reach southern lawyers are repeated on pages 194, 197, 198, 199, 199–200, and 200. The point has some significance, but the space devoted to making it seems excessive.

All in all, this book will be a useful resource for history and other courses.

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Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Battle over School Prayer: How Engel v. Vitale Changed America,* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007. Pp. 263. $35.00 cloth (ISBN 978-0-7006-1526-1); $15.99 paper (ISBN 978-07006-2526-1).

College and university professors of American history in general and of legal history in particular have come to appreciate offerings in the Landmark Law Cases and American Society series as tremendous monographs for classroom use. This latest title, written by Professor Dierenfield of Canisius College, lives up to the standards of this fine series in providing excellent historical context for the 1962 decision of the Supreme Court prohibiting school prayer and analyzing and interpreting the decision with insights that will benefit scholars and students alike.

In the 1950s, New York City compelled its public school children to recite "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us" (67). One of the plaintiffs in the *Engel* case, Monroe Lerner, argued that "the exercise was either a 'mockery' of prayer for those who believed in prayer or an 'imposition' for those who did not" (99). In its decision in 1962, the Court held for the plaintiffs and found that "the entire idea of a state-mandated or state-sponsored prayer was contrary to the spirit and command of the First Amendment" (130).

Dierenfield does a wonderful job of contextualizing this decision in both the law and social environment from which it arose. In a brief overview of over two hundred years of cultural tension over the role of religion in the public sector, the author pays particular attention to concerns that might be omitted from a lesser text, including historical periodization, regional variation, and sectarian conflict. However, he really begins his analysis of American law and society prior to *Engel* with an analysis of three court decisions from the 1940s, the last of which was the *Everson* opinion of 1947. Dierenfield comments that with this decision, the Court "firmly grafted" Jefferson's metaphor of a wall of separation "onto the language of the First Amendment" (49). The author's analysis of this case demonstrates his command of both the law and the socio-political context in which it arose. The decision demonstrated the extent of differing understandings of the meaning of the First Amendment among the Court's justices and provoked extensive lobbying, discontent, and hostility from segments of the American public. Dierenfield handles the history of both with great equanimity.

Dierenfield is even better in his discussion of the Court's inconsistency between its issuance of the *Everson* decision and that in *Engel*. The author movingly recites how legal and social divisions resulted in painful experiences of school children forced to confront religious teaching and practice in public schools. He concludes

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that while the Court articulated profound principles in *Everson,* its own divisions rendered it incapable of living up to them in subsequent cases. Divisions within American society and its highest court compelled the toleration of suffering by young people subjected to adults' attempts to impose religion as a means of saving the souls of non-believers and protecting the traditional values of their societies.

However, Dierenfield seems unwilling to see the Court's decision in *Engel* as championing the rights of the young victims he describes. Instead he sees the Court as simply reacting to changes in American society, placing the protection of future minorities not in firm legal principles but in the preservation of social attitudes of religious tolerance. He writes: "Given the ever-growing religious pluralism in U.S. society, the Court simply accommodated Constitutional law to [social] reality" (133).

Later, in discussing reaction to the decision, he finds: "For all of the initial fears expressed about *Engel* the larger import of the case was to uphold Constitutionalism, as construed by the Supreme Court, and recognize that the United States was being transformed from a largely Protestant country to an increasingly pluralistic one" (162). The plaintiffs might have hoped that the decision had not only illuminated a conflict over values and conceptions of citizenship within American society, but also provided some security for their rights to be free from religious coercion. In this role law might well lead rather than follow social interests. As the author so well demonstrates in his extensive exploration of legal and political development since 1962, the case brought cultural differences expressed in beliefs and values to the forefront of American political society. But, it also presented Americans with a greater understanding of the role of law in resolving cultural differences and its ability to produce decisions apart from the political process. A referendum to ban school prayer would not have been likely to pass in 1962, but just such a ban became the national law. In *Engel,* law expressed a vision of American society conceived of at the founding but not sufficiently realized in 1962 nor since.

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Brian K. Landsberg, *Free At Last to Vote: The Alabama Origins of the 1965 Voting Rights Act,* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007. Pp. 280. $34.95 (ISBN 978-0-7006-1510-0).

Alabama is to the right to vote as the Jehovah's Witnesses are to the First Amendment. Just as the latter have prompted so many of the cases central to constitutional development of freedom of speech and religion, Alabama has been at the center of nearly every landmark decision, good and bad, concerning the right to vote. It was the notorious (and still on the books) 1901 Alabama Constitution, with the most extensive suffrage restrictions ever adopted in American history, that the Supreme Court refused to address when the Court stood aside at the start of the twentieth century and permitted the massive disfranchisement throughout the South of black and poor white voters. When the Court began to move away from this reluctance in the late 1950s, it was Alabama that provoked the change, as the Court struck down

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