

Seminar

Are Catholic Majorities More Hospitable to Religious Minorities Than Others?

Abstract

It is hard to believe it is a coincidence that when we look at the patterns of restriction of religious freedom that exist around the world, including legal restrictions and social hostilities, in places with high or very high restrictions, there is almost always a dominant religious group that is a majority or supermajority. But there are no countries with high or very high legal restrictions and very few countries with high social hostilities that have a Catholic majority or supermajority. This provides a powerful invitation for those of us who live in countries with high restrictions to reflect upon the role that the dominant religious groups may have in perpetuating those restrictions, and the potential role that those dominant religious group may have in overcoming those patterns of restriction and hostility. Among the most important resources for promoting religious freedom will be religious reasons and doctrines found within religious traditions. Freedom of thought, conscience, and belief is most likely to be promoted when dominant religious groups find within their own religious traditions the resources and arguments in defense of freedom, conscience, and human dignity. Many religious traditions, including Orthodox Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu, can look to the experience of the Catholic Church for insight and inspiration.

Speaker

Brett G. Scharffs, Brigham Young University J. Reuben Clark Law School

Discussants

Paolo Costa, FBK-ISR

Roberto Toniatti, Law School, University of Trento

Cinzia Piciocchi, Law School, University of Trento

Andrea Pin, Law School, University of Padua

13 April 2017 | 17.00 - 19.00
Fondazione Bruno Kessler | Aula Piccola
Via Santa Croce 77 | 38122 Trento

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Speaker Biography

Brett G. Scharffs is the Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies and the Francis R. Kirkham Professor of Law at Brigham Young University Law School. Together with his colleagues at the Center, he pursues the Center's mission of helping secure the blessing of freedom of religion and belief for all people.

Professor Scharffs is a graduate of Georgetown University, where he received a B.S.B.A in international business and an M.A. in philosophy. He was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, where he earned a B.Phil in philosophy. He received his J.D. from Yale Law School, where he was Senior Editor of the Yale Law Journal. He was a law clerk on the D.C. Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals, and a legal assistant on the Iran-US Claim Tribunal in The Hague.

For the past eight years he has been a visiting professor at Central European University in Budapest, where he teaches comparative law and religion. Over the past decade he has helped organize advanced academic training programs on religion and the rule of law in China, Vietnam, and Myanmar, as well as programs on Islamic Sharia law and human rights at several universities in Indonesia.

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