

# REPORT FROM THE Center

## Spring Programs to Explore Religion on College Campuses

In the spring of 2012, a semester-long series of conversations will examine the ways in which students grapple with religious questions, expressions, and behaviors during their college years, as well as the ways faculty, staff, and administrators can help in this process. The program series, entitled "Religion on Campus: A Semester-long Conversation," will consider questions such as: How do college students explore their spiritual identity? How do they tolerate others who are doing the same? How do we all balance the need for civility with the desire for personal expression?

Two of the programs in this six-part series will be offered in the form of lectures free and open to the public. On Wednesday, February 15, Rev. Ian Oliver, Senior Associate Chaplain for Protestant Life and Pastor of University Church at Yale University, will speak on "Religious

Students in a Secular Society." On Wednesday, April 11, John Schmalzbauer, Ph.D., will speak on "Campus Religious Life in America: Past and Present." Dr. Schmalzbauer is Associate Professor and Blanche Gorman Strong Chair in Protestant Studies, Department of Religious Studies, at Missouri State University. His research focuses on the place of religion in higher education, and he is author of *People of Faith: Religious Conviction in American Journalism and Higher Education*, and serves as co-investigator for the National Study of Campus Ministries.



John Schmalzbauer

The remaining four conversations in this series will consist of a multi-part seminar. Participants will form a reading group to discuss the

issues in depth, using the book *Religion on Campus: What Religion Really Means to Today's Undergraduates* as a point of departure. Administrators chaplains, and student leaders from all colleges and universities in the Hampton Roads area have been invited to attend.

**Participation in the seminar is limited to invited guests.** If you would like to be invited, please call the Center at 757.455.3129 or contact Professor Eric Mazur at [emazur@vwd.edu](mailto:emazur@vwd.edu). See the calendar of events on page 8 for details.



Ian Oliver

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### REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR



## The State of Religious Liberty

Religious freedom is one of our most precious rights. It is deeply engrained in our social and political culture, and a long-standing commitment to religious freedom is shared by religious groups across the theological spectrum. The same is true of the principle of church-state separation, which is an important part of religious freedom as it is understood in the United States. Practically no one wants to see an established or official church, and very few people think we'd be better off if we all shared the same faith.

While we all agree that religious freedom is a good thing, we don't all agree on what it means. And it's not just that the law is unclear, though it is; Supreme Court decisions on the First Amendment's religion clauses are famously confused and inconsistent. At a deeper level we as a people have different and often conflicting understandings of what sorts of

## Center Director on Spring Sabbatical

Dr. Paul Rasor, Joan P. and Macon F. Brock Jr. Director of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom, will be on sabbatical during the 2012 spring semester. He will be completing a book entitled *Reclaiming Prophetic Liberalism: The Dilemmas of Public Faith*, to be published by Skinner House in Boston. He will also be conducting research in Canada

and the Netherlands comparing the ways three of the world's most tolerant societies, Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States, have responded to the increased religious and cultural diversity created by immigration and other factors. During the sabbatical Rasor will spend five weeks as a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. Dr. Eric Mazur, Gloria and David Furman Professor of Judaic Studies, will serve as acting director of the Center while Rasor is away.

*continued from page 1*

practices should be permitted in the name of religion, the role the government should play in accommodating citizens' religious practices, the extent to which religious groups should influence public policy, and similar matters. Policies and laws that for some seem to protect religious freedom look to others like special privilege. Religious influence on public issues is an important and deeply felt expression of faith for some people, while to others it seems corrupting and coercive. These are difficult and important issues, and our views about them are affected by our political and theological starting points.

These differences were evident at the congressional hearings last October on "The State of Religious Liberty in the United States." The hearings were held by

*Thomas Jefferson first proposed the Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom in 1779. It was adopted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1786.*

the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution. All three witnesses who appeared before the committee agreed that we face serious threats to religious freedom today, but they strongly disagreed on what those threats were.

The most liberal perspective was offered by Rev. Barry Lynn, Executive Director of American United for Separation of Church and State. As an ordained United Church of Christ minister and an attorney, Lynn brings a unique perspective to these issues. One of the threats Lynn pointed to is the bigotry and fear still prevalent in the United States against religious minorities. This appears in both official actions such as zoning denials for new houses of worship and community reactions such as protests, intimidation and vandalism. Public officials and private groups who oppose the construction of Muslim mosques, for example, may frame



their opposition in terms of parking problems or residential zoning rules. Yet privately they often admit that they just don't want Muslims (or some other group) in their neighborhood and that they would not be opposed to the construction of Christian churches on the same spots.

Another threat comes from instances of government-compelled religion. A town in Alabama has an ordinance that allows misdemeanor offenders to avoid punishment if they attend church services weekly for a year. Publicly funded mission groups that provide food and shelter to the homeless often require recipients to attend worship services, mostly Christian, as a condition for receiving the aid. Lynn argues that forcing people to choose between jail and church or between food and religion is precisely the

### *Report from the Center*

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

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kind of coercive official action the First Amendment is designed to prevent.

The most conservative view was that of Colby May, Senior Counsel and Director of the American Center for Law and Justice, a Christian-based advocacy organization founded by Pat Robertson with offices at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA. The ACLJ argues for interpretations of the First Amendment that would expand the ability of federal and state governments to promote religious views. Among other things, it supports the display of religious symbols by public officials, such as posting the Ten Commandments in courthouses, and seeks to expand the space for prayer and other religious practices in public schools. May argues that court decisions holding these sorts of official actions unconstitutional amount to a judicial threat to religious freedom.

My own position on these matters is basically the same as Lynn's. Government support of religion, while typically framed in neutral terms, is often expressed in Christian terms. This demonstrates a profound lack of respect for persons of other faiths as well as for nonreligious persons. It also sends a message that it is okay to view minority faiths as inferior and less worthy of constitutional protection.

When people support government-sponsored religious practices in the name of religious freedom, there is a serious disconnect. Our religious freedom is weakened, not strengthened, by official religious activities. I'm in pretty good company on this point. James Madison reminded us that "religion flourishes in greater purity without, than with the aid of government," and Baptist founder Roger Williams insisted that religious freedom is best protected when church and state are strictly separated. I can't help thinking that those who want the government to sanction their religious practices are really seeking religious power, not religious freedom. It will be interesting to see what conclusions the congressional committee will draw on these matters. ■

*All items are from the Religion Clause blog.*

### Suit Challenging Ten Commandments in School May Proceed

On November 28, 2011, a Virginia federal district judge refused to dismiss a lawsuit challenging the posting of the Ten Commandments as part of a display in the Giles County, Virginia Public Schools. The court said there are too many unknown facts to dismiss the complaint in *Doe 1 v. School Board of Giles County* at this point. The court also gave the parties 14 days to work out a protective order to protect the identity of the two John Doe plaintiffs—a student and the student's parent.

*Director's comment: The struggle over posting the Ten Commandments in the Giles County schools has been going on for more than a year. See the news item in the Fall 2011 newsletter.*

### Court Upholds School's Ban of Anti-Islam T-Shirts

In the case of *Sapp v. School Board of Alachua County*, Florida, decided on September 30, 2011, a Florida federal district court upheld against free expression challenges a school's dress codes that were applied to send students home for wearing T-shirts carrying the slogan "Islam is of the Devil." The children who wore the T-shirts came from two families that were members of the Dove World Outreach Center. The Center had gained notoriety for promoting a "Burn a Quran Day."

### New Report on Religious Advocacy Groups in D.C.

On November 21, 2011, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released a new report titled *Lobbying for the Faithful: Religious Advocacy Groups in Washington D.C.*

*Here is an excerpt from the Executive Summary:*

"The number of organizations engaged in religious lobbying or religion-related advocacy in Washington, D.C., has increased roughly fivefold in the past four decades, from fewer than 40 in 1970 to more than 200 today. These groups collectively employ at least 1,000 people in the greater Washington area and spend at least \$390 million a year on efforts to influence national public policy. As a whole, religious advocacy organizations work on about 300 policy issues. For most of the past century, religious advocacy groups in Washington focused mainly on domestic affairs. Today, however, roughly as many groups work only on international issues as work only on domestic issues, and nearly two-thirds of the groups work on both..."

About one-in-five religious advocacy organizations in Washington have a Roman Catholic perspective (19%) and a similar proportion are evangelical Protestant in outlook (18%), while 12% are Jewish and 8% are mainline Protestant. But many smaller U.S. religious groups, including Baha'is, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Sikhs, also have established advocacy organizations in the Washington area. In fact, the number of Muslim groups (17) is about the same as the number of mainline Protestant groups (16). And the largest category today is interreligious: One-quarter of the groups studied (54) either represent multiple faiths or advocate on religious issues without representing a specific religion."

*continued on page 4*



## Generation Gap in Religious Affiliation

According to a new Pew Research Center report, The Generation Gap and the 2012 Election, younger generations are significantly less likely than older ones to affiliate with a religious tradition. The report analyzes the most recent General Social Survey, which found that 26% of Millennial generation respondents said they were unaffiliated, as did 21% of Gen Xers. Among Baby Boomers, 15% were unaffiliated, and just 10% of the Silent Generation said that they were unaffiliated.

## New Poll Shows Small Increase in U.S. Anti-Semitic Attitudes

On November 3, 2011, the Anti-Defamation League released a new national poll finding a slight increase in anti-Semitic attitudes of Americans over the past two years. The survey found that 15% of Americans hold deeply anti-Semitic views, up from 12% in 2009. The survey demonstrated that old attitudes and stereotypes are still prevalent in significant groups of the population. 14% agreed with the statement that Jews have too much power in the United States. 31% agreed with the statement that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ.

## House Reaffirms “In God We Trust” as National Motto

On November 1, 2011, by a vote of 396 – 9 (with 2 members voting “present”), the U.S. House of Representatives passed House Concurrent Resolution 13, reaffirming “In God We Trust” as the national motto and encouraging its display in public buildings.

## FBI Releases 2010 Hate Crime Data

On November 14, 2011 the FBI released its report on 2010 Hate Crime Statistics. Of the 6,224 single bias incidents reported in 2010, 20% were motivated by religious bias – second only to racially motivated hate crimes which accounted for 47.3% of the incidents. Sexual orientation bias was involved in 19.3% of the single bias incidents. Of the 1,409 hate crimes offenses motivated by religious bias, 65.4% were anti-Jewish; 13.2% were anti-Islamic; 4.3% were anti-Catholic; 3.8% were anti-multiple; 3.3% were anti-Protestant; 0.5% were anti-Atheism/Agnosticism/etc.; and 9.5% involved various other religions. The 6,628 total hate crime incidents in 2010 amounted to an insignificant increase over the 6,604 incidents reported for 2009.



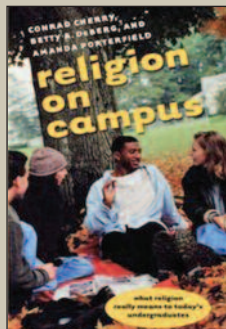
## Director's Book Translated into Hungarian

Center Director Paul Rasor's 2005 book, *Faith Without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century*, has been translated into Hungarian. The book is used in the Unitarian churches in Hungarian speaking minority communities in Romania and by theological students in the Unitarian seminary in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Many of the students read English and have used the book in their studies, but the new translation will make the book accessible to ministers in the rural churches and to members of their congregations. There are between 75,000 and 80,000 Unitarians in Romania.



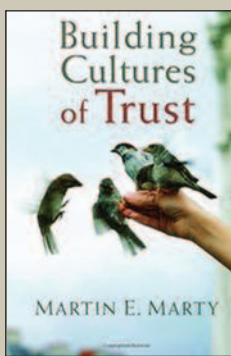
## RASOR'S RECOMMENDED READING

The first of our recommendations is the book to be used in the spring 2012 seminar discussing Religion on Campus. The others are of general interest. These books are available in the Center's library.

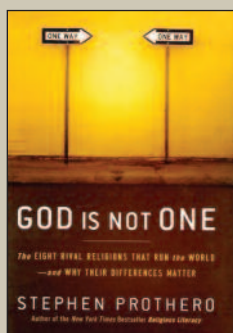


Conrad Cherry, Betty DeBerg, and Amanda Porterfield, *Religion on Campus: What Religion Really Means to Today's Undergraduates* (2006)

Martin Marty,  
*Building Cultures  
of Trust* (2010)



Stephen Prothero,  
*God is Not One: The  
Eight Rival Religions  
that Run the World—  
and Why Their  
Differences Matter*  
(2010)



## BOOKS RECEIVED

*Some new titles in the Center's collection:*

**Benne, Robert**, Good and Bad Ways to Think about Religion and Politics (Eerdmans, 2010)

**Balmer, Randall**, The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond (Baylor University Press, 2010)

**Bennett, Clinton**, Interpreting the Qur'an: A Guide for the Uninitiated (Continuum, 2009)

**Cavanaugh, William**, The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict (Oxford University Press, 2009)

**Cobb, John B., and Ward M. McAgee, eds.**, The Dialogue Comes of Age: Christian Encounters with Other Traditions (Fortress, 2010)

**Dean, Kenda Creasy**, Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (Oxford University Press, 2010)

**Froese, Paul, and Christopher Bader**, America's Four Gods: What We Say about God—and What That Says about Us (Oxford University Press, 2010)

**Kozinski, Thaddeus J.**, The Political Problem of Religious Pluralism And Why Philosophers Can't Solve It (Lexington Books, 2010)

**Marty, Martin E.**, Building Cultures of Trust (Eerdmans, 2010)

**Nord, Warren A.**, Does God Make a Difference? Taking Religion Seriously in Our Schools and Universities (Oxford University Press, 2010)

**Prothero, Stephen**, God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter (HarperOne, 2010)

**Sayyid, S., and AbdoolKarim Vakil, eds.**, Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives (Columbia University Press, 2011) (HarperOne, 2008)

**Volf, Miroslav, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington, eds.**, A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor (Eerdmans, 2009)

**Williams, Daniel K.**, God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right (Oxford University Press, 2010)

**Wolfe, Alan**, Religion and Democracy in the United States: Danger or Opportunity (Princeton University Press, 2010)



## 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, come to the Center offices in Clarke Hall 108 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 to make other arrangements. Specific policies can be found on the Center's website under the "Education" button on the Center's home page.

## Some Hard Questions About Our Faiths

All religions contain features that raise difficult questions for insiders and outsiders alike. These may be found in challenging texts, misunderstood practices, or elsewhere. Left unexamined, these hard questions too often become a source of misunderstanding and fear.

*In the Nexus Interfaith Dialogue Series for 2011-2012, panelists from inside and outside particular faiths will discuss one especially challenging issue.*

### PANELS

#### FEBRUARY 13, 2012

Can Judaism, a minority faith accustomed to surviving persecution, survive in a climate of acceptance?

#### FEBRUARY 27, 2012

Does Christianity claim to be the only true path to salvation? Are Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and atheists consigned to Hell?

#### MARCH 19, 2012

Is Hinduism polytheistic? Do Hindus worship many Gods or one God?

## DIRECTOR'S ACTIVITIES

*Center Director Paul Rasor had several off-campus speaking engagements and other activities in 2011.*

### SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS (2011)

*January 15:* Gave a public presentation and led a workshop on multiculturalism at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Williamsburg, VA.

*January 16:* Served as guest preacher for Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Williamsburg, VA, on the theme "Democracy Matters."

*February 20:* Served as guest preacher at the Unitarian Church of Norfolk on the theme "Do We Know Who We Are?"

*March 25:* Moderated a roundtable discussion on "The State of Virginia's Religious History," featuring a panel of four distinguished historians, at the annual Virginia Forum at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, VA.

*November 17:* Presented the Rumi Forum Community Service Award to Robert Nusbaum, well-known Norfolk attorney and the person (along with VWC President Billy Greer) most responsible for the creation of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom, at the Rumi Forum Annual Friendship and Solidarity Dinner in Norfolk.

### MISCELLANEOUS EVENTS

*February 23:* Introduced and led a community discussion of the documentary film *The Tillman Story*, presented at Virginia Wesleyan College.

*March 31:* Attended the annual Humanitarian Awards Dinner of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities.

*April 29:* Performed in the play "Faust: Prologue in Heaven" (in the role of Mephistopheles, the Devil) as part of the student-directed festival of one-act plays at Virginia Wesleyan College.

*October 4:* Appeared on *HearSay with Cathy Lewis* on WHRV public radio, along with Cookson Lecturer Charles Haynes.

### PUBLICATIONS

Wrote an entry on "Unitarianism" for the *Cambridge Dictionary of Religion*, published by Cambridge University Press (London) in 2011.

Wrote an Introduction for the Hungarian translation of his 2005 book *Faith Without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century*. (See story on page 4/6)

Wrote a book blurb for Leaf Seligman, *Opening the Window: Sabbath Meditations* (Peterborough, NH: Bauhan Publishing, 2011)



## LOOKING BACK

## SUPPORT THE CENTER

### The 2011 ONE LOVE FESTIVAL *An Evening of Music, Poetry and Sharing*



*Vivian Teter, Professor of English at Virginia Wesleyan College and award-winning poet, reading at the 2011 One Love Festival.*

*Members of the Virginia Beach Friends School student group Soundwaves performing on steel drums and African drums at the 2011 One Love Festival.*

The sixth annual One Love Festival, co-sponsored by the Center and several local organizations and faith communities, was held on October 22, 2011, in Boyd Dining Hall. The event brought together more than 200 people of all faiths for a special evening of music, poetry, dance and sharing. The Festival's goal is to create a community of harmony and peace where all are joined in One Love. The next One Love Festival will be held on Saturday, October 20, 2012, at Virginia Wesleyan College. For details, see the Festival's website, [onelovefestivalva.com](http://onelovefestivalva.com).

*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 support the Center, you may use the form below, or you may make a gift through our website: [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

**Monday, Feb. 13**

**Nexus Interfaith Dialogue: Some Hard Questions About Our Faiths**  
Judaism: Can Judaism, a minority faith accustomed to surviving persecution, survive in a climate of acceptance?  
7:30 – 9 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

**Wednesday, Feb. 15**

**Religious Students in a Secular University**  
Rev. Ian Oliver, Senior Associate Chaplain for Protestant Life and Pastor of University Church, Yale University  
7:30 – 9 p.m., Monumental Chapel



**Thursday, Feb. 16**

**Conflicts on Campus? The Religious Voice in the Classroom\***  
*\*Limited to Seminar Participants*  
Rev. Ian Oliver, Yale University Chaplain, and Dr. Eric Mazur, Gloria and David Furman Professor of Judaic Studies, Virginia Wesleyan College  
11 – 11:50 a.m., Pearce Hospitality Suite

**Monday, Feb. 27**

**Nexus Interfaith Dialogue: Some Hard Questions About Our Faiths**  
Christianity: Does Christianity claim to be the only true path to salvation? Are Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and atheists consigned to Hell?  
7:30 – 9 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

### MARCH

**Thursday, March 1**

**A Pretty Picture? The Image of Campus Religion in the Media\***  
*\*Limited to Seminar Participants*  
Rev. Ian Oliver, Yale University Chaplain, and Dr. Eric Mazur, Gloria and David Furman Professor of Judaic Studies, Virginia Wesleyan College  
11 – 11:50 a.m., Pearce Hospitality Suite

**Thursday, March 15**

**A Friendly Conversation? Student Group Interfaith Relations\***  
*\*Limited to Seminar Participants*



Dr. Eric Mazur, Gloria and David Furman Professor of Judaic Studies, Virginia Wesleyan College  
11 – 11:50 a.m., Pearce Hospitality Suite

**Monday, March 26**

**Nexus Interfaith Dialogue: Some Hard Questions About Our Faiths**  
Hinduism: Is Hinduism polytheistic? Do Hindus worship many Gods or one God?  
7:30 – 9 p.m., Boyd Dining Center



### APRIL

**Wednesday, April 11**

**Campus Religious Life in America: Past and Present**  
Dr. John Schmalzbauer, Associate Professor and Blanche Gorman Strong Chair in Protestant Studies, Missouri State University  
7:30 – 9 p.m., Monumental Chapel

**Thursday, April 12**

**Friendly Competition: The Campus Religious Marketplace\***  
*\*Limited to Seminar Participants*  
Dr. John Schmalzbauer, Missouri State University, and Dr. Eric Mazur, Gloria and David Furman Professor of Judaic Studies, Virginia Wesleyan College  
11 – 11:50 a.m., Pearce Hospitality Suite

*Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the public. Reservations not required.  
For more information, call 757.455.3129.*



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