

## Honors Thesis Project Proposal

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**Working Title:** The Stranger at the Door: Immigration and Christian Obligation

**Project Purpose:** What obligations do Christian peoples, nations, or individuals have towards foreigners, refugees, or immigrants seeking to visit or dwell in their nation? More broadly, what obligations do all nations have to foreigners, refugees, or immigrants? Is the perspective championed by contemporary Christian humanists like Pope Francis consistent with Christian doctrine and tradition, or are the teachings of Saint Thomas and Aristotle more worthy of our adherence? What does it mean to be a Christian and a patriot; how does one meet the demands of saintliness and political prudence?

**Project Overview:** Advocates of loose immigration standards and ready inclusion of all refugees often cite their moral obligations as a Christian as the motivation and rationale for their political stance. This perspective seems to have become more prevalent leading up to and following the Syria Refugee Crisis, which tested the generosity and public tolerance of multiculturalism of western nations.

I was inspired by these world events when writing my capstone project. In that capstone I explored what nations are and what it means to be a citizen of an increasingly diverse and multicultural nation. I relied on the work of Pierre Manent in *Democracy Without Nations* when arguing my thesis, and contrasted his position with that of Will Kymlicka in *Multicultural Citizenship*. I am grateful to have received an “A” for that thesis.

Though two years have passed since I wrote that paper, the topic of immigration and multiculturalism as relates to Western nations remains at center stage in our political consciousness, and many suspect it will remain there for the foreseeable future. Seeing that neither public sentiments nor my personal interest has waned, I would like to re-examine the themes I scraped the surface of in my capstone.

I intend to refocus my attention from multiculturalism to immigration itself. Of course, the subject of immigration cannot be cleanly severed from multiculturalism, so a discussion of multiculturalism drawing from work in my capstone will be included in this thesis. However the focus and trajectory of this thesis will be natural law and Christian obligation as relates to immigration.

My research will largely involve reading through many of the great texts in the natural law and Christian tradition relating to immigration like Aristotle's *Politics* and selections from Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. It will also involve reading and listening to, as well as outlining the arguments in all of the materials created by Pope Francis concerning immigration. Also, as explained in the paragraphs to come, I anticipate reading through and relying on many other contemporary sources either discovered by me or recommended by my advisor.

The thesis will begin with a four to five-page introduction. The introduction will set the stage by briefly explaining the historical importance of the Syrian Refugee Crisis and the basic political perspectives reacting to it. I will then explicitly introduce the key questions this thesis will answer. Naturally, a brief introduction for the main thinkers I will grapple with will be included in the order I will introduce them: Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Pope Francis. If

space allows, I will also make reference to some of the other scholars/philosophers I may cite (e.g. Pierre Manent, Taylor Marshall, or Cardinals Cupich, Tobin, and Burke). I will finish my introduction by stating my thesis in support of the Aristo-Thomist perspective, though my argument defending that thesis will appear much later.

The first substantive section of the thesis will be approximately 15 pages in length. In this section, I will carefully present the perspectives of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas in *Politics* and *Summa Theologica* as relates to immigration. This section will not include my argument or analysis, but rather will be focused on providing the reader with a fair exegesis of the texts. I anticipate introducing, relying on, and referencing many scholars who have written about this matter.

I will then repeat the process at an equitable length, but for the opposing perspective. I will provide the reader with a careful reconstruction of Pope Francis's teachings regarding immigration from numerous papal encyclicals, homilies, changes to the Catholic Catechism, and public speeches. Like in the first substantive section, I will include insights from notable interpreters and supporters of Pope Francis (e.g. Cardinal Cupich or Tobin).

Following the exegesis of these opposing perspectives, I will offer an argument in favor of the Aristo-Thomist perspective. I anticipate devoting approximately twenty pages to this portion of the paper. At this point, I plan to draw from my research and writing from my capstone. I also plan to reference and rely on the work of contemporary political philosophers like Daniel Mahoney, Pierre Manent, or Ralph Hancock. I anticipate include portions of the poetry of Charles Pierre Péguy with commentary from Pierre Manent as is fitting. I will also

include the teachings of other contemporary religious leaders like Cardinal Burke. I hope to also draw from other scholars who've written on natural law and immigration whose work I am unfamiliar with now but will become familiar with as I continue researching the topic at hand. A significant portion of my argument will include a dive into the deeper questions of citizenship, political prudence, and the necessity of saintliness in the life of the Christian. After diving deeper into these theoretical themes, I will come back to the surface with new insights into the practical problems at hand.

I will conclude with a section equitable in length to the introduction, so about five pages. In this conclusion, I will re-examine the current events explained in the introduction with the goal of applying my thesis to the practical concerns of the crisis. I will also briefly and concisely review the main themes I touched on throughout the thesis. Once completed, the thesis should be approximately 60 pages in length.

**Thesis Committee:** Dr. Ralph Hancock, Dr. Ryan Christensen, and Dr. Paul Kerry.

**Qualifications of Thesis Committee:** My Thesis Committee will include Dr. Hancock (chair and faculty advisor), Dr. Christensen (Department Honors Coordinator), and Dr. Paul Kerry (faculty reader).

Dr. Hancock: I've been lucky to participate as a student in three of Dr. Hancock's classes: POLI 202 Western Political Heritage 2, POLI 362 Reason Revelation and Politics, and POLI 400 Capstone in Political Theory. While in POLI 400, Dr. Hancock advised me on and graded my capstone project. Dr. Hancock has taught and written extensively on topics relevant to my thesis. I intend to use his knowledge of this

philosophical space to orient my attention towards the most promising philosophical sources. I also plan to incorporate his teachings regarding topics like moral analogy and the responsibility of reason in political life from POLI 362, POLI 400, and his writings. It should be noted that his thought may be implicit in any portion of my thesis if not explicit because of the great affect his thinking has had on mine.

Dr. Paul Kerry: I regret to say I do not have a personal relationship with Dr. Kerry at this point. I am however familiar with his work at the Wheatley Institution of which I am an employee. Dr. Hancock recommended I ask him to be the faculty reader.

**Project Timeline:** Immediately after my topic is approved after September 27, I plan to begin researching and writing the first substantive section of my paper. Since I am taking twenty credits this semester, I anticipate progress on that section being slow. I hope to finish that section by the end of the fall semester. I will then devote my time during the Christmas break to researching and writing my second substantive section. I will then begin writing my argument in January and should be done by the conclusion of that month. At that point, I will have about twenty-one days to write my introduction and conclusion, as well as to edit the other sections with the guidance of my advisor. By the twenty-first, I will submit my thesis defense form. I will then work closely with my advisor and committee members on polishing my thesis in preparation for my defense which must be completed by the March 11th. I anticipate any changes to be small and style-oriented at this point. Nevertheless, if any weaknesses in my work are made clear in the defense, I will work to remedy those issues by the final date to submit the thesis: March 20th.

**Funding:** I do not anticipate needing any funding to complete this thesis.

**Culminating Experience:** I intend to pursue publication in any journal or medium recommended by Dr. Hancock or the other advisors. In addition to their recommendations, I will produce a shortened version of my thesis that may be submitted to student journals and conferences like the UVU Undergraduate Philosophy Conference.