

proaches in a time when these receive more and more scrutiny and where matters pertaining to the inclusion of diversity and the limits of the law require more attention. However, it is for scholars themselves to decide whether this is the case and, more importantly, to add to furtherance of the debate.

This scholarly book, with its varied spectrum of topics, contributes towards the furtherance of debate pertaining to the challenges and complexities related to the cooperation between religion, the law and the state. Consequently, the book is an asset (irrespective of its substantial connection to the American constitutional and jurisprudential context) for especially those specialising in constitutional law and religious rights and freedoms.

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God vs. the Gavel: The perils of extreme religious liberty

Marci A. Hamilton

New York: Cambridge University Press, Revised Second Edition, 2014, 476 p., ISBN 976-1-107-45655-6 (paperback), US\$ 27.99.

This provocative book contrasts “common-sense” religious liberty against “extreme” religious liberty within the United States. The notion of extreme religious liberty is espoused by documented stories of, amongst others, clergy sex abuse and the refusal of companies to do business with same-sex couples. For example, the classic and much contested argument, where racism is equated with homophobia, is used to describe the refusal of companies to do business with same-sex couples. For the author “this is as extreme as religious liberty gets. . .” (231). Based on such examples, the purpose of the book is made clear – a call “for a return to common-sense religious liberty” (i). However, no criteria are provided for determining what “common-sense” and “extreme” entails.

The benefits of religion are briefly acknowledged followed by an urgent call to awaken to the extent to which the right to religious liberty may immunize religious conduct from sanction when it interferes with public health, safety and welfare. The author is of the opinion that the main cause of “extreme” religious liberty within the US have been certain legislative reforms that have been arbitrary and unreflective. Such legislative reform includes the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). It is then argued that these two Acts opened the gates widely for extreme religious liberty amounting to licentiousness and the granting of non-existing rights under the First Amendment. Congress was willing to pass blind accommodation statutes without reflecting on the disabling effect thereof on the rule of

law (22). However, legislative reform is not credited as the only part of the problem. Lawmakers too often grant religious lobbyists privileges to harm others and cases such as *Wisconsin v. Yoder* and *Hobby Lobby* are indicative of this.

Part two of the book discusses the history and doctrine behind common-sense religious liberty and gives an exposition of what religious liberty should look like. The criteria used to determine extreme religious liberty is the “harm principle” as developed by John Stuart Mill. However, the use of this principle as determining criterion is not justified in the book and the concept “harm” is not circumscribed and eventually left open for wide interpretation.

This book offers a provocative and alternative liberal view to the protection of religious freedom and can be recommended to all persons concerned about the relationship between religious liberty and the rule of law.

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Dissident for Life: Alexander Ogorodnikov and the Struggle for Religious Freedom in Russia

Koenraad De Wolf

Grand Rapids / Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2013, 336 p., ISBN 978-0802867438, GBP 18.99.

In the preface to the book, a friend of the Russian human rights activist Alexander Ogorodnikov Lord David Alton says that the life story of this man is a testimony of his exceptional courage and self-sacrifice, and that it is our responsibility to share it with all the future generations. The author of the book looked at that task as his mission. He wrote a truly heroic saga about a man who not only fought the Soviet regime but also defended other people.

At present, it is difficult even to imagine what cruelty the Christians in the USSR had to face. They suffered only for their desire to preach, have theological discussions and help the poor. The example of Alexander Ogorodnikov shows how much one believer can achieve. He was born in 1950 and from his youth he was a civil activist, he created a voluntary people’s guard for protecting public order, he studied to become a philosopher and later studied in the Institute of Cinematography. He worked as an assistant of the famous film director Andrey Tarkovsky during the filming of the “Mirror.” He was expelled from the Institute for the attempt to produce a film about the religious life of the young people in the Soviet Union. Ogorodnikov’s life work was that he created the Christian Seminar, gathering together the thinking people who lacked freedom, faith, the