

parents, the Canadian Charter is silent on human rights of the family. Ross notes that Canadian law functions “as a mediating force between family members ... more so than a mechanism to generally protect the family’s integrity as a whole” (284-285).

A few chapters are somewhat disappointing. While the participation of a former Supreme Court of Canada justice is almost always desirable, the chapter contributed by the Hon. Michel Bastarache is wrong-headed. The title indicates that it addresses the UDHR and the recognition of social rights. But the chapter addresses the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights while neglecting the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The latter includes social rights.

The chapter by Peter D. Lauwers, a justice of the Ontario Court of Appeal, and Eric Fleming should also have been left for another book. The first paragraph indicates that the authors were asked to address the link between free speech and human dignity in the UDHR. However, they instead wrote about judicial reasoning and moral philosophy. This is interesting material but unrelated to the topic of this volume.

The chapter on freedom of thought, contributed by Marcus Moore, is interesting in this era of disinformation, propaganda, censorship and artificial intelligence. However, at 60 pages in length, it reads more like a master’s thesis than a book chapter. If you have a strong interest in this topic, you will find a thorough exploration of it here.

The book offers much of value to international human rights theorists and practitioners alike. As the symposium was organized by the Christian Legal Fellowship in Canada, it is not surprising that this volume includes a significant focus on FoRB and other issues of interest to religious communities, or that it addresses critiques of the international human rights system itself.

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## **Religious Freedom and Covid-19: A European Perspective**

*Edited by Jelle Creemers and Tatiana Kopaleishvili*

*London and New York: Routledge 2025, 232 pp., ISBN 9781032326900, € 140.00 hardback, € 41.59 eBook*

The COVID-19 pandemic, the worst global health crisis since World War II, posed severe challenges to the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). This book offers a valuable analysis of the impact that emergency has had on the exercise of religious freedom in Europe. Member states of the Council of Europe, bound to respect for the same standards of FoRB

protection, had to find proportionate ways to limit this right in the pursuit of the legitimate aim of protection of health, which had been very seldom invoked since the entry into force of the European Convention on Human Rights. Social groups, including religious denominations and belief organizations, were called to a great responsibility insofar as they could use their influence to encourage either virtuous or vicious behavior on the part of their members. Individuals were forced dramatically to choose between respect for secular measures limiting their right to FoRB and obedience to religious norms that prescribed acts involving propinquity, such as burials.

The book's focus on a specific crisis has not prevented the contributors from addressing broader questions in terms of the balance between competing but equally legitimate interests, for which reason this volume will not become outdated soon. As the revealing title of the editors' introduction states, "Never let a good crisis go to waste." Setting aside the different context from which this phrase originated, this book stands as a significant contribution to the debate on the lessons learned from the global crisis that can hopefully be applied in future emergencies.

The book derives from a project of the Institute for the Study of Freedom of Religion or Belief (ISFORB) at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven, Belgium. Along with chapters written by members of ISFORB, it incorporates perspectives of authors from other backgrounds. One merit of the volume is its multidisciplinary approach, as highlighted by the presence of contributions by sociologists, theologians, legal scholars and historians, among others. The insights offered are not exhaustive (and it could not have been otherwise), but comprehensive: the first part centers on theoretical perspectives, while the second part presents case studies on practical aspects of management of the health crisis.

The first part, devoted to European values, norms and policies, includes a comparison between US and European approaches to pandemic management, an accurate legal analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the manifestation of FoRB in Europe, and an assessment of religion-based conscientious objection to mandatory vaccinations. The chapter comparing the Belgian and Dutch approaches is among the most original. Its relevance lies not so much in its evaluation of the particular policies implemented by the two states as in the broader focus adopted by the authors, which goes beyond religion as a specific legal category and instead emphasizes human dignity. While their criticism of the special treatment of religion may be questioned by other scholars, it certainly offers much food for thought.

The second part is well-structured. Space restrictions have necessarily limited the number of case studies that could be included, but the editors have expertly selected four varied perspectives on the management of FoRB-related challeng-

es. These present the points of view of the state (as in the chapter on Belgium), society (whose internal tensions are examined with regard to Orthodox Georgia), new religious movements (the specific national context is Ukraine) and an established church (the Church of England, which collaborated with the state in the lockdown). None of the chapters is limited to a single perspective, and common themes pervade all these contributions. Nevertheless, the choice of such a structure successfully transmits the complexity and variety of existing situations to the reader.

The interesting perspectives and balanced structure of this book make it a highly recommended resource for scholars as well as practitioners, political, religious, and societal actors.

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## **The Non-Religious and the State: Seculars Crafting Their Lives in Different Frameworks from the Age of Revolution to the Current Day**

**Jeffrey Tyssens, Niels De Nutte and Stefan Schröder (eds.)**

*Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2025, iv + 397 pp., ISBN 978-3111337012, €64.95 (hardcover)*

This edited volume is the result of a 2022 international conference of the Secular Studies Association Brussels research group (SSAB) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). The introductory chapter explains that the volume as a whole calls for attention to diversity in thinking about both “the non-religious/secular/humanists/nones” and about “the state,” which knows multiple localities and levels of “public authority.” Particular attention is devoted to the roles and frameworks of a variety of individuals, rather than organizations or other usual suspects. Tyssens and de Nutte make a helpful distinction between actors with a “protest identity” (such as atheism) and those with a “project identity” (humanism). This differentiation could also be very helpful in typologies of other (non-)religious individuals and societal actors. Finally, while the volume pays attention to different time frames since “the age of Revolution,” the primary focus is on present-day situations.

The book contains 18 contributions by both established and younger researchers, including varying but all very helpful case studies demonstrating the diversity of seculars and their contexts. Although Belgium and Europe more broadly receive (not surprisingly) much attention, the contributions also discuss the United States, Ghana, Brazil, Mexico and the Middle East. The chapters are country-specific or comparative, and the authors come from a variety of disciplinary