“Shared Intentions and the Scope of Public Reason"

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John Rawls claims that public reasoning is the reasoning of “equal citizens who as a corporate body impose rules on one another backed by sanctions of state power.” Drawing upon an amended version of Michael Bratman’s theory of shared intentions, I flesh out this claim by developing the ‘civic people’ account of public reason. Citizens constitute a civic people—and thereby exercise collective political autonomy—by forming a ‘shared policy’ to decide fundamental political questions via shareable public reasons. I then explain that the civic people account supports Rawls's claim that only questions concerning ‘constitutional essentials’ and ‘matters of basic justice’ must be decided via public reasons. Consequently, I conclude that Jonathan Quong is incorrect in claiming that the idea of public reason requires that all political questions be decided by means of public reasons.