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## The Refugee Crisis and Religion

Wilson, Erin; Mavelli, Luca

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## Chapter 1

# The Refugee Crisis and Religion

## *Beyond Conceptual and Physical Boundaries*

Erin K. Wilson and Luca Mavelli

It is hard to think of a time in recent history when both ‘religion’ and ‘refugees’ have been such prominent and controversial categories in public politics and discourses around the world. A range of complex dynamics has led to both phenomena independently rising to the top of policy agendas, including, though not limited to, concerns of rising insecurity, in part tied to the perception of mass uncontrolled movement of people, and the global war on terror discourse that contributes to linking ‘terrorist’ and ‘Muslim’ in the public consciousness. From there, it has been only a short step for these words to become linked with ‘refugee’ as well. Categories of ‘religion’, ‘conflict’ and ‘violence’ have already been tied to one another in social imaginaries in Euro-American contexts for some time (Cavanaugh 2009). In the context of the mass migration of displaced people driven by intractable civil war in Syria, the rise of ISIS, alongside existing refugee producing ‘hotspots’, such as Eritrea and Afghanistan (UNHCR 2015), ‘religion’, ‘conflict/violence/terror’ and ‘refugees’ is also becoming increasingly entangled in media, policy narratives and public discourses across numerous contexts.

A central theme of this book is that this entanglement of ‘refugee’, ‘violence/conflict/terror’ and ‘religion’ is contributing to the production of narrow policy responses, exclusionary politics and a growing trend towards ‘securitizing’ forced migration, rather than treating the global refugee crisis primarily as a question of humanitarianism, or solidarity with fellow human beings. Our goal, consequently, by bringing together a diversity of voices and perspectives that both support and challenge one another, is first to explore in detail how these categories are entangled and operate in current discourses and approaches to the refugee crisis. Second, in outlining these dynamics we hope to open up new avenues and alternative approaches to thinking about and responding to religion and the refugee crisis.

In this opening chapter, we set out the key parameters of the debates to which this book speaks, namely debates over religion and politics, religious identity and the refugee crisis, and the increasing securitization of migration in a context where, disturbingly, lines are increasingly blurred between the categories of ‘refugee’, ‘terrorist’ and ‘Muslim’. We begin with a broad overview of the contours of the current refugee crisis, raising a number of questions regarding to what extent the present moment can and should be considered a ‘crisis’, and the perceived main factors producing it. From there, we outline key emerging trends in the critical study of religion and politics in international relations and religious studies. These include the contested nature of ‘religion’ as a category in contemporary politics and the critique of dominant narratives in politics and public policy about religion. While religion is no longer ignored, as was once the case, emerging narratives still position and evaluate it as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ with reference to secularist perspectives and assumptions.

We then note how similar discourses of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ also permeate discussions of two other categories that are central to the current moment – ‘Muslim’ and ‘refugee’. In each case, these dominant narratives and categorizations reduce the agency of refugees in particular, but also self-identified religious organizations and agencies working in the asylum, displacement and protection sectors, as our contributors explore in depth (see, e.g. Ager and Ager, Kidwai, and Beaman, Selby and Barras).

Finally, we provide a brief overview of the contributions to this book, noting how they speak to each of these different concerns and open up new angles through which to think in more nuanced terms about the relationships between categories of ‘religion’ and ‘refugee’ and to acknowledge the culpability and responsibility of political leaders and populations the world over in contributing to this humanitarian emergency.

## **THE WORST DISPLACEMENT CRISIS SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE PLACE OF RELIGION**

The scale of the refugee crisis in the early twenty-first century has become something of a household fact. Record numbers of over 65 million people are displaced worldwide (UNHCR 2016). Yet as the UNHCR (2015) notes, it is not merely the number of people who are displaced, but the pace at which they have become displaced. The refugee crisis has seen rapid acceleration since 2014, largely as a result of new crises emerging in Syria, Iraq and Burundi, to name a few, alongside on-going conflicts in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia (UNHCR 2015: 5). The effects of this in humanitarian terms are mass overcrowding in refugee camps in countries surrounding the conflict zones (Dobbs 2016; McDonald-Gibson 2013),

increasing flows of irregular migration to Europe, North America and Australia and, in connection with this, increased numbers of deaths on deadly land and sea routes (IOM 2016). This means that the majority of the world's refugees (86%) are hosted in developing countries, where infrastructure is poor and resources are scarce (UNHCR 2015).

There is, however, an additional factor that is exacerbating the already serious consequences of the size and speed of the displacement crisis, namely the lack of political will across multiple contexts to accept refugees and displaced persons. In some cases, this is simply the result of practicalities – many neighbouring developing countries are already overwhelmed with refugees and simply do not have the capacity to accept any more (Dobbs 2016). This, however, is not the case for developed countries. As the OECD (2015) notes, with regard to Europe, it is not the numbers of refugees generating this 'crisis', since Europe has the capacity and experience to deal with large movements of people. 'Crisis' also implies an event that has happened suddenly and unexpectedly. As several commentators have noted, the current situation has been developing over several years and can hardly be said to have caught policymakers unaware (Kingsley, Rice-Oxley and Nardelli 2015; *The Guardian* 2015). EU leaders' failure to formulate joint, coherent responses is also a crucial factor in the generation of the so-called crisis (Roth 2016). Indeed, the refugee crisis in many respects lays bare cracks in the European project that were hitherto unobserved, or at least unacknowledged (Reguly 2015). Despite priding itself on its commitment to humanitarianism, human rights, democracy and cosmopolitan ideals of international citizenship, with few exceptions (notably Germany and Sweden), the European response to the refugee crisis has been to implement increasingly hard line migration policies and deploy harsh exclusionary rhetoric (Daley 2016). Europe is not alone here. In the early phases of the European crisis in 2015, European leaders explicitly highlighted the deterrence-driven Australian model of mandatory detention, offshore processing and third-country resettlement as a serious policy option for the European context (Davies and Orchard 2015; Zamfir 2015).

Arguably, the principal catalyst for these increasingly harsh immigration policies and growing exclusionary discourses is the question of 'religion', in particular 'Islam'. Alexander Betts (2016) has labelled Islam 'the elephant in the room', the primary reason states are unwilling to accept refugees generated by the Syrian conflict in particular. Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, has argued that right-wing opposition to accepting refugees is ultimately not about employment, social welfare or management. 'What it is really about is that they are Muslim' (quoted in Lyman 2015). Some states, notably in Eastern Europe, have openly acknowledged this, declaring that they will only accept Christian refugees from Syria (BBC 2015a). Similar statements emerged early on in the 2016 US presidential race, as Hurd explores in her chapter in this book, and were also voiced by

the Abbott government in Australia (Henderson and Uhlman 2015). These stances, we suggest, are fuelled by numerous assumptions about the nature of 'religion' in general, of 'Islam' in particular, and the relationship between 'religion', 'Islam', 'violence' and 'refugees'. However, they are also the result of the assumed 'secular' nature of Euro-American states and the perceived incompatibility of 'religion' and 'Islam' to peacefully co-exist within and alongside secular political values. These assumptions are not new, but have been part of the emergence of secularism as a political ideology and model of statecraft since the Enlightenment (Asad 2003; Casanova 2011).

Yet it is not just at the level of the state that 'religion' has become entangled with policy and public discourses on the refugee crisis. Neither are the ways in which 'religion' intersects with the crisis as reactionary and exclusionary as those discussed in connection with state policies. In recent years, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), for example, has sought to develop its 'religious literacy' through greater engagement with faith leaders and more nuanced understanding of local faith communities. Examples of this drive include the 2012 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection and the 2014 Note on partnership with faith-based organizations and local faith communities (UNHCR 2012; 2014a). Long before the present crisis moment, religious civil society organizations were crucial providers of assistance and support to refugees and asylum seekers, often stepping in to fill the gaps left by the increasing privatization of state services (Eby et al. 2011; Lynch 2011; Wilson 2011). Religious organizations continue to be key service providers in the present context, as Carriere and Kidwai highlight in their contributions, reflecting on their work with Jesuit Refugee Services and Islamic Relief, respectively. Further, as the contributions from Squire and 'Gabriel' and Beaman, Selby and Barras highlight, 'religion' and 'faith' are important dynamics that shape and are shaped by the lived experiences of refugees and migrants themselves. Yet this interaction occurs in complex ways that often defy the dominant categorizations of 'secular' and 'religious' and their associated assumptions that scholars and policymakers frequently seek to apply to the lives of refugees and migrants. All of these dynamics point to the need to question and rethink our approaches to 'religion' and its relationship with the 'refugee crisis'.

## FROM SECULARIZATION TO 'GOOD' AND 'BAD' RELIGION

These divergent trends are reflective of broader dynamics regarding religion, global politics and public life more generally. Despite increased emphasis on and engagement with 'religion' in the context of the refugee crisis, discussions are still dominated to a large extent by secularist assumptions about the nature of 'religion' and its relationship with politics, and by narratives of

'good religion/bad religion'. Scholars working at the intersection of religious studies, law, migration, development and international relations have roundly critiqued these dominant discourses in recent years (Barras 2014; Beaman 2012; Berger 2007; Hurd 2015c; Jones and Juul Petersen 2011; Mavelli 2012; Wilson 2012). These narratives have largely replaced assumptions of secularization theory that religion would eventually die out and was therefore irrelevant to politics and public life (Berger 1999; Casanova 1994). Religion rather than disappearing has become increasingly more prominent, both as a source of peace and tolerance and as a source of violence and terrorism. The issue now, according to the good religion/bad religion discourse, is to facilitate contributions from religion that support peace, human rights, development, gender equality and so on, while minimizing those aspects of religion that contribute to violence, intolerance and chaos (Hurd 2015c). In the context of the refugee crisis, this narrative manifests in the form of religion identified as a source of persecution that causes people to flee ('bad religion'), as well as a source of support for refugees and forced migrants, both in terms of their personal spiritual journey and in the form of faith-based organizations that provide practical support for refugees. This is not to say that such dynamics do not exist or are not important. Religious identity is a significant source of persecution that causes people to flee. Numerous scholars, including some of the contributors to this book (Goździak and Shandy 2002; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Wilson 2011, 2014) have noted the presence of these trends in the field of forced migration. What we do suggest in this book, however, is that these dynamics are not the full story. To simply understand 'religion' in terms of either 'good' or 'bad' maintains religion's subordination to the secular in contemporary public discourses. In order to develop more nuanced analyses and responses to the contemporary refugee crisis, we need to broaden our understanding of what 'religion' is, noting its infinite variation across different cultural and political contexts and levels, and the politics that sit behind how 'religion' is defined and used in relation to the contemporary refugee crisis. Further, we must be conscious that the categories of 'religion' and 'secular', as well as categories of 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', 'forced migrant' and so on, do not necessarily resonate with the worldviews, frames and narratives of a majority of the people who are most directly affected by the crisis.

### **'GOOD MUSLIM, BAD MUSLIM', 'GOOD REFUGEE, BAD REFUGEE'**

While this narrative of 'good' and 'bad' applies to religions in general, it has become most obvious and acute in relation to Islam. Mahmood Mamdani (2002, 2004) noted this already in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

The dominant political discourse that emerged did not just emphasize the connection between Islam and terrorism, but also urged us ‘to distinguish “good Muslims” from “bad Muslims”’ (Mamdani 2002: 766). George W. Bush (2001), for instance, remarked shortly after the attacks that ‘those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself.’ Similarly, in a statement delivered shortly after the 7/7 London Bombings, Tony Blair stressed that ‘the vast and overwhelming majority of Muslims, here and abroad, are decent and law-abiding people who abhor this act of terrorism every bit as much as we do’ (Blair 2005). More recently, he remarked that those who commit terrorist acts in the name of Islam contradict ‘the proper teaching of the Koran’ (Blair 2014). While these statements could be cast as attempts to de-essentialize Islam by emphasizing that violence is not an endemic feature of Islam, but only the product of some ‘bad Muslims’, this ‘good Muslim, bad Muslim’ narrative has also contributed to constructing ‘good Muslims’ as devoid of agency and victims of a growing ‘radicalized and politicized view of Islam’ (Blair 2014) that they are clearly unable to resist.

From this perspective, the calls for Western intervention against Islamic extremists worldwide that have routinely punctuated global politics since 9/11 do not just provide a reductionist cultural explanation of complex phenomena (such as ISIS), but also convey an implicit understanding of Muslims as victims of their own culture and as such completely devoid of agency. Similarly, the recurrent request from Western governments and civil society to ‘good Muslims’ to distance themselves from extremist violence, followed by an equally recurrent discourse that Muslims may not have voiced their distance as clearly and loudly as they should, reproduces the stereotype of Muslims as unable to shake off the chains of an oppressive culture. As Mamdani puts it, this narrative constructs Muslims as

hav[ing] no history, no politics, and no debates ... [as having] petrified into a lifeless custom ... incapable of transforming their culture, the way they seem incapable of growing their own food. *The implication is that their salvation lies, as always, in philanthropy, in being saved from the outside.* (Mamdani 2002: 767, emphasis added)

The construction of Muslims as agency-less victims of their own tradition, whose only hopes rest on external salvation, draws on an Orientalist tradition that is currently reproduced in Western and particularly European approaches towards refugees. This approach is epitomized by the UK decision in September 2015 to take 20,000 Syrian refugees over a period of 5 years directly from camps in Syria’s neighbouring countries, namely Turkey,

Jordan and Lebanon, and that the refugees would be selected on the basis of need: ‘We will take the most vulnerable, we will take disabled children, we will take women who have been raped, we will take men who have suffered torture’ (UK prime minister David Cameron, cited in BBC News 2015b). As Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh explains in this book, this approach reflects a ‘good refugee, bad refugee’ narrative. Good refugees are women, children and male victims of violence who patiently wait in refugee camps to be rescued by British/European/Western saviours. Bad refugees are those who exercise agency by engaging in ‘proactive livelihood and survival strategies’ such as crossing Sub-Saharan Africa or the Mediterranean in order to seek refuge in Europe. Bad refugees challenge the script ‘refugee=victim’ thus becoming a ‘swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean’ (UK prime minister David Cameron, cited in BBC News 2015c), “‘queue jumpers’” and “‘bogus asylum-seekers’” who are jeopardising the protection claims made by “‘real’” (i.e. “‘good’”) refugees’ (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, this book). The ‘good Muslim, bad Muslim’ distinction is deeply intertwined with the ‘good refugee, bad refugee narrative’ because, as José Casanova has pointed out, particularly in the case of Europe,

immigration and Islam are almost synonymous. The overwhelming majority of immigrants in most European countries ... are Muslims and the overwhelming majority of Western European Muslims are immigrants. ... This entails a superimposition of different dimensions of ‘otherness’ that exacerbates issues of boundaries, accommodation and incorporation. The immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socio-economic disprivileged “other” all tend to coincide. (Casanova, 2006b: 76)

If considered in their overlapping dimension, the ‘good religion, bad religion’, ‘good Muslim, bad Muslim’ and ‘good refugee, bad refugee’ divides contribute to explaining in Europe, and also in North America and Australia, not just the growing importance of religious identity in the politics of migration and refugees, but also the hierarchization of refugees according to religious-racial attributes. Thus, several European countries, including Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Cyprus, have either outright refused to take in Muslim refugees or expressed strong preferences towards Christian refugees on the grounds that, as Christian countries, they have the obligation to defend their culture and identity (Lyman 2015), which would be threatened by a large presence of Muslims, and that their duty of solidarity should be primarily towards other Christians particularly if they have been the object of religious persecution. Likewise, in the United States, presidential candidate Ted Cruz (cited in Zezima, 2015) stated that the country should only accept Christian refugees (and in particular those being persecuted) because, unlike



Muslims, ‘there is no meaningful risk of Christians committing acts of terror’, a sentiment that ignores instances of mass violence that Christian groups, such as the Army of God, have engaged in (Juergensmeyer 2000), as well as overlooking the considerable fear and harm that rising anti-Islamic attacks, committed by Christians and atheists alike, have on the Muslim community in the United States (RTNews 2015). Other presidential candidates, including Jeb Bush and Donald Trump, made similar statements in the aftermath of the Paris attacks in November 2015, as Hurd discusses in her contribution. Trump went so far as to propose a total ban on Muslims entering the United States (Diamond 2015). In Australia, former prime minister Tony Abbott used the prevention of terrorism as a justification for the government’s harsh immigration regime, highlighting their success in ‘stopping the boats’ as a foundation for ‘stopping the jihadis’, further cementing the linkages between refugees and asylum seekers, terrorists and Islam in the public consciousness (Abbott 2014).

These statements suggest that at the top of the hierarchy are Christian refugees, ideally victims of religious (Muslim) persecution. They are followed by Muslim refugees/victims, such as those waiting in camps for British/American/Australian salvation, and the ‘womanandchild’ or child refugee, who symbolize the quintessence of vulnerability. Indeed, the UK decision to take 20,000 Syrians from refugee camps came in response to the emotional wave caused by the death of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian boy of Kurdish ethnic background, who drowned off the coast of the Turkish city of Bodrum on 2 September 2015. The picture of his lifeless body peacefully lying on the shore sparked a large outcry all over the world. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh observes in this book, another category that has gained growing sympathy is that of the ‘Muslim man carrying a child’, as epitomized by the images of ‘Laith Majid weeping in relief as he reaches the island of Kos holding his 7-year-old daughter in his arms and hugging his 9-year-old son; an exhausted father with a sleeping child on his arm; Abdul Halim Attar – the Palestinian refugee from Syria who came to be known as “the pen-seller of Beirut” – with his sleeping daughter on his shoulder’. At the bottom of this hierarchy are the ‘bad refugees’, the majority, mostly represented by Muslims who escape the ‘victim script’ and try to take matters into their own hands by venturing to the ‘North’ across dangerous and illegal routes.

This biopolitical hierarchy is essential to understand Western initiatives, such as the UK decision in October 2014 to no longer support search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean and in September 2015 to take 20,000 refugees directly from Syrian camps over a period of 5 years. The official explanation of these initiatives is that search and rescue operations and taking refugees already in Europe would act as ‘unintended “pull factors”, encouraging more migrants to attempt the dangerous sea crossing and thereby

leading to more tragic and unnecessary deaths' (UK foreign office minister Lady Anelay, cited in Travis 2014). This explanation is tenuous to say the least, given that the small number of places offered by the United Kingdom would arguably do little to discourage migrants from risking their lives trying to reach Europe. The UK initiative can thus be read through the lens of the 'bad refugees' narrative: those (Muslim) refugees who reject their status as victims and exercise agency are not worthy of protection. In fact, they are a threat as they pose a fundamental challenge to sovereign power's prerogative 'of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die' (Foucault, 2003: 254). Accordingly, migrant deaths in the Mediterranean and along other illegal routes in the attempt to reach a better life become a responsibility of migrants themselves. The 'bad (Muslim) refugee' biopolitical narrative teaches us that 'when immigrants drown by the hundreds in the Mediterranean', it is ultimately 'their fault' because 'they should not have come to take resources that were needed for "our own people" in a time of austerity' (Carr 2015).

While the overlapping dimensions of 'good religion, bad religion', 'good Muslim, bad Muslim' and 'good refugee, bad refugee' provide important cues, a more thorough understanding of the biopolitics of migration and refugees requires us to consider these dimensions in a broader biopolitical narrative of crisis. Far from being an objective condition stemming from seemingly exceptional events (such as the conflicts in Syria, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, the rise of ISIS, the economic recession, water and food scarcity, global warming), matched by a Western incapacity to confront them, the protean narrative of crisis that has come to dominate modern political life represents itself as a form of governance. The notion of crisis as governance has been explored by numerous scholars (see Brassett and Williams 2012; Roitman 2013; Butler and Athanasiou 2013) who have pointed out how the multiple regimes of crises that govern our lives – economic crisis, financial crisis, political crisis, environmental crisis, housing crisis, credit crisis, energy crisis – shape the range of political possibilities, convey a fundamental acceptance of current predicaments and shift responsibility from governments to individuals, thus resulting in the construction of resilient subjects whose only rational strategy of survival is the acceptance of the status quo and adapting to externally imposed changes (Walker and Cooper 2011; Joseph 2013).

When it comes to migration and refugees, we want to suggest crisis as governance establishes an indefinite state of exception that authorizes a decisionist notion of sovereignty in a deeply racialized framework where the 'bad Muslim refugee' is perceived as the embodiment of an 'inferior species' that threatens our survival and well-being. Bad (Muslim) refugees are thus reduced to bare lives, namely lives that can be 'killed with impunity' (Agamben 1998) in a climate of general indifference: an indifference which

has resulted in the quiet transformation of the Mediterranean into a graveyard (with over 20,000 deaths in the last 20 years and about 4,000 deaths in 2015 alone; see [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)) and only occasionally shaken by the death of ‘good refugees’ such as ‘women and children’.

The increasingly harsh and strict measures introduced in the Australian context since 2013, which have served as inspiration for some political leaders in the European context, followed in the wake of significant numbers of deaths of asylum seekers travelling by boat. In June of 2012, the then prime minister Julia Gillard appointed Angus Houston, Michael L’Estrange and Paris Aristotle to investigate measures to reduce the number of migrants drowning at sea in attempts to reach Australia (Coorey, Ireland and Wright 2012). The appointment of the expert panel followed a spate of drownings between December 2011 and June 2012 that resulted in over 400 deaths (Border Crossing Observatory 2016). The subsequent deaths of another approximately 120 migrants in the two weeks following the release of the report (Border Crossing Observatory 2016) further strengthened bipartisan support for the implementation of the measures recommended by the panel, which included mandatory offshore processing for boat arrivals, the removal of family reunion concessions for boat arrivals and turning back irregular vessels (Houston, Aristotle and L’Estrange 2012: 14–18). Subsequently, the Gillard and Abbott Governments also implemented regional settlement arrangements with Papua New Guinea, Nauru and Cambodia, whereby irregular maritime arrivals are permanently resettled in these countries, and never in Australia (Zamfir 2015). The Houston Report and subsequent statements from politicians argue that these measures are necessary to save lives (Houston, Aristotle and L’Estrange: 7; Cullen 2012; Barlow 2013). As William Maley points out, however, such policies are not about ‘saving lives’ or preventing ‘unnecessary deaths’. ‘The real message of the new Australian approach is a simple one: “Go and die somewhere else”’ (Maley 2013).

## MIGRANTS OR REFUGEES?

The hierarchy of refugees previously discussed should therefore be understood as part of a biopolitical racialized order that is enacted through the seemingly reasonable, legitimate and morally fair distinction between ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’. What traditionally distinguishes these two groups is the element of voluntariness. According to the International Organization for Migration, the term ‘migrants’ applies to ‘all cases where the decision to migrate was taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of “personal convenience” [improvement of material and social conditions] and without intervention of an external compelling factor’ (<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>). On the

other hand, the 1951 Convention defines the refugee as someone who has been forced to flee his or her country ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion’ (<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>). This distinction has significant biopolitical implications as it constructs refugees as subjects in need – as people who deserve protection and who need to be treated humanely – and migrants as commodified labor whose acceptance is subordinated to the economic needs of the host country.

Albeit seemingly uncontroversial, this distinction is problematic, largely because it is a primarily bureaucratic distinction aimed at providing easy categories through which to determine whether an individual is in need/deserving of protection or not. Yet, the lived realities of migration are extremely blurred on the ground and do not easily conform to these categories, rendering them untenable. Individual experiences of persecution are not the only factors that contribute to people living in daily fear of their lives and forcing them to flee in search of safety. Betts (2013) has called this ‘Survival Migration’. He argues that the provisions of the Refugee Convention, with their emphasis on the violation and abuse of human rights, are a reflection of the post-Second World War political climate, when understandings of displacement were informed by the individual persecution witnessed as part of the Holocaust and the onset of the ideological conflict of the Cold War. As he emphasizes, the nature of displacement has transformed dramatically since then. Betts argues instead that dealing with asylum and refuge requests requires a focus on the deprivation of rights, not just their violation (Betts 2013). This would enable the recognition of other dynamics beyond individual persecution that threaten people’s lives in the contemporary context, including mass indiscriminate violence, endemic poverty, climate change and political instability. Gabriel’s story, as transcribed in the chapter by Vicki Squire, attests to the complex factors that contribute to a person undertaking a journey of migration, and that the line between ‘forced’ and ‘unforced’ is rarely easy to define in practice. As Jørgen Carling observes:

A Nigerian arriving in Italy might have left Nigeria for reasons other than a fear of persecution, but ended up fleeing extreme danger in Libya. Conversely, a Syrian might have crossed into Jordan and found safety from the war, but been prompted by the bleak prospects of indeterminate camp life to make the onward journey to Europe. Regardless of the legal status that each one obtains in Europe, they are both migrants who have made difficult decisions, who deserve our compassion, and whose rights need to be ensured. (Carling 2015)

Debates over which and how terms should be used in the context of asylum and displacement have been going on for years (see, e.g. Castles 2000).

Fully aware of the politics surrounding terminology in the debate, we deliberately chose to use the term ‘The Refugee Crisis’ in the title of this book. In doing so, we by no means seek to diminish the important legal distinctions that are made between these different categories. This book, however, is focused more on the political and societal discourses and dynamics surrounding the crisis, rather than the strict legal regulations and guidelines. In current discourses, ‘refugee’ carries fewer pejorative connotations than ‘migrant’ or ‘asylum seeker’ (Ruz 2015). Further, we suggest that calling the current moment a ‘refugee’ crisis, rather than a migration or displacement crisis, enables the retention of a focus on the lived human experiences of being forced from one’s home. Finally, we want to encourage a broader understanding of the factors that threaten people’s lives and lead to them fleeing their country of origin and at the same time encourage a broader conceptualization of what it means to be a ‘refugee’. Concurrently, however, through this book we are seeking to trouble the categories that are used to talk about ‘refugees’, ‘migrants’, ‘displacement’, ‘crises’, ‘Muslims’, ‘Christians’, ‘religion’ and ‘secularism’. As such, the title of the book should be broadly interpreted, as the contributions to this book do.

### ‘POSTSECULARIZING’ THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Bringing all of these themes and goals together, it is possible to describe this book as an attempt to ‘postsecularize’ analyses of the refugee crisis. The concept of the postsecular and postsecularism as a theoretical perspective have recently emerged in response to the perceived continued importance of ‘religion’ in politics and public life. It has been driven in part by the work of Jürgen Habermas, though Habermasian postsecularism has rightly been criticized for retaining a secularist perspective on religion (Pabst 2012) and for rendering religion as a disembodied intellectual activity (Mavelli 2012). Many dynamic approaches to postsecularism focus on its possibilities for critique of the secular, ‘prompted by the idea that values such as democracy, freedom, equality, inclusion and justice may not necessarily be best pursued within an exclusively immanent secular framework. Quite the opposite, the secular may be a site of isolation, domination, violence and exclusion’ (Mavelli and Petito 2012: 931). Taking this critique a step further, the very act of categorizing ideas, practices, organizations and people into either ‘secular’ or ‘religious’ may in itself be an act of violence, since these categories do not mean the same things nor necessarily even make sense across all times and all places.

Contrary to predominantly secular analyses of the refugee crisis, this book takes neither ‘religion’ nor ‘secularism’ as clearly defined, predetermined

categories. Neither do we assume singular meanings and definitions of categories such as ‘Muslim’, ‘Christian’, ‘Islam’ in the context of the refugee crisis. Rather, we understand ‘the religious’ and ‘the secular’ as conceptual distinctions and social constructions, deployed in the service of particular ideological and political agendas within and beyond the politics of the refugee crisis, distinctions that in reality are increasingly difficult to maintain. We combine this with a predominantly constructivist approach to conceptualizations of the categories of ‘refugee’, ‘migrant’ and ‘crisis’ in an effort to open up new spaces for considering how the relationships among these different categories operate in theory and in practice.

Yet postsecularizing the refugee crisis is not simply about questioning conceptual distinctions and categorizations. Such questioning lays important groundwork, but it contributes to maintaining the dominance of secular perspectives, by positioning ‘religion’ and ‘belief’ as largely intellectual activities, rather than as lived and embodied experiences (Mavelli and Wilson 2016). It is for this reason that we have sought to combine a multiplicity of perspectives, from scholars (Ager, Barbato, Baumgart-Ochse), to practitioners (Carriere, Kidwai), to refugees and migrants themselves (Beaman, Selby and Barras and Gabriel and Squire). We have also endeavoured to combine a range of analyses that explore various levels of global politics from individual and grassroots perspectives (Lant, Gabriel and Squire, Beaman et al., McGuirk and Niedzwiecki), to the national (Hurd, Wagenvoorde) and international institutional perspectives (Falk). Through combining each of these different perspectives, we hope to stress the need for complex, multifaceted, nuanced analyses of the refugee crisis, of ‘religion’ and of how they intersect with one another, as well as contribute to moving postsecular theorizing beyond a focus on purely cognitive approaches to one that combines both conceptual and lived, embodied experiences.

Nonetheless, there is an important caveat to raise about postsecular theorizing. One of our primary goals with the book is to question the categories that are deployed in the context of the refugee crisis and in relation to religion. Given the multiplicity and complexity that is to be found in relation to both at the level of lived experiences, efforts at classification are potentially futile. Further, there is a danger that utilizing a framework that, while questioning and destabilizing the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’, nonetheless retains them as analytical categories, does little to challenge the dominance of secularism. As both Pabst (2012) and Birnbaum (2015) have argued, any framework that retains the concepts of ‘religion’ and ‘secular’, even in the form of the ‘postsecular’, runs the risk of replicating the hierarchical divisions and inequalities that it is endeavouring to escape. This is because it maintains some of the assumptions of the secular/religious binary – in particular that ‘religion’ is something distinct and separate from the ‘secular’. Aware of

these shortcomings of the postsecular approach, we do not see this book as a definitive answer to the question of how to move beyond predominantly secular modes of analysing religion and the refugee crisis. Rather, it is a departure point from which new categories and frameworks can be developed and applied.

A final word on the contributions – in addition to opening up innovative conceptual spaces for discussing religion and the refugee crisis, an additional goal of the book was to introduce innovation in terms of the format of volumes on such societally and politically relevant topics. As such, the contributions in this book range from critical analytical scholarly analysis to shorter more reflective pieces from practitioners, to chapters that seek to combine the voices of scholars and refugees. The result, we hope, is a conceptually and programmatically rich assortment of pieces that all contribute to rethinking the relationships and connections involved in the refugee crisis and religion.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The discussion begins with a contribution by **Richard Falk**, who argues that the current refugee crisis should be understood as the product of a world that is at once realist and neo-liberal. This is a world in which the security of states matters more than the dignity of people, and ‘money and trade have a far more robust entitlement to mobility across borders than do people’. This is reflected in current dominant political debates, which have focused more on the impact of migrants on host (Western) countries – as a threat to identity, cohesion and the economy – ‘with scant consideration given to upholding the *human dignity* of those who seek refuge’. For Falk, the global refugee crisis ‘can be examined as an insoluble collective goods problem of global scope’ in which ‘the different and competing orientations of states inhibit agreement on a cooperative solution based on the aggregation of national interests’. What is fundamentally missing in the current neo-liberal world of nation-states is thus a fundamental lack of humanity, which may enable a reconceptualization of the refugee ‘other’ from a threat to a fellow human being.

### ‘Questioning the Secular/Religious Divide’

The chapters in the first section of the book, ‘*Questioning the secular/religious divide*’, raise numerous questions over the utility of this framework for making sense of multiple aspects of the refugee crisis, from international and state-level responses to grassroots civil society and humanitarian organizations. One such question concerns the assumptions that are continually made about ‘religion’ and its relationship with violence and intolerance. As these

contributions maintain, neither secularism nor religion holds a monopoly over intolerance or inclusion. Indeed, the moral resources available in different religious traditions and communities may be harnessed – and indeed, are already being deployed – not only to challenge the egoism of a state-centric neo-liberal world, but also to promote a vision of solidarity beyond the limits of secularism. As **Alastair and Joey Ager** discuss in their contribution, this requires understanding the global resurgence of religion not simply as a threat to secular frameworks of actions, but as an opportunity to complement a secular logic of solidarity that dominates global humanitarianism, often concerned with rationality, neutrality and materiality and, as a result, largely alien to those who are the primary recipients of the support offered. Indeed, they argue that the secular privatization, marginalization and instrumentalization of religion can result in neglecting the spiritual needs of refugees and in overlooking important spiritual and moral resources that would contribute to furthering important policies of protection or gender discrimination. Even more, religious language and reasoning can be essential to understand experiences of suffering and exile and to respond accordingly. As such, local faith communities, drawing on their spiritual capital, should be – and indeed already are – playing a key role in taking care of migrants’ needs and hopes, ‘keep[ing] alive the imagination of an alternative future for forced migrants and our response to their circumstances’.

The ethos, to be sure, is not to privilege religious over secular approaches to solidarity, but to appreciate how the two may benefit from cross-contamination and cross-fertilization, in the assumption that what matters is the person cared for. From this perspective, **Bethan Lant** suggests that the gulf between secular and religious faith-based organizations working with vulnerable migrants should be reconsidered. Drawing on her experience as Project Lead at Praxis Community Projects, a secular organization based in the East End of London that works with vulnerable migrants, she considers that what defines her and her co-workers is not their faith or lack thereof, but ‘a desire to work with marginalized communities and individuals to improve their lot’. The very fact that Praxis operates in a building originally built as a church contributes to blurring the line between secular and religious frameworks of meaning and action in delivering assistance and support to vulnerable migrants. For sure, faith-based organizations have often been considered less professional than secular ones, similarly disguising a proselytizing intent, and often providing services, such as prayer groups or chaplaincy, that secular organizations do not provide. Yet, her experience at Praxis conveys a framework of action in which solidarity and care are testimony of faith conveyed through the language of human rights in order to cater for vulnerable migrants, independently of their religious affiliation, in an ultimately post-secular framework where caring for the other is the ultimate ethos.



For **Renée Wagenvoorde**, moving beyond the secular and the religious is essential to overcome the exclusionary dimension that is attached to these categories. With secularism, she argues, “‘religion’ is seen as a fixed and unchanging category; a category that is subjective and irrational, and that needs to be subordinated to ‘the secular’, which is perceived to be neutral and universally applicable’. This hierarchy becomes instrumental to sustain the process of ‘selfing’ and ‘othering’ through which ‘European countries view themselves as rational and modern, in comparison with an irrational and pre-modern “other”’ overwhelmingly embodied by Islam. This inevitably impacts upon refugee politics, whose underlying logics of solidarity become disconnected from universal ideas of unity and justice, while emphasizing communitarian logics of kinship and identity. Drawing on social psychology, Wagenvoorde argues that a multifaceted interpretation of identity is essential to move beyond this impasse and in particular beyond the construction of Muslim refugees as inassimilable because they are ultimately ‘other’ to Western European modernity. Challenging this perspective requires, as the title of the second section of this book suggests, ‘deconstructing the Muslim refugee’.

### ‘Deconstructing the Muslim Refugee’

The contributions in this section build on the critiques of religious/secular categorizations, seeking, in different ways, to subvert dominant understandings and characterizations of both ‘Muslim’ and ‘refugee’ in public discourses across multiple contexts. **Lori Beaman, Jennifer Selby and Amélie Barras** explore the place of religion in Canada’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis. They pursue this from a number of different angles, all of which address the fundamental question of how ‘religion’ and, particularly, the identities of Muslim and Christian refugees are constructed in public discourses surrounding the refugee crisis. Across these different angles, from policies of the Harper and Trudeau governments to the role of Christian faith-based service providers in refugee resettlement, there are a number of factors they note that may contribute to refugees adopting ‘exaggerated or reconfigured religious identities’. The authors highlight the problematic power dynamics inherent in religious, particularly Christian, frameworks of hospitality to the stranger which often result in putatively ascribing spiritual needs to refugees who may actually be devoid of them. This analysis complements the chapters of Ager and Ager, Goździak and Kidwai, which emphasize the often neglected spiritual needs of refugees, and highlight how a construction of Syrian refugees as pious Muslims by default may equate to their ‘otherization’. Drawing on interviews conducted with Muslims in Quebec and Newfoundland, the authors challenge such essentialized constructions of refugee

religious identities by emphasizing the diversity of experiences, perspectives and (non-)engagements with ‘religion’ that permeate the Muslim community in Canada. In this way, Beaman, Selby and Barras encourage us not to over-emphasize or over-essentialize religious identity in the context of the current refugee crisis.

**Elizabeth Shakman Hurd** takes issue with a different kind of essentialization occurring in public discourses on the refugee crisis – the view that ‘to be Muslim ... is to harbour a propensity for violence’, a narrative that cuts across the ‘good religion, bad religion’, ‘good Muslim, bad Muslim’ dichotomies we noted above. Through a series of examples, Hurd notes the potential dangers that can arise when religion is foregrounded as a factor in conflict and violence, rather than taking into consideration the sociopolitical dynamics that are at stake, a problem which affects contemporary analysis of both the refugee crisis and global terrorism. She shows how assumptions about the inherently violent nature of Islam that permeate discourses on terrorism have been picked up in political discourses surrounding the refugee crisis to justify the exclusion of Muslims. ‘To suggest that Muslims are fuelling the violence *because* they are Muslim, and that Christians are inherently non-violent, taps into and feeds a powerful discourse casting Muslims as perpetrators of violence and non-Muslims as their innocent victims.’ Hurd goes on to note that this position also ignores the variation, eclecticism and adaptive nature of religious subjects. Their engagement with their religion is constantly evolving and shifting dependent on experience and context. As such, not only does Hurd contribute to deconstructing dominant narratives through which ‘Muslim’, ‘refugee’ and ‘terrorist’ become entangled, she also raises serious questions over the category of ‘religion’ itself more generally.

The variation and adaptive nature of religious subjects is acutely brought through in the encounter between a refugee named ‘**Gabriel**’ and **Vicki Squire**, transcribed and narrated here by Squire. As Squire notes, Gabriel’s experiences in many respects defy the usual categories we utilize to make sense of both ‘religion’ and ‘the refugee crisis’. Gabriel is neither a forced nor a voluntary, political or economic migrant – he is all of these, and many others besides. Gabriel’s story relates first-hand the situation described by Carling, above, where a plurality of factors and circumstances contributes to threatening a person’s life and forcing them to flee, in one way or another. As Squire describes it, ‘Gabriel’s story starkly demonstrates how journeys are rarely “voluntary” in any straightforward way, and how even when people do not qualify strictly as forced or “political” migrants they can nevertheless be escaping conditions that necessitate movement. This story thus highlights how fragmented and fluid journeys do not neatly fit into the migratory categories that Europeans have created and sustained over time’. Gabriel’s story also challenges other dominant narratives surrounding religion in the refugee

crisis, namely that religion can produce a kind of fatalism and thus passivity among religious subjects, a view that is the product, Squire argues, of secular biases. Importantly, she notes how postsecular analysis of the refugee crisis can contribute to highlighting continuities, rather than oppositions, between the religious and the secular, in addition to acknowledging diverse forms of political agency and subjectivity that subvert prevailing categorizations enforced by secular ontologies.

In the concluding chapter of this section, **Elżbieta Goździak** explores the US spiritual response to the suffering of 20,000 Kosovar refugees resettled in the United States in 1999. Goździak discusses how there was a general tendency to ‘medicalize the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians’ and to neglect the role of religion and spirituality in the well-being of the refugees, despite the fact that religious persecution is one of the elements of the UN definition of a refugee. Kosovar Albanians did not perceive themselves as victims, but primarily as survivors. This raised several moral questions which transcended a medical-psychiatric condition. Islam played a crucial role in the decoding of their traumatic experience and so did prayers and common rituals as a way to bring solace and relief. The analysis thus highlights how Islam as part of the everyday life of refugees may be an essential and holistic dimension of subjectivity, which enables the refugee to make sense of their experience and life in a new setting. This case is all the more relevant considering the large number of Syrian refugees entering Western life on a daily basis.

### ‘Religious Traditions of Hospitality in Theory and Practice’

Religion is thus essential to get a full appreciation of the needs of refugees as well as, going back to Falk’s argument, to re-instil in the current neo-liberal world of nation-states a fundamental dimension of humanity, which may enable a reconceptualization of the refugee ‘other’ from a threat to a fellow human being. To this end, the scholars and practitioners whose contributions constitute the third section, *Religious traditions of hospitality*, propose to harness the potential of religious traditions. In particular, **Mariano Barbato** explores the potential of St. Augustine’s opus magnum, *Civitas Dei*, in order to advance a radical reconceptualization of the refugee ‘other’. This entails approaching migration not as a deviation from a normal state-centric state of affairs, but as the human default position. As he explains, ‘When everyone is ultimately a wanderer and stranger in this world, the migrant is the default position and the settled self can recognize the brother in the other. The Pilgrim City concept of belonging beyond the state has a corrective impact on the understanding of duties that states have at borders: opening the gates of the borders for giving shelter instead of defending borders as shelters for the residents.’ This Augustinian perspective becomes essential to challenge a secular ‘human rights agenda of cosmopolitan individualism’ that is ‘too

much embedded into global capitalism and national democracies to develop its egalitarian and overambitious idea'. The transcendence of faith can thus provide the trust to welcome the stranger as the latter becomes an emissary of God and the only way for us to meet God is by opening the door of our homes to the stranger.

Far from being a theological imaginary confined to the Christian tradition, the figure of the migrant as the archetype of the human condition is shared by 'all three major monotheistic religions' and is embodied by Abraham, 'our common ancestor'. This is the argument advanced by **Jean-Marie Carrière**, Europe director of Jesuit Refugee Service. For Carrière, this interfaith tradition encompasses a duty of solidarity towards those who risk their lives searching for a better life. This duty transcends boundaries, whether physical such as the Mediterranean, or bureaucratic, such as the often artificial distinction between migrants and refugees, and entails nurturing the hope of a better life. This requires a political and personal commitment, as witnessed by the Jesuit Refugee Service Welcome Project: a network of families and religious communities that, since September 2009 in Paris, has been hosting asylum seekers in their homes on a short-term basis. A key practical and symbolic dimension of this project is to 'open the door': offering hospitality 'to the person who arrives', regardless of the reasons for his arrival. Hospitality thus emerges both as a private and political virtue and a process of transformation of the self.

In the chapter that follows, **Tahir Zaman** focuses on the distinctive feature of the Islamic tradition of hospitality. He begins by discussing how dominant understandings of refugee protection are grounded in 'sedentary metaphysics' which narrowly reflects the European experience and confines hospitality to 'a politics of pity and gratitude' monopolized by the nation state. On the other hand, Islamic traditions of hospitality are anchored in a fundamental dimension of reciprocity that understands migrants as agents of transformation rather than victims, transforming them from 'strangers' into 'neighbours'. This understanding rests on the experience of the Prophet Muhammad, for whom the practice of *jīwār* (granting protection and assistance to the one seeking refuge) was an essential component of his prophetic mission. This connects to the Augustinian Christian vision of the stranger as an emissary of God discussed by Barbato and highlights important connections between the Christian and Islamic traditions of hospitality. However, Zaman also explores how these moral resources clash with the realist concern of nation-states. In particular, he focuses on the case of the Turkish state response to the Syrian refugee crisis and shows how the religious discourse of hospitality advanced by Turkish authority has ultimately been subordinated to state-centric concerns of identity and security.

The Islamic tradition of hospitality is further explored by **Sadia Kidwai** as part of a broader discussion of how the international development sector has

‘made space’ for faith in recent years. Kidwai, drawing on her experience as Policy and Research Analyst at Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW), discusses how faith-based organizations have long been the object of ‘misapprehension and mistrust’ because deemed ultimately interested in proselytizing and as the carriers of values at odds with international human rights norms. However, the case of IRW suggests that faith is a powerful mechanism to cope with the distress and trauma of voluntary or forced migration. ‘Whether as a source of spiritual solace’, or ‘in the form of prayer’, or by ‘enabling a sense of shared identity and belonging among host societies’, faith provides a unique prism to understand, empathize and cater for the needs of the migrants. The Islamic tradition of hospitality is replete with stories of refugees and represents, with its injunction that ‘seeking asylum is not only a right, but a duty, in order to preserve our God-given human dignity’, an untapped resource to build trust and promote a more human approach to the refugee’s plight. To this end, the recognition of faith as a fundamental dimension of human dignity and a community-based approach to protection (which echoes the Welcome experience of the JRS) become essential dimensions of a model of solidarity beyond the nation state.

In the final contribution of this section, **Claudia Baumgart-Ochse** explores the role of religious traditions with reference to Palestinian refugees. While the dominant religious frameworks of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict – Jewish religious Zionism, conservative Evangelicalism and Islamism – ‘tie themselves to specific national projects’, she considers the importance of ‘dissenting voices that seek to apply inclusive readings of their respective religious traditions to the conflict’. Thus, Baumgart-Ochse focuses on Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologians, activists, communities and organizations which draw attention to theological resources and minor religious traditions ‘which could have the potential to justify a human rights approach to the Palestinian refugee problem’. The Rabbis for Human Rights, for instance, emphasize the ‘traditional Jewish responsibility for the safety and welfare of the stranger, the different and the weak, the convert’ with reference to Leviticus and the Jewish exile in Egypt. Hence, the Jewish people’s historical experience of exile and redemption should sensitize Jews today ‘to the suffering of others and compel us to defend the rights of all who dwell among us’. For Baumgart-Ochse, similar instances can be found in Muslim and Christian traditions to the effect that religion can become, as Muslim legal scholar Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im suggests, the focus of an overlapping consensus on how to address the plight of Palestinian refugees beyond Zionism and Islamism.

### **‘At the Intersection of Faith, Gender, Sexuality and Asylum’**

The final section of the book begins with a contribution by **Elena Fiddian-Qasimiyeh**, who explores how the ‘faith-gender-asylum’ nexus

plays a key role in constructing an understanding of refugees as agency-less victims who need to be rescued, reproducing traditional stereotypes about religion, race and gender. Thus, religion is portrayed as conservative and as a source of gender inequality and persecution, while women are portrayed as victims 'of brown men' (Spivak 1993: 93), and Islam as the cradle of this regime of violence, inequality and oppression. These assumptions shape a 'good refugee, bad refugee' hierarchy which translates into policy practices that reward refugee victims patiently waiting in refugee camps, women and children, and, more recently fathers with children, particularly if their suffering has been captured on camera for the benefit of media and social networks. Another implication of this faith-gender-asylum nexus is that it 'forcibly frames the performative strategies developed by refugees in ways that may themselves ultimately be a form of violence' because it forces upon refugees a predetermined understanding of subjectivity. In particular, a combination of secularist, Orientalist, Islamophobic and homonormative tropes often results in the fact that 'vulnerable' minority groups that reach the global North are denied international protection as Muslim feminists or as Muslim LGBT+ refugees, as these combinations are perceived as incompatible with each other. Hence, the 'binary frameworks which equate religion with oppression and secularism with gender and sexual equality' ultimately result in practices of securitization, racialization and hierarchicalization of refugees.

The relationship between religion and the rights of LGBT people is becoming an issue of increasing significance in contemporary human rights politics generally and is a critical dimension of the current refugee crisis, as **Siobhan McGuirk and Max Niedzwiecki** explore in their chapter. They argue that 'LGBT forced migrants operate as focal points for battles that pit Christians who depict God as a wrathful enforcer of the letter of the law against those who think of God as a loving supporter of the spirit of the law'. Drawing on their own experiences as practitioners in the sphere, as well as interviews conducted in the context of fieldwork with LGBT Asylum Welcome (LAW), McGuirk and Niedzwiecki outline the contours of these complex battles in both the US and the Ugandan contexts. They describe both the theological debates and the political and lived realities of these battles and how they impact the work of volunteers involved in a church-based LGBT asylum seeker support program. Significantly, McGuirk and Niedzwiecki highlight that distinctions between pro- and anti-LGBT Christians do not easily conform to the distinction between loving versus wrathful God and thus, here, as with all other dimensions of the refugee crisis and religion, it is important to not make sweeping assumptions and generalizations. Nonetheless, they argue that 'faith is deeply implicated in the contemporary LGBT asylum crisis', in complex and diverse ways. It is crucial that it not be ignored, but also that it not be over-essentialized or over-emphasized, in scholarly analysis, policymaking and practice.

The different contributions to the book, while diverse and wide-ranging, sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory in their subjects, foci and arguments, share the view that the dynamics surrounding categories of 'religion', 'secularism', 'Muslim', 'Christian', 'refugee', 'migrant' and their entanglement with one another, are crucial, yet under-explored dimensions of the current refugee crisis. Through this book, we offer a small contribution towards addressing the gaps in this area, and hope that other scholars will draw on these works to develop even more nuanced analyses and policy responses to the challenges wrought by mass displacement in the context of heightened 'religious' and 'secular' consciousness in the early twenty-first century.