

Religion in the 21st Century: Challenges and transformations

EDITED BY LISBET CHRISTOFFERSEN, HANS RAUN IVERSEN, HANNE PETERSEN AND MARGIT WARBURG

Ashgate, Aldershot, 2010, x + 234 pp (hardback £55.00) ISBN: 978-1-4094-0398-2

This edited collection of papers is the culmination of an interdisciplinary research project led by the University of Copenhagen. It includes contributions from scholars around the world interested in the place of religion in the 21st century. Consequently, a wide variety of perspectives, including those linked to Danish society, are available in addressing the two prime themes of the work: specifically, the broad challenges *to* and *from* religion in the modern world discussed in Part I and how such challenges may lead to transformations in the 'operation' of religion in an increasingly globalised community as discussed in Part II. These perspectives straddle a variety of disciplines such as politics, sociology, theology, science and law. Lawyers will wish to note, however, that treatment of the interaction between law and religion is confined to discussion in Part II, focusing on discussion of the scope for legal change, progress and transformation in this area as influenced by issues such as culture and religion.

The collection begins by considering religious challenges in Part I and how far it may be said that religion today is contributing to a 'de-secularisation' of societies across the globe. Politically, the focus seems predominately placed on challenges *from* religion aimed at the secular world. This is evident, for example, in José Casanova's argument that increasing commentary on religion in relevant political debate has 'de-privatised' religion, bringing it starkly within the domain of political discourse although not necessarily into the individual sphere – where individuals still 'believe without belonging' to their religion. Such political discourse on religion has become more globalised and the result has been more intense geopolitical religious debates such as in the Danish cartoon crisis which is further addressed under 'Transformations' in Part II. Both sociologists and theologians subsequently offer their interpretations of how challenges concerning religion and politics are affecting the forms in which the religious and secular worlds interact with each other, and how far it is possible – if at all – to be both fully religious and fully modern in the 21st century.

Part I continues with assessment of the clash between religion and science and suggests that a productive dialogue between the two may be beneficial in exploring religion–science relations. This section of Part I probes a particularly visible and aggressive secular threat to religion in the 21st century and a number of challenges to religion from science are considered, highlighting an inversion of the relationship concerning challenges between religion and politics earlier outlined.

Part II opens by considering the role of Islamic law and its various sources, techniques, customs and cultures. The diverse background of the Islamic legal tradition is analysed for indications as to likely future changes. The specific experience of legal cultures in the Nordic countries is, unsurprisingly given the location of the project, also investigated regarding relevant transformations in culture and direction. Moreover, the legal culture across Europe as a whole is assessed regarding how legal change may be influenced by increasing religious and cultural plurality – although earlier comments in Part I indicate that Europe is still referred to as *the* secular continent. Nevertheless, these contributions provide useful points of contrast and establish the idea that law may be able to reflect religious and cultural shifts over time. Elsewhere, for example, Sébastien Tank-Storper provides an alternative explanation to that of Casanova for religion's return to the secular sphere and Part II concludes with a detailed assessment of the Danish cartoon crisis and its various (geo)political, legal and religious consequences.

This is an enlightening selection of essays, although their appeal to lawyers is probably likely to be dwarfed by that of those interested in religion within other social science disciplines. Nevertheless, in this context it affords the reader a broad, and frequently thought-provoking, account of some of the challenges not only facing religion but also those from religion to aspects of secularism. The essays in Part II provide useful case-studies on how religion currently operates and may proceed to operate in the 21st century considering the tensions posed by these sets of challenges.

MATTHEW GIBSON

Liverpool Law School, University of Liverpool

doi:10.1017/S0956618X11000123

Holy Writ: Interpretation in law and religion

EDITED BY ARIE-JAN KWAK

Ashgate, Aldershot, 2009, 204 pp (hardback £55.00) ISBN: 978-0-7546-7896-0

I Do Solemnly Swear: The moral obligation of legal officials

STEVE SHEPPARD

Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, 276 pp (paperback £18.99)
ISBN 978-0-5217-3508-7

No one with even a passing interest in American legal affairs can fail to have some awareness of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, hero and intellectual standard bearer of that court's conservative judges. In trenchant writings, lectures and judgments (frequently dissenting), he has insisted he alone has a