

# REPORT FROM THE Center

## Spring Symposium to Explore Religion and Science in the Public Schools

The Center's Spring 2007 Symposium will address "*Creationism, Evolution, and Intelligent Design: Religion and Science in the Public Schools.*" This is an important and timely topic.

The past few years have seen a flurry of challenges to teaching evolution in public school science classes. These challenges represent the latest act in a recurring cultural drama that goes back to the famous Scopes "monkey trial" in 1925. Despite recent defeats of "intelligent design" in the courts and the legislatures, this issue is not likely to disappear. The American public remains deeply divided about the creation and evolution of life and about the way these are taught in the public schools.

These matters go to the heart of public education in the United States, raising critical issues of law and politics, science

and religion and educational policy. Speakers will include historians, scientists, educators, theologians and legal scholars, several of whom are nationally recognized experts in this field. The Symposium should be of interest to teachers, parents, religious leaders, legal specialists and others concerned with educational policy and the relationship of church and state.

The Symposium begins Thursday, February 1 and continues on consecutive Thursdays through March 8. Each program will consist of a public presentation followed by audience discussion, and each will be offered twice: once at 11 a.m. and again at 7:30 p.m. in Boyd Dining Center



at Virginia Wesleyan College. All are free and open to the public; no reservations are required. The schedule of specific speakers and topics can be found in the Calendar of Events on Page 8 and on the Center's Web site.

*This Symposium is supported in part by a grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.*

### IN THIS Issue

■ RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE NEWS	3
■ CSRF COURSES APPROVED	5
■ CSRF BORROWING POLICY	5
■ PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS	6
■ DIRECTOR'S ACTIVITIES	6
■ FALL 2007 SYMPOSIUM	7
■ CALENDAR OF EVENTS	8

### REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR



## Intelligent Design: Religion or Science?

One of the difficulties courts often face in religious freedom cases is the slipperiness of the term "religion." The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." When someone challenges a government activity as interfering with religious free exercise or as improperly promoting a religious message, a court must first determine whether the claim does in fact involve religion.

Sometimes this is easy. If a practice includes prayer or a sacred text, for example, no one is likely to argue the point. In other cases, however, the parties may disagree about whether a particular practice or belief is religious. Such a disagreement lies at the heart of the ongoing disputes over whether the theory of intelligent design (ID) should be

*continued on page 2*



## Playback Theatre,

*an improvisational theatre troupe valuing story, ritual and community, performed at One Love - A World Peace Interfaith Music and Arts Extravaganza - in September. The event, co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of*

*continued from page 1*

taught in public schools.

ID's basic claim is that the universe is so complex it must have been created by an intelligent higher being. School boards in several states have adopted or seriously considered proposals requiring ID to be taught in science classes, usually as an "alternative" to Darwinian evolution. While the political struggle around this issue in Kansas and elsewhere has been widely publicized, the most significant federal court decision on ID came from Pennsylvania. In October 2004, the Dover Area School District adopted a resolution stating: "Students will be made aware of gaps/problems in Darwin's theory and of other theories of evolution including, but not limited to, intelligent

design." Ninth grade biology teachers were required to read a statement to their students that said, "Darwin's Theory is a theory...not a fact." The statement specifically named ID as an alternative, about which students were "encouraged to keep an open mind." A group of parents challenged the Dover ID policy in federal court, arguing that it violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. In a lengthy and carefully reasoned opinion issued on December 20, 2005, in the case of *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, federal Judge John Jones agreed, and enjoined the school district from applying the policy.

The central issue in the case was

whether ID is a scientific or religious theory. Jones gave several reasons for ruling that ID was a religious view. First, ID is a direct descendant of "creationism," the belief that the creation story told in the Book of Genesis is literally true. Throughout the 20th century, creationists have tried to prevent the teaching of evolution in public schools and were successful in several states. In 1968, however, the Supreme Court overturned state laws prohibiting the teaching of evolution or requiring that creationism be given equal time. For a while creationist efforts continued under new names such as "creation science" or "scientific creationism," but in 1987 the Supreme Court rejected this ploy. It was at this

### *Report from the Center*

is published twice a year by the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom at Virginia Wesleyan College.

Paul Rasor  
Director

Ann Shappell  
Assistant to the Director

757.455.3129  
csrf@vwc.edu  
www.vwc.edu/csrf



*Religious Freedom and a number of religious and community organizations, was held at Virginia Wesleyan College. More than 250 people of diverse faiths, backgrounds and ages came together to demonstrate a model of unity in diversity and enjoy an evening of fun and fellowship.*

point that “intelligent design” appeared.

The evidence produced in the Dover case showed that ID was developed as a tactical response to these court decisions. The most compelling evidence was the revelation that the textbook recommended for learning about ID used the term “creationism” in its earliest drafts, and that this term was systematically replaced with “intelligent design” after the Supreme Court’s 1987 ruling.

Another factor in the Dover decision was the testimony of Dr. John Haught, a highly regarded theologian who has written widely on the relationship of religion and science. (Haught will be part of the Center’s Spring Symposium.) Haught noted that ID is not a new scientific theory, as its proponents claim, but rather a religious argument for the existence of God first used by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. Perhaps the most compelling factor was the statements of several school board members that the ID policy was intended to bring a religious perspective into the science curriculum. This is precisely the kind of official endorsement of religion the First Amendment prohibits. Jones’ opinion also contains a lengthy discussion of the definition and methodologies of science,

*continued on page 4*

## Muslim Congressman Won’t Be First Politician to Forgo Taking Oath on Bible

The Minnesota Democrat Keith Ellison, the first Muslim elected to Congress, announced he would take his oath of office on the Qur’an, provoking criticism from conservatives. However, Jewish politicians often take oaths on the Hebrew Bible, and Presidents John Quincy Adams and Franklin Pierce took their oaths without religious texts. The Constitution states, “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.” (RNS, December 6, 2006)

## Michigan Rejects Intelligent Design in Science Classes

The Michigan State Board of Education has unanimously adopted new curriculum guidelines that support the teaching of evolution and exclude the teaching of intelligent design in science classes. The theory could be taught in other courses. Michigan Citizens For Science issued a statement praising the fair procedures used by the Board of Education in considering the issue. (Reported by the Associated Press, Oct. 10, 2006)

## Supreme Court Declines to Hear Case Challenging School’s Unit on Islam

On Oct. 2, 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court announced it would not consider the case of *Elkunda v. Byron Union School District*. The case involved a challenge by school parents to a world history unit titled “The Roots of Islam and the Empire” that had students reading pages from the Qur’an and studying Islam’s Five Pillars of Faith. The study unit included role-playing activities designed to acquaint students with Islam. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals had earlier ruled that the unit did not create Establishment Clause problems. (Reported by the Associated Press)

## Utah Trio Asks Court to Overturn Polygamy Ban

A Utah couple and a woman who wants to become the second wife in their family are asking the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Denver to overturn Utah’s ban on polygamy. A Salt Lake County clerk refused to issue a marriage license when G. Lee Cook and the second woman - accompanied by Cook’s wife - applied. A federal judge dismissed their lawsuit, saying the clerk properly followed state law. The challengers claim they have a deeply-held religious belief that plural marriage is ordained of God and is to be encouraged and practiced, and argue the ban unconstitutionally targets one religion. (Reported by the Associated Press, Sept. 25, 2006)

*continued on page 4*



## Muslims Say Attacks, Harassment Up 29 Percent Last Year

A woman in Freeport, Ill., hits a Muslim woman for wearing a head scarf, a Texas man firebombs a mosque in El Paso and a Qur'an is stuffed in a university library toilet in Stockton, Calif. Those were just three of the 1,972 acts of violence, harassment and discrimination committed against Muslims in America in 2005, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which on Monday, Sept. 18, 2006, released "The Struggle for Equality," a report examining Muslim civil rights in America. The 2005 figure represents a 29.6 percent jump over 2004, when 1,522 cases were reported. The report also found that anti-Muslim "hate crimes" (physical assault) in 2005 rose 8.6 percent from the previous year, increasing to 153 last year from 141 in 2004. (RNS)

## House Homeland Security Chairman Endorses Religious Profiling

Rep. Peter King, (R-NY), chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, has endorsed religious and ethnic profiling. He would require persons of "Middle Eastern and South Asian" descent to undergo additional security checks, saying, "If the threat is coming from a particular group, I can understand why it would make sense to single them out for further questioning." King has said that while not all Muslims are terrorists, all recent terrorists have been Muslim. Legal and law enforcement officials, however, have rejected racial and religious profiling both on constitutional grounds and on grounds of effectiveness. (Reported by *Newsday*, Aug. 17, 2006)

## Poll: Four in Ten Americans Admit Prejudice Against Muslims

Almost 40 percent of Americans acknowledge having some prejudice against Muslims, but those with Muslim acquaintances are more likely to show favorable attitudes, a new *USA Today*/Gallup Poll shows. Thirty-nine percent of Americans asked to "honestly" assess themselves said they have "at least some feelings of prejudice against Muslims" while 59 percent said they did not. (RNS, Aug. 16, 2006)

## Councilman Loses In Attempt To Offer Christian Prayers

A federal district court in Virginia dismissed the claim of Fredericksburg city council member Hashmel Turner that his First Amendment rights were violated when he was not permitted to offer a specifically Christian opening prayer at city council meetings. In its Aug. 14 ruling, the court found that his opening prayer was government speech, not private speech. Thus, "City Council can restrict what is said on its behalf during the opening prayer without infringing on the speaker's viewpoint." The court went on to hold that the Establishment Clause prohibits sectarian legislative prayers, and the city's policy of requiring nonsectarian prayer is not an Establishment Clause violation. An appeal is likely. (Story reported in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*)

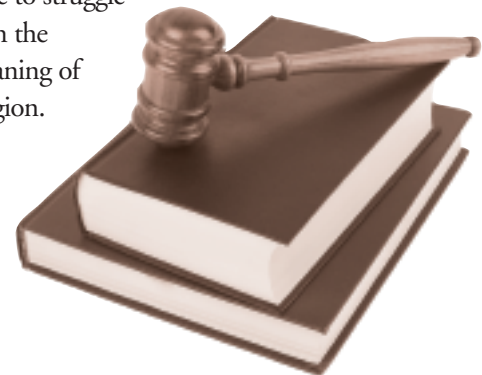
For more information on these and other stories see the CSRF Web site: [www.vwc.edu/csrf](http://www.vwc.edu/csrf).

continued from page 3

ruling that ID is not a science or a scientific theory. This ruling, of course, reinforces the conclusion that ID is a religious view. Jones made a point of saying that he took no position on whether ID is "true"; he simply ruled that it is religion, and not science.

The Dover ruling does not mean that ID cannot be taught in the public schools at all. While the First Amendment prohibits public schools from promoting religion, it does not prohibit teaching about religion. Many observers, including the Supreme Court, have noted that knowledge of religion is an important part of education today. Just as the Bible or other sacred texts may be included in history or literature courses, for example, ID might be taught in a course on comparative religions or the history of ideas. But it may not be taught in biology class as a science.

In the end, religion may be no more difficult to define than other field-defining terms such as science, philosophy, or history. But unlike these fields, religion is recognized in our constitutional structure, and it is protected by a pair of negative clauses designed to prevent the government from interfering with private religious choices. This special status means that the courts will sometimes have to struggle with the meaning of religion.




**NOTE:** *The Center's Spring 2007 Symposium addresses these issues in much greater depth. See Page 1. ■*

# CSRF Courses Approved

The College's Education Programs Commission has approved the listing of three courses as CSRF courses. In the past, several courses in the College curriculum have been identified as "Center-affiliated," but until now no courses have been officially offered by the Center. This new approval changes this practice. No new courses were created at this time. Instead, three existing courses were shifted from their current designations to CSRF designations. The three courses are:

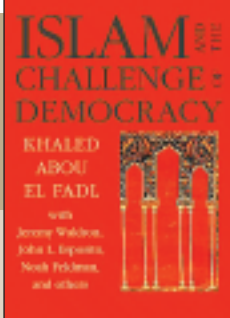
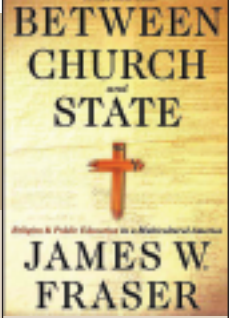

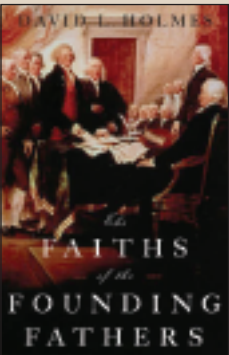
- CSRF 100 *Religious Freedom Symposium*
- CSRF 275 *Religious Freedom and Tolerance*
- CSRF 355 *Law and Religion in America*

CSRF 100 will be offered in conjunction with the Center's annual symposium and gives students who attend the symposium presentations a chance to earn an extra credit hour. In the spring, this course will correlate with the Symposium on Religion and Science in the Public Schools. The other courses are not yet in the schedule, but one or both of them may be offered during the 2007-08 academic year.



**Rasor's Recommended Reading:**

Abou El Fadl, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy*  
 Fraser, *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America*  
 Hammond, *Religion on Trial: How Supreme Court Trends Threaten the Freedom of Conscience in America*  
 Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*

# Borrowing Policy

All books in the CSRF collection are included in the College library's online catalog and most are available to VWC faculty, students and other interested users. If you would like to borrow a book, simply come to the Center offices, located on the first floor of Clarke Hall, during normal College business hours. If you are unable to come to the Center during these hours, please call the office at 757.455.3129 and we can make other arrangements. Specific policies can be found on the Center's Web site.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

The Center library continues to grow. These are some of the books received by the Center since our fall newsletter.

ABOU EL FADL, KHALED, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (Princeton, 2004)

ABOU EL FADL, KHALED, *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (Beacon, 2002)

ALMOND, GABRIEL A., R. SCOTT APPLEBY, AND EMMANUEL SIVAN, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World* (University of Chicago, 2003)

BEZANSON, RANDALL P., *How Free Can Religion Be?* (University of Illinois, 2006)

CARTER, STEPHEN L., *The Dissent of the Governed: A Meditation on Law, Religion, and Loyalty* (Harvard, 1998)

FRASER, JAMES W., *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America* (St. Martin's, 1999)

GOLDBERG, MICHELLE, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (Norton, 2006)

HAMMOND, PHILLIP E., *Religion on Trial: How Supreme Court Trends Threaten the Freedom of Conscience in America* (AltaMira, 2004)

HOLMES, DAVID L., *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford, 2006)

JAYNE, ALLEN, *Jefferson's Declaration of Independence: Origins, Philosophy, and Theology* (University of Kentucky, 2000)

KHAN, M. A. MUQTEDAR, *American Muslims: Bridging Faith and Freedom* (Amana, 2002)

MEACHAM, JON, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation* (Random House, 2006)

SUCHOCKI, MARJORIE HEWITT, *Divinity and Diversity: A Christian Affirmation of Religious Pluralism* (Abingdon, 2003)

TAYLOR, MARK LEWIS, *Religion, Politics, and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire* (Augsburg Fortress, 2005)

## PROGRAM

# Highlights

## Dramatic Presentations Add Variety to Center's Programming


Two dramatic presentations are part of the Center's programming for Spring 2007. While independent of the Spring Symposium on Religion and Science in the Public Schools, these presentations offer alternative ways of looking at the relationship between religion and science.

## Claudia Stevens Returns to VWC



On Thursday, March 29, Claudia Stevens, singer, actor, and concert pianist, will present her new one-woman musical play, *Blue Lias, or the Fish Lizard's Whore*. The form of *Blue Lias* is an imagined professional meeting of scientists, taking place in the present. Stevens portrays 19th-century English paleontologist Mary Anning reflecting on her most significant scientific discoveries within the context of religious doctrine and emerging evolutionary theory, as well as the unattributed use of her discoveries by male scientists.\*

## Center Director to Present *Clarence Darrow*



Center Director Paul Rasor will present the one-man play *Clarence Darrow* by David W. Rintels, based on the Irving Stone biography *Clarence Darrow for the Defense*. Lawyer Clarence Darrow was one of the most controversial and courageous defenders of justice in American history. The drama follows Darrow as he reflects on his life and career, including his support for the labor movement and his defense of unpopular clients such as Darwinist John T. Scopes, and re-enacts some of Darrow's impassioned pleas to the juries of his most renowned court cases. The play will be performed April 12-15 in Hofheimer Theatre at Virginia Wesleyan College.\*

See the Center's Web site for more details.

\*For reservations call 757.455.3381

## DIRECTOR'S ACTIVITIES

*Center Director Paul Rasor was busy with several conferences, speaking engagements and other off-campus activities during the fall.*

### HIGHLIGHTS:

*September 2006:* Published a review of Elizabeth Anne Oldmixon's book, *Uncompromising Positions: God, Sex, and the U.S. House of Representatives* (2005), in the fall 2006 issue of the *Journal of Church and State*.

*October 6, 2006:* Moderated a panel discussion for the annual Symposium on Law, Religion and Ethics, sponsored by the *Journal of Law and Religion* at Hamline University School of Law, St. Paul, MN. The Symposium theme was "Religious Americans and Political Choices: A Conversation about Shared Values and Citizen Responsibilities."

*October 8-11, 2006:* Preached at University Unitarian Church in Seattle, Wash., and led a two-day workshop on "Unitarian Universalism and the Challenge of Religious Identity" for Unitarian Universalist ministers from the Northwest United States and Western Canada.

*November 3, 2006:* Made a presentation on religious freedom to Church Women United of Hampton Roads.

*November 14, 2006:* Led a public discussion of the film *Jesus Camp* at the Naro Cinema in Norfolk.

*November 17-21, 2006:* Attended the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., where the Center was one of four national organizations featured at a special reception.



## Fall 2007 Symposium

The Center's Fall 2007 Symposium will address "From Jamestown to Jefferson: The Evolution of Religious Authority in Colonial Virginia." Virginia was the first American colony to have an established church and it became the first state to adopt a statute on religious freedom. The Symposium

will explore a range of themes related to Virginia's historic journey, including such questions as: How did this journey transform the relationship between church and state? What was the Church's social and moral influence during



this period? How were "heretics" and dissenting religious groups treated? What role did religion play in the daily lives of the colonists? What lessons from Virginia's experience are relevant today? Speakers will include nationally known scholars from a variety of disciplines, including history, law, religious studies and theology and political science. The six-part Symposium begins Thursday, Sept. 6, and continues through Nov. 8. More information will appear in the Center's fall 2007 newsletter and on our Web site.

*The Center's Symposia are normally held during the spring semester.*

*This Symposium was moved to the fall semester for the 2007-2008 program year so it could be part of the ongoing Jamestown celebrations taking place throughout 2007.*

*The Center  
for the Study  
of Religious  
Freedom needs  
your support.*

You can support the Center in many ways: by attending Center programs, by sharing news of the Center's work with others, and by your financial contributions. Please share this newsletter with your family and friends, and encourage them to come to Center events.

If you would like to make a financial gift to the Center, you may use the form below, or you may make a gift through our Web site: [www.vwc.edu/csrf](http://www.vwc.edu/csrf).

Your gifts allow us to improve our programs, strengthen our library and other resources, and continue our work of promoting religious freedom.

## Financial Gift to The Center for the Study of Religious Freedom

☐ \$1,000    ☐ \$500    ☐ \$250    ☐ \$100    ☐ \$50    ☐ Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please designate my gift for:

☐ Program Enhancement Fund    ☐ Publication Fund    ☐ Catharine Cookson Endowed Visiting Scholar Fund

Enclosed is a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ payable to Virginia Wesleyan College. (Note fund on memo line of check.)

OR Charge my credit card \$\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ MasterCard    ☐ VISA Card# \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

My gift is ☐ in honor of    ☐ in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Please notify: \_\_\_\_\_

*Name and Address*

**Please mail to:** College Advancement, Virginia Wesleyan College, 1584 Wesleyan Drive, Norfolk, VA 23502-5599

# Calendar OF EVENTS

## FEBRUARY

Thursday, Feb. 1, 2007: *Symposium session\**

### **Crossing the Lines: God, Public Schools, and the Constitution**

*Paul Rasor, J.D., Ph.D., CSRF Director*

What are the relevant First Amendment principles, key court decisions, and unsettled questions?

Thursday, Feb. 8, 2007: *Symposium session\**

### **Religion versus Science: Why Does it Matter?**

*James Gilbert, Ph.D., Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland, Department of History*

Why does the creation-evolution controversy keep coming back? How does its history help clarify the issues we face today?

Monday, Feb. 12, 2007

NEXUS Interfaith Dialogue: Islam and Women

### **What is the status of women in the Qur'an and in Islamic law?**

7:30 – 9 p.m., *Boyd Dining Center*

Thursday, Feb. 15, 2007: *Symposium session\**

### **Evolution and Faith: What Is at Stake?**

*John F. Haught, Ph.D., Distinguished Research Professor, Georgetown University, Department of Theology*

After Darwin, is there room for an understanding of God that is consistent with traditional beliefs and core ethical values, and at the same time fully consistent with evolutionary biology?

Thursday, Feb. 22, 2007: *Symposium session\**

### **How Do Biologists View Creationism and Intelligent Design?**

*Paul M. Ressler, Ph.D., Batten Professor of Biology and Philip Rock, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biology, Virginia Wesleyan College*

What is the scientific status of evolution? What are the implications of this controversy for science education?

## MARCH

Thursday, March 1, 2007: *Symposium session\**

### **Creationism, Intelligent Design, Evolution: What's a Teacher To Do?**

*Ginger L. Ferris, M.S., Assistant Professor of Education and B. Malcolm Lively, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education, Virginia Wesleyan College*

How can teachers prepare to deal with issues on science and religion?

Thursday, March 8, 2007: *Symposium session\**

### **Science and Religion in the Public Schools: What Next?**

*Kent Greenawalt, University Professor, Columbia University School of Law*

What are the unresolved issues and future controversies?

Thursday, March 29, 2007

### ***Blue Lias, or The Fish Lizard's Whore***

A one-woman musical play created and performed by Claudia Stevens. Followed by audience discussion.

7:30 p.m., *Hofheimer Theatre*

## APRIL

Thursday, April 12, through Sunday, April 15, 2007

### ***Clarence Darrow***

CSRF director Paul Rasor presents the one-man play *Clarence Darrow*, by David W. Rintels.

8 p.m. Thursday – Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, *Hofheimer Theatre*

Monday, April 16, 2007

NEXUS Interfaith Dialogue: Islam and Religious Pluralism

### **How does Islam participate in a pluralistic society?**

7:30 – 9 p.m., *Boyd Dining Center*

*All events are free and open to the public.*

*\* All Symposium programs are presented at Virginia Wesleyan College, Boyd Dining Center. 11 a.m., and repeated at 7:30 p.m.*



1584 Wesleyan Drive  
Norfolk, VA 23502-5599

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Norfolk, Virginia  
Permit 27