

Post-Liberal Religious Liberty

Why should we care about religious liberty? Leading commentators, United Kingdom courts, and the European Court of Human Rights have de-emphasised the special importance of religious liberty. They frequently contend that it falls within a more general concern for personal autonomy. In this liberal egalitarian account, religious liberty claims are often rejected when faced with competing individual interests – the neutral secular state must protect us against the liberty-constraining acts of religions. Joel Harrison challenges this account. He argues that it is rooted in a theologically derived narrative of secularisation: rather than being neutral, it rests on a specific construction of ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ spheres. This challenge makes space for an alternative theological, political, and legal vision. Drawing from Christian thought, from St Augustine to John Milbank, Harrison develops a post-liberal focus on association. Religious liberty, he argues, facilitates creating communities seeking solidarity, fraternity, and charity – goals that are central to our common good.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83650-0 — Post-Liberal Religious Liberty
Joel Harrison
Frontmatter
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Forming Communities of Charity

JOEL HARRISON

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108836500
DOI: 10.1017/9781108873796

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First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-83650-0 Hardback

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For Kate

*Territories . . . view their rulers not in the light of
moral educators, merely as economic managers and
purveyors of satisfaction*

Augustine, *City of God*

*No one may gainsay anything said to the emperor's
honour. And what could do him greater honour than
to be called a 'son of the church'?*

Ambrose, *Sermon against Auxentius*

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many people without whom this book would not exist and I would be a much poorer person.

Many of the arguments found in this book began to take form during my graduate studies. Although the work has changed since then, that time was intellectually formative. Christopher McCrudden and John Perry provided guidance over several years. Their example and insights were invaluable for undertaking a law and theology project. I am immensely grateful for the opportunities Chris gave me, and for John's continual encouragement and desire to see me flourish in the academic vocation. Ian Leigh, John Finnis, Timothy Endicott, Jeremy Waldron, and Julian Rivers read work arising from that period, and their incisive criticisms, attention, and suggestions still shape my writing today.

Jane Calderwood Norton, Farrah Ahmed, Angela Wu Howard, Paul Yowell, Richard Ekins, Will Partlett, Claudia Haupt, Yvonne Tew, Dan Ghezelbash, Lukas Opacic, and Rex Ahdar – colleagues in the law school community – have been wonderful conversation partners, readers, and friends. The late Sir Grant Hammond first pushed me to set out overseas, assuming a depth of confidence in me that I continue to draw from. John Witte Jr's encouragement has been uplifting, and I am grateful to him for recommending this work for publication. Patrick Parkinson, Nicholas Aroney, and Denise Meyerson have immensely helped an orphaned kiwi navigate the Australian wilderness. John Milbank, whose work inspires many of the arguments in this book, was exceedingly generous in sharing various draft chapters and articles. The Woolf Fisher Trust (NZ) financially supported this project while I was in Oxford. I am grateful to the

Acknowledgements

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Trust and to Nigel Evans, its Secretary, who was unceasingly caring and understanding.

Chapters from this book were presented at different venues. I am grateful to Dale Smith and Lulu Weis for the invitation to present at the Melbourne Law School Legal Theory Workshop; to Richard Ekins and Rob Heimbürger for organising a roundtable discussion at St John's College, Oxford; and to the participants at each. I am also grateful to Richard for supporting a Visiting Fellowship at the Oxford Programme for the Foundations of Law and Constitutional Government, allowing me time to write. The Cambridge University Press team – Beatrice Rehl, Eilidh Burret, Kaye Barbaro, Mathew Rohit, and Cara Chamberlain – have guided this book through editing and publication. I am grateful for its care and attention. Katrina Woodforde provided excellent early editing assistance.

Within these pages, I argue for the centrality of fraternity and divine love. Augustine considered that communion with God is experienced as fellowship with others. To Stefan and Linda Fisher-Høyrem, Peter and Bethany Eckley, Daniel and Charlotte Maughan, Dan Cojocaru, Andy Kerr, Nathan Rose, Jose Ho, Rob Heimbürger, Zack and Michelle Baize, Ryan Lang, Roger Revell, Byron and Jess Smith, and David and Sarah Taylor I am immensely grateful. My parents-in-law, Brian and Adrienne, have provided unwavering support and innumerable babysitting hours. My parents, Paul and Penelope, first taught me the language of divine love. My brothers, Jeremy, Luke, Benjamin, and Daniel, and my cousin Dreu, understand that the world must be enchanted. I could only write this book because of the communities that have shaped me.

Finally, my closest companions along the way. My son Ambrose and my daughter Antigone surprise and delight me every day. My wife Kate, who has been the chief advocate for this book, provided the support to see it done, and continues to be my conversation partner on all things religion and public life. It is to her, my love, that the book is dedicated.

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