

In This Issue

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IN THIS ISSUE we bring together a variety of voices and perspectives. The first article, “Islamophobia in France: The Contradiction in the Implementation of *Laïcité* in the 21st Century,” by Jade Alvillar, examines the clash between the French version of secularism and the religious traditions of Muslims, particularly in the clash between the French prohibition of public displays of religion on the one hand and the wearing of the *hijab* on the other. She suggests that rather than causing friction, the clash is the almost inevitable outcome of worldview clashes between a former colonial power and its once colonized peoples seeking to participate freely in the dominant culture. Alvillar’s award-winning work was written under the direction of Hamilton College Prof. Abhishek Amar and recommended to *Religio et Lex* by Prof. Seth Schermerhorn.

The second article, “Pence & Persecution Politics: An Analysis of Vice President Pence’s Speeches Before Two Groups of Persecuted Church Activists,” was written by Chad Moore, a PhD candidate at Boston University. Moore’s work examines the rhetoric of Vice President Mike Pence, and draws distinct connections between the goals of the conservative Christian community seeking to protect fellow Christians from persecution in other countries and the rhetoric of the Trump administration—particularly in its primary emissary to the Christian conservative world, Vice President Mike Pence—to reassure that community of the Administration’s shared interests.

The third and fourth articles are reflections of two entirely different sorts. The first, by Professor Emeritus Ivan Strenski, is a return to some of the issues he raised in his article which appeared in the last issue of *Religio et Lex*. This time, he ponders the difference between “freedom of religion”—as he sees it, the problematic deference the courts have given religious institutions in internal matters—and “religious freedom.” This second category, for Strenski, is more akin to the freedom of conscience so popular to thinkers of the early Republic (like Madison and others) because it was closer to the Protestant notion of the freedom of all believers to believe (and act) as their individual religious faiths dictated. The second reflection, by Professor Jeff Brauch, explores his efforts to integrate his Christian faith with the teaching of law, particularly as it is expressed to students like his own who are embarking on their own career as people of faith engaged in the practice of law. Brauch is a member of the law faculty and a former dean at Regent University.

In addition to the content, there are also a few changes made in this issue of *Religio et Lex*. I am pleased to acknowledge the assistance of two new student managing editors, both of whom I have had the privilege of teaching—and learning from—in several classes: **Ian Paul Joslyn**, a rising junior at Virginia Wesleyan University (Class of 2022) who is pursuing one major in religious studies and another in history; and **Victoria Steele**, a rising senior at Virginia Wesleyan University (Class of 2021) who is also pursuing a major in religious studies and another in social work. I enjoyed working with them for a few

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months before we all were required to adjust to the new realities of life under the coronavirus pandemic, and I look forward to working with them both again now that we have settled into the “new normal.”

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Religio et Lex is produced under the auspices of the Robert Nusbaum Center (formerly 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 **Robert Nusbaum Center**, 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.