

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

It is rare when a project exceeds its initial vision, but as the staff of the *Journal* put this issue "to bed," we are left with the feeling that our grasp has exceeded our reach. Sparked by the energy and determination of our departing book review editor, Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., our original project—to produce one issue on Islamic jurisprudence and another on "best books of the 1990s," distributing these issues to scholars with a critical need for these resources with the help of a Lilly Endowment grant—has grown and grown. As a result, you, our readers, have already been treated to a five-issue series of important reference books:

—a double issue on Islamic jurisprudence, focusing on Islamic law on peacemaking and human rights (Volume XV, 1 & 2), guest-edited by Azizah al-Hibri;

—perhaps the most comprehensive bibliography in the world on truth commissions, transitional and restorative justice prepared by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation at the behest of its director, Charles Villa-Vicencio, and accompanied by provocative essays on reconciliation and punishment by Don Shriver and John Steele (Volume XVI, No. 1);

—a mammoth issue devoted to reviews of best books in law and religion published in the decade of the 1990s, guest-edited by Ed Gaffney; and now

—this, our fifth and final issue in this series: a special issue on Jewish and biblical law, including an extensive book review section on books published in the decade of the '90s (Volume XVII).

For this issue, my first words must be of thanks to the many people who rose to the challenge of finding book reviewers all over the world for these books. First, of course, Ed Gaffney deserves tremendous credit for his willingness to seek funding for the issue, to work with our staff in finding reviewers, to help to pry even older books out of the hands of publishers, and to edit these reviews, as he has done with reviews in the past issues in this project. We are going to miss him as he retires as book review editor and from our Editorial Board, though he has already been warned that he will not escape our friendship so easily. Steven D. Smith from Notre Dame Law School succeeds him as book review editor with our next issue.

Second, I must thank those members of the Jewish law and Biblical law scholarly communities who so graciously offered their help for this project, even though many of them had never heard of Ed or me when we contacted them about reviewers or books, even though I risk omitting someone important to this project by naming them. John Welch at Brigham Young University helped to circulate news of this special issue among interested scholars, including the Society of Biblical Literature, and deserves credit for most of the extensive bibliography of Biblical Law books we could not review. Elliot Dorff, University of Judaism; David Gordis, Hebrew College; Dick Hiers, University of Florida, Jack Sasson, Vanderbilt, Jacob Neusner, Bard College; David Novak, University of Toronto; Joel B. Wolowelsky, the Yeshivah at Flatbush; Lenn Goodman, Vanderbilt; and John Bullard, Wofford College, were among those kind enough to send out a call for reviewers or connect us with both eminently known and gifted younger scholars whose reviews you will find in these pages. Countless other scholars to whom they referred us to sent us on to others who could help.

Among those reviewers brave enough to undertake multiple reviews, we must particularly single out Bernard Jackson, University of Manchester, whose willingness to undertake a multi-book review when we thought we were running out of time was truly generous; and whose newest scholarly work you will soon see in an upcoming issue. And I must express my regrets to authors of the many wonderful books published in the 1990s that we simply couldn't match up with reviewers and available books, given time constraints.

We also offer three provocative articles in this issue, worthy companions of the books herein reviewed. David Benatar puzzles over the meaning and implications of a Talmudic principle, attributed to Rabbi Chanina, that posits that a person who obeys a commandment is "greater" than a person who acts in the way the commandment requires, but not because he is commanded.

Hanina Ben-Menahem offers a corrective to "the received opinion" that Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* III:34 is a text addressing the question of equity, which is influenced by Aristotle, arguing that, though this text is not about equity. Maimonides does utilize the notion of equity when the circumstances require, as demonstrated in other texts.

And Dick Hiers explores Biblical texts to describe what social justice principles are embedded in the text on such questions as the needs of the poor and the right to fair treatment. These articles will demand your engagement.

For those who are new to the *Journal*, we hope this will be an encouragement to consider us for your next article, to subscribe so that we can continue to publish such fine work, and to serve in the many volunteer capacities where we need help.

Finally, I need to thank our staff, who are growing skeptical of my assurance that, with our next issues, things will “settle down,” (though we hope not too much). Linda Berglin, Howard Vogel, and Stephen Liebo worked with good spirit and went beyond the call of duty on these issues. Our student assistants for this issue, Fallon Kelly, Jim Zuleger, Jessica Page, Shari Selander, Sharon Clark Williams and Kathryn Russell have also worked hard to iron out technical “kinks” in the material. For those we have missed, given deadlines and the number of reviews we were working with, we hope you and the authors will forgive us. Our Editorial Board has been wonderfully supportive of this project, and we must once again thank the Lilly Endowment whose generous help has made these issues a lasting contribution to the literature in law and religion.

Marie A. Failing, Editor