based on. For a reason to be public, premises need not be fully shared by everyone, but the values that are identified in normative premises must be shared political values, and the specific conception of the values must be such that it can be supported by appealing to other shared values.[11] Or, to put it in Rawls's terms: these premises "can be presented independently from comprehensive doctrines of any kind" and "can be worked out from fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the public political culture of a constitutional regime, such as the conception of citizens as free and equal persons" (Rawls 1997: 776). In other words, a public reason is one that is based on premises that rely on shared political values, that is, values that are supported in the overlapping consensus, such as justice, equality, freedom, or toleration. This does not mean that we should all share the exact same conception of these values, as there are different reasonable ways to understand, for instance, what equality means or what justice means. But these different conceptions should be themselves based on other shared political values, and it should be possible to present them and defend them independently of any comprehensive doctrine.

Are the premises of the pope's reason public? The key value that the reason appeals to is justice, which is a shared political value. In liberal political philosophy, justice is in fact the most important value: it is, in Rawls's famous phrase, the "first virtue of social institutions" (Rawls 1999: 3). All reasonable citizens are expected to share a liberal conception of justice, the first principle of which is a principle of equal liberty: "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others" (Rawls 1999: 53). The second premise of the pope's reason interprets this principle of equal liberty as meaning that a right to be safe from serious harm belongs to such basic liberties that everyone is entitled to.

From the first principle of justice, it follows that states have the obligation to secure these individual basic liberties. If a state fails to protect these basic liberties, then this gives rise to certain duties for other states, in particular the duty to grant a right of asylum for individuals who were able to leave their homeland (Owen 2016: 144).[12] Liberals disagree as to the extent to which borders should be open and freedom of movement should be unlimited (Abizadeh 2008, Carens 1987, Miller 2008, Walzer 1983), but even those who argue that states have a right to control their borders agree that this right is "limited by obligations to refugees" (Gibney 2015: 448). The third premise, then, is the object of a wide consensus among liberals, even though questions remain open regarding the application of this obligation in practice and the just distribution of refugees between states (Gibney 2015).

In other words, the premises of the reason interpret justice in such a way that it justifies both the rights of refugees and the obligation of states to protect these rights. This interpretation of justice is fully in line with the liberal conception, as it ultimately relies on the principle of equal liberty. This liberal conception of justice is characterized by the fact that it is shared by all reasonable citizens, independently of the comprehensive doctrines they might adhere to; in Rawls's words, the conception is "political, not metaphysical" (Rawls 1985). There might be limited disagreements among liberals regarding the interpretation of justice and of its principles or regarding the question of its application to the specific case of refugees. But it is a public reason, because it "proceeds entirely within a political conception of justice" (Rawls 1997: 776), that is, all the premises of the pope's reason can be defined, defended, assessed, and challenged, based on liberal terms only, and they do not appeal to any sectarian value that other citizens might not be reasonably expected to accept. The justificatory force of the reason consists in its liberal conception of justice and does not require reference to any comprehensive doctrine to make sense. Therefore, even if the pope's reason is a religious reason, it still qualifies as a public reason as well because it respects shared rules of reasoning and because it relies on premises that appeal to shared political values.

In the end, the worry that liberals might exclude conservative arguments, rather than religious arguments, is partly justified: ultimately, reasons are public when they express shared political values that derive from a family of reasonable conceptions of political justice. This means that reasons can only be public if they are compatible with such liberal shared political values. But what matters is the kinds of values that one appeals to, rather than the kinds of policy that one defends. So if the pope had said we should welcome refugees because it is God's will, without appealing to the shared political value of justice, then this would have been a clear case of an inaccessible, non-public reason.

All of this shows that liberal political philosophers should be much more careful when they talk about "religious reasons" as if it was a single category, as if all religious reasons were religious in the same way (March 2013). If liberals are often a bit too quick to say that religious reasons are, in general, excluded from public reason, it is precisely because what they have in mind when they refer to religious reasons is something like an explicit reference to God's will (Bardon 2018). As Jeremy Waldron puts it: "Secular theorists often assume that they know what a religious argument is like: they present it as a crude prescription from God, backed up with threat of hellfire, derived from general or particular revelation, and they contrast it with the elegant complexity of a philosophical argument by Rawls (say) or Dworkin. With this image in mind, they think it obvious that religious argument should be excluded from public life" (2002: 20).

It is fair to say that, whenever a religious reason is religious in that specific sense, when its content is fundamentally religious and when it cannot make sense as a reason outside of a very specific religious doctrine, then it should always be excluded from public reason, because it is always non-public. But it is only reasons that are religious in that very specific and narrow sense that should be excluded. Many religious reasons, like the pope's reason supporting the claim that we should welcome refugees, are compatible with the demands of public reason. This shows that the distinction between religious and non-religious reasons does not overlap with the distinction between public and non-public reasons. Just because a reason is religious does not mean, on its own, that we can conclude that it is a non-public reason. Religion can play a role in Rawlsian public reason. It should be clear, however, that this can only be a fairly limited role, in the sense that religious reasons will always need a non-religious backup: they can only be public if they are not only religious. The pope's reason is a clear illustration of that: his defense of the rights of refugees might have religious origins, and it might be religiously motivated, but his emphasis on the duty of justice, a value shared by all reasonable citizens beyond any specific

religious doctrine, makes it accessible to all. Ultimately, the message of Pope Francis is that our obligations toward refugees are based on an understanding of what human beings, *qua* human beings, are entitled to, and in particular on the claim that being safe from serious harm is part of these basic individual rights. This message might resonate particularly strongly for those who see the pope as a religious and moral authority, but an examination of the liberal idea of public reason explains why it is also likely to find an echo beyond the Catholic community, with all those who share the idea that the rights of refugees are a matter of justice.

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■ NOTES

1. This is not to say that the pope does not take positions on social or political issues, or that Catholicism (like other religious traditions) is not socially or politically relevant. In fact, it might be argued that the pope still has significant political influence: the pope's speeches and actions are highly visible and have a significant agenda-setting power. However, the pope is expected to not get involved in political affairs in the sense that he should not endorse political candidates, explicitly support or oppose a democratically elected government, or claim that political leaders should follow his guidance as a religious leader.

2. The link between legitimacy and public reason is explicit in Rawls, for instance: "Our exercise of political power is proper and hence justifiable only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to them as reasonable and rational" (Rawls 2005: 217).

3. By reason, I mean a claim that justifies a belief, and more specifically in this article, a belief regarding whether refugees should be welcomed or not. A reason is constituted by a number of premises (moral commitments, empirical claims, etc.) leading to a conclusion (the belief that is supported by the reason). In other words, the reasons I am interested in here are those that explain why someone would believe that refugees should be welcomed (for instance, a moral commitment to solidarity) or that explain why someone would believe that refugees should not be welcomed (for instance, economic considerations regarding the costs of welcoming refugees). That a claim qualifies as a reason tells us that it explains at least partly why someone had adopted a specific belief. It does not however tell us anything about whether this is a good reason, whether the moral commitments that it starts from are valuable ones, or whether the empirical claims that it relies on are factually correct.

4. The question of the definition of religion is a very difficult one, and for the purpose of this article it is not necessary to defend any specific definition. It is however important to know what liberal political philosophers have in mind when they use this concept: liberal political philosophers tend to define religion as a special kind of comprehensive doctrine, or conception of the good life, which is based on beliefs that cannot be supported by evidence and that we cannot expect every other citizen to share. This does not mean that religion can be reduced to such a comprehensive doctrine or that this specific understanding of religion is unproblematic and should remain unchallenged. Cécile Laborde has, for instance, recently argued that attention should be paid to other dimensions of the concept of religion (Laborde 2017).

5. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights provides an illustration of this liberal commitment to the protection of freedom of religion: "1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom,

either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others."

6. On the distinction between public justification as a conception of political legitimacy and public justification as an ideal of civility, see Bardon (2018).

7. On the origins of the concept of hospitality, see Mette Louise Berg and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2018b), Benjamin Boudou (2017), Elena Isayev (2018), and Olivia Wilkinson (2018).

8. See Waldron (2002), for instance, on the religious origins of Locke's liberalism.

9. Robert Audi has, for instance, defended a principle of secular motivation: citizens should not only offer an "adequate secular reason" (Audi 1993: 691) to support political decisions; they should also be "sufficiently *motivated* by adequate secular reason" (Audi 1993: 692). But even Audi recognizes that citizens might also be religiously motivated: what is important is that the religious motivation is not necessary, and that the alternative non-religious grounds for supporting the decision are themselves sufficient (Audi 2011: 71–72).

10. By "welcoming," I also mean protecting their basic interests. The duty to welcome refugees is not discharged by simply letting them in; they should also be protected and cared for in an appropriate manner.

11. This is similar to what Jonathan Quong has called justificatory disagreements, as opposed to foundational disagreements: "[Foundational disagreements] are characterized by the fact that the participants do not share any premises which can serve as a mutually acceptable standard of justification. The second type of disagreement, *justificatory disagreement*, occurs when participants do share premises that serve as a mutually acceptable standard of justification, but they nevertheless disagree about certain substantive conclusions" (Quong 2011: 193).

12. Besides the protection of the rights of refugees, other states also have "a duty of justice to support this state in building its capacity for securing the human rights of its citizens" (Owen 2016: 143).

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