

## 7<sup>th</sup> ICLARS Conference *The accommodation of religion or belief in the public sphere: Undeserved privilege or fundamental right?, Notre Dame, Indiana, October 21–23, 2024*

VII Konferencja ICLARS *Akomodacja religii lub przekonań w sferze publicznej: Nienależny przywilej czy prawo podstawowe?*, Notre Dame, Indiana, 21–23 października 2024 roku

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The International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ICLARS) is probably one of the most important associations of legal scholars, legal practitioners and social scientists in the interdisciplinary field of law and religion. In this relatively small but growing field, there is rising demand for international meetings that will improve international contacts, build a sense of a scientific community and develop international scholarship. Previous conferences were held in Milan, Santiago, Richmond in Virginia, Oxford, Rio de Janeiro and Cordoba in Spain, while this 7<sup>th</sup> ICLARS Conference was held on the beautiful campus of Notre Dame University in Indiana, USA.

The major co-organisers were The Law School at Notre Dame and the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (at Brigham Young University). The conference was attended by legal scholars and practitioners from all over the world. There were plenary sessions with invited keynote speakers, followed by parallel sessions throughout the day.<sup>1</sup>

The main plenary lecture on the first day was delivered by Malcom Evans, Professor of Public International Law and Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford, UK, after which there was a plenary session on "The accommodation of religion and belief: Between individual right and social harmony" with the following renowned speakers: Carmen Asiaín from Universidad de Montevideo as chair and Professors Perry Dane (Rutgers), Li-ann Thio (NUS), Joseph David (Saphir Academic College) and Francois Venter (North-West University, South Africa). The second plenary session, titled "The accommodation of religion and belief in the working environment: Contemporary challenges in the public and private sectors," was chaired by Ana María Celis (PUC, Chile). The speakers were Vincent de Gaetano (Commissioner for Education at the Ombudsman's Office, Malta), Brian Grim (President of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, based in Annapolis, MD), Carlos Bernal (Commissioner of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, DC), Nicolas Aroney (University of Queensland) and Ioannis Ktistakis (Judge of the European Court of Human Rights). On the third day, the plenary panellists

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<sup>1</sup> General programme: <https://www.iclars.org/7th-iclars-conference/> [accessed: 21 November 2024].

were Andrea Pin (University of Padova) as chair and John White (Emory), Stephanie Barclay (Georgetown), Marko Ventura (University of Siena), Javier Martínez-Torrón (Complutense University of Madrid), Rodrigo Alves (University of Uberlândia, Brazil) and Mark Hill (Notre Dame London), who discussed the theme “Religion and human rights in the West: A transcontinental dialogue.”

The parallel sessions also featured excellent topics and speakers. Topics included: proportionality and balance in the courts; increasing religious accommodations in workplaces; internal perspectives on religion in the public sphere; negotiated laws as legal instruments for the accommodation of religion or belief in the public sphere: abstract models and practical cases; the accommodation of religion and belief in the united states constitutional system; religious minorities on the two shores of the Mediterranean: a comparative analysis of the rights they have (and do not have); the space of religious and non-religious beliefs in the public sphere; the role of legal education, legal practice and the courts in guaranteeing religious pluralism; social actions and corporate religious liberty: legal, moral and theological perspectives on a contested freedom; the challenges of religious accommodation in the midst of Brazil’s cultural and environmental complexity; the accommodation of the religious factor in the prison system in Italy and Spain in the age of security; Halal Food Acts, Muslim Holiday Ordinances and the problem of agency in religious accommodations; foundations of religious freedom: constitutional and legal frameworks; religious rules and emergencies: lessons from a pandemic emergency in Europe and in a global perspective (DIREMOM Panel); freedom of religion or belief and education: contemporary issues; cooperation with religion and accommodation of religious and moral obligations in neutral states: a European perspective (NEUCOPER panel); reconciling state secularism and religious pluralism in Africa; religious law and secular law: interactions, converging and diverging perspectives in the accommodation of religion; accommodation of religion or belief in the working environment; school and religion in Latin America: state financing as a limit vs. The integrative confessional educational proposal; religious freedom and human rights: the confluence of law, philosophy, theology and culture; state neutrality and religious freedom: new challenges in Europe; and book discussion for religious minorities in pluralist societies: critical perspectives on the accommodation of religious diversities.

The conference also included another important event: the award of one combined prize: John Witte Prize and the Routledge Prize. The winning book, the outstanding work of three editors, Rafael Domingo, Gary S. Hauk and Timothy P. Jackson, was *Faith in law, law in faith: Reflecting and building on the work of John Witte, Jr.*, published by Brill-Nijhoff in 2024. The book contains contributions by scholars from around the world. The prize ceremony was rounded off with a presentation of the works of Professor Witte by Richard H. Helmholz and Cole W. Durham and a speech by Professor Witte. Professor Cole W. Durham delivered a speech at the closing ceremony.

I would recommend that every legal scholar and legal practitioner apply for membership of the ICLARS, which was “[...] founded in 2007 with the aim of providing a forum where information, data and opinions could be readily exchanged among members and made available to the broader scientific community.” ICLARS organises regular

conferences and publishes a book series with Routledge and a newsletter. ICLARS has always been open to all those interested in matters concerning law and religion, irrespective of political or religious opinions. All are invited to become members of ICLARS and to send in suggestions and proposals concerning law and religion studies and research projects.<sup>2</sup>

The conference at Notre Dame University was one of a kind, and we, as scholars in the field of law and religion, are looking forward to future meetings and events, particularly the 8<sup>th</sup> ICLARS conference, which is planned to be organised in Palermo, Italy.

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<sup>2</sup> ICLARS webpage, [https://www.iclars.org/about\\_us.html](https://www.iclars.org/about_us.html) [accessed: 21 November 2024].

