

In This Issue

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Welcome to the second issue of *Religio et Lex: Contemplations on Religion & Law*.

IN THIS ISSUE we bring together a variety of voices and perspectives. The first article, “Loyalty and Morality: Religious Minorities in U.S. Electoral Politics” by Gabriel DeJoseph, is a study of the ways in which individuals from contemporary minority religious traditions seeking elected office face challenges similar to those faced by individuals from marginalized groups in American history. Specifically, he compares Muslims and atheists today with Catholics of the mid-Twentieth century, and focuses on systemic Protestant bias, particularly as they relate to notions of authority, textuality, and morality. While some might consider this topic an investigation of the intersection of religion and politics rather than of religion and law, DeJoseph’s work is a powerful reminder that for many, the text and the Law are powerfully intertwined, and one’s relationship to one—rightly or wrongly—might reveal something about one’s relationship to the other. DeJoseph’s work was recommended to *Religio et Lex* by Hamilton College Professor Seth Schermerhorn, his thesis advisor.

The second article, “Corporate Freedom of Religion and the Two Leviathans,” was written by Ivan Strenski, the Holstein Family and Community Professor of Religious Studies, *Emeritus*, at the University of California, Riverside. In a move that may be both foreign and uncomfortable to those more traditionally trained in law, but which is standard operating procedure for those trained in the “History of Religions,” Strenski examines recent Supreme Court decisions—particularly those in which religious organizations (rather than individuals) are accorded religious freedom rights—and ponders the effect of a society requiring something in return for the “gift” of such corporate freedom. Clearly more speculative than normative, Strenski’s article requires us to reconsider the nature of rights and the power of corporate identities. It is a personal privilege to have the opportunity to publish this work by Professor Strenski, who I have known since I was in graduate school, and whose work on various theorists in the study of religion—particularly his *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth Century History* (1987)—has been a great help in my own thinking.

The third article and the reflection piece were not ready for publication by our self-imposed issue deadline; we will publish them as soon as they have completed the review process, and we’ll update this introduction accordingly.

In addition to the content, there are also a few changes made in this issue of *Religio et Lex*. First, I am pleased to report that this is the first issue to involve student managing editors: Jacklyn Alodia Cheely and Jake Q. Stokke. Each is the kind of student any college would be proud to enroll; I had the opportunity to have both in my classes, and I can attest to their intellectual and personal maturity and sophistication. I can also attest to their

In This Issue: “An Introduction”

patience as we began a new adventure in student involvement; it took us a bit longer to understand the nature of the tasks before them, but Jacklyn and Jake did read and critique manuscripts submitted for publication, and provided important feedback. Alas, both of these fine students graduated in May 2019. However, I am pleased that taking over for them are two new student managing editors, both of whom I have had the privilege of teaching—and learning from—in several classes: **Ian Paul Joslyn** is a sophomore at Virginia Wesleyan University (Class of 2022) who is pursuing one major in religious studies and another in history; **Victoria Steele** is a junior at Virginia Wesleyan University (Class of 2021) who is also pursuing a major in religious studies and another in social work. I look forward to working with them both.

The second change is a broadening of the second section of each issue of *Religio et Lex*. Initially envisioned as an outlet for graduate student work, this section now will consider work from scholars more generally—graduate students (of all disciplines), practitioners, and scholars—whose research merits peer review. There will still be space reserved for graduate students—and of course, nothing will change in our policy toward undergraduate work—but we will now consider work of more seasoned scholars who wish to contribute original scholarship, rather than limiting their contribution to the more reflective last section of each issue.

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Religio et Lex is produced under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom at Virginia Wesleyan University.

Recognized as a green college and named one of the nation’s best institutions for undergraduate education by *The Princeton Review*, **Virginia Wesleyan University** is a private, four-year liberal arts college focused on empowering students to become active learners and engaged citizens. In accord with the College’s United Methodist heritage, Virginia Wesleyan aspires to be a supportive community that is committed to social responsibility, ethical conduct, higher learning and religious freedom. The University is located on a picturesque 300-acre campus on the border of Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Virginia.

The **Center for the Study of Religious Freedom**, located on the campus of Virginia Wesleyan University, is one of the few programs of its kind operating within an undergraduate liberal arts university in the United States. Since its inception in 1996, the Center has brought individuals and communities into deep and meaningful dialogue about the most important values in society. Its work is grounded in the University’s commitment to a rigorous liberal arts education and its United Methodist heritage, which has long recognized religious freedom as a basic human right. The Center aims to create a civil society through education, respectful dialogue, and mutual understanding and is dedicated to equipping students to be leaders and citizens who understand how the reconciliation of religious differences creates the most meaningful opportunities for civil solutions to difficult and urgent problems.

We are grateful to the University and to the Center for their encouragement and support. We at *Religio et Lex* believe that all of us can better facilitate true religious freedom only if we understand both the potential of, and the limits on, the lives of all people. In that, we believe that we are following in the mandate of the Center and the vision of Virginia Wesleyan University. We hope you agree.