

Contemporary Challenges to Religious Concepts of Law

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The interdisciplinary Open Access **Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society** (JRAT) aims at investigating the impact of social transformation processes on religions and - vice versa - the effects of changes within religions on societies under different thematic perspectives. Volume 2/2020 is dedicated to the thematic area of legal issues. Starting with 2019, JRAT will be published by Brill.

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Religious traditions are currently facing challenges of secularization, ethical-religious pluralism as well as increasing political exploitation. JRAT 2/2020 will focus (1) *predominantly* on the impact of these challenges on the legal self-understanding of "traditional" religions and on their conceptions of law and (2) *exemplarily* it will investigate on the repercussions of these changes on secular judicial systems. This entails also possible interaction between both aspects.

Ad (1)

Regarding the legal content of religions, an initial question deals with the extent to which religious sources, especially texts of revelation, might be considered to function as legal texts. Subsequent hermeneutical problems include doctrines on the sources of law and the methodology of religious judicial systems: Where does reliance on transcendent foundations impact on the practice of legal adjudication, and where can argumentative rationality, which does not necessarily depend upon revelation, assert itself? To what extent do religious traditions provide potential for distinctions between theology and jurisprudence on the one hand, as well as to distinctions between questions regarding individual belief, society and politics?

Other ensuing topics include the following: Do religious messages view issues of earthly (temporal) justice under an eschatological reservation and thus show an attitude of "quietist" abstention, or do they claim to provide the foundation for constituting a legal community or at least for being involved in its shaping? Under which conditions can the identification with a religion (or a religious community) preclude the simultaneous loyalty to a secular community? How can religions, based on their self-understanding and their identity as spiritual or even legal communities, cope with religious-ethical pluralism and/or individualism in a secular socio-political environment? In what way can a productive processing of these challenges by religious traditions have repercussions on the understanding of their own doctrinal foundations and legal principles? To what extent can religious freedom, universal human rights and the rule of law be integrated in the legal conceptions of religious systems, and can religions derive argumentative resources thereof against (renewed) political appropriation? What role can religions play in the further development and refinement of secular standards, in particular with regard to the protection of human rights?

Ad (2)

Exemplary consideration of new challenges in the perception and handling of the phenomenon of "religion" by widely secularized judicial systems: the new self-affirmation of religion(s) can on the one hand, provoke governmental demarcations, due to either laicistic motives of preservation of a secular culture, or, on the other hand, based on matters of equal treatment of diverse religions with differently valued social acceptability. In contrast, the state can also strengthen its ties to religions either by falling back on their increasing importance for political purposes or by restraining the general claim to validity of the rule of law almost to the point of a legal pluralism. The state can, not least, attempt to support processes of inner-religious appropriation of secular fundamental rights standards.

In addition to this main thematic focus JRAT also accepts **free contributions** provided that they focus in principle on the subject matter of the journal. This means particularly the growing complexity of the global context, the paradigmatic changes in the construction of social meanings, the legal challenges and their connection with religious transformations.

Please send your contribution to stefan.hammer@univie.ac.at

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40.000 characters, spaces included

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