



Research Workshop of the
Israel Science Foundation

International conference:

Religious Perspectives on the Public Sphere: Neutrality, Pluralism and the Secular

12-15 December 2011

Tel Aviv & Tuzba



The Minerva Center for Human Rights
Tel Aviv University



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI MILANO

Monday, December 12th, 2011

20:00 *Welcome Dinner* in Tel Aviv

Tuesday, December 13th, 2011

8:45 *Leaving* for Tzuba.

10:30 Silvio Ferrari, Shai Lavi & Suzanne Last Stone – Academic Committee

Opening remarks

11:00 Silvio Ferrari, University of Milan/RELIGARE

Religion and the Public/Private Divide

12:15 Suzanne Last Stone, Cardozo Law School New York

The Ambiguities of Public Space in Rabbinic Thought

13:15 Lunch

15:00 Gerhard Robbers, University of Trier

Public and Private in Protestantism

16:15 David C. Flatto, Penn State University

Religious Law and its Limits: A Study of Rabbinic Thought, in Comparison with Christian and Muslim Perspectives

Wednesday, December 14th, 2011

9:00 Norman Doe, Cardiff University

Public/Private, Sacred/Secular Distinctions in the Laws of the Churches of the Worldwide Anglican Communion

10:15 Nikos Maghioros, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Private and Public According to the Orthodox Canonical Tradition

11:30 Mathias Rohe, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg/RELIGARE

Religion and the Public Sphere in Islam: Concepts of Dominance and Pluralism in Past and Present

12:30 Lunch

14:00 Mark Hill, Cardiff University

Public Ministry in the Law of the Church of England

15:15 Hasan Hacak, Marmara University

The Basis and Effects of Private-Public Law Division in Classical Islamic Law

16:30 Amos Israel, Tel Aviv University

Jewish Law and the Public/Private Divide: Religious Spatial Coping in the Modern/Secular World.

Thursday, December 15th, 2011

9:00 Marco Ventura, University of Siena

Catholic Canon Law: the Absolutist Rule that Made Pluralist Democracy Possible

10:15 Asher Maoz, Tel Aviv University

Neutrality in the Public Sphere –Between State and Religion

11:30 Pieter Coertzen, University of Stellenbosch

Religion in the Public Space of a Pluralistic Society - Reformed Theological Perspectives

12:45 Shai Lavi, Tel Aviv University

Religion and the Public/Private Sphere: Concluding Remarks

14:00 Lunch

15:00 *Round Table Discussion and Conclusion*

Religious Perspectives on the Public Sphere:

Neutrality, Pluralism and the Secular

Legal scholars have commonly approached the relationship between State and Church starting from the conceptual framework that is dominant in contemporary liberal constitutionalism. Notions such as “public”, “secular”, “pluralism”, and “neutrality” have been discussed from the perspective of the modern state. This approach, however, offers only half of the picture. The workshop seeks to address similar questions from the internal perspectives of different religious traditions.

Some of the central questions that will be presented and discussed are:

- Is the public/private distinction significant in the legal traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam? If so, how is this distinction conceived? Which are its main characteristics? What are the most important differences between the “religious” conceptions and the conceptions prevailing in the legal traditions of liberal constitutionalism? How can “religious” conceptions of public and private contribute to the organization of contemporary society?
- What does the distinction between the secular and the sacred signify within the legal systems of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (provided this distinction exists)? Is there a link (historical, theological, philosophical, etc.) between this religious distinction and the development of the modern concept of secularism? Is the secular/sacred distinction a relic of a pre-modern age or has it something to say to contemporary society?
- From the point of view of liberal constitutionalism, religious neutrality of the public sphere is often considered to be the best way to grant equal rights to citizens; others prefer to look at pluralism as the best tool to combine difference and equality. According to the legal traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are “neutrality” and “pluralism” significant as organizational principles of the interactions that take place in the public sphere? If so, in which way? If not, what is the conceptual framework and what resources can the legal traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam provide to organize the public sphere in a way that respects the rights of the believers of different religions and of the non-believers?

The workshop is co-sponsored by the EU research program RELIGARE on “Religious Diversity and Secular Models in Europe” (<http://www.religareproject.eu>), The Minerva Center for Human Rights at Tel Aviv University, and the Cardozo Law School in New York. The workshop is also supported by a research grant of the Israeli Science Foundation.

Organizing Committee:

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Suzanne Last Stone, Director, Center for Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization, Cardozo Law School

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