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From the Director

# Religion and the Aims of Liberal Education

On November 8-9, 2012, the Boisi Center helped to organize a major academic symposium on “Religion and the Liberal Aims of Higher Education,” in honor of Boston College’s Sesquicentennial. Co-organized by Boisi Center Associate Director Erik Owens and Boisi Professor of Education and Public Policy Henry Braun, the conference gathered fifteen influential scholars for rigorous reflection on the nature of the academy, the place of religion, and the future of liberal education.

Nathan Hatch, president of Wake Forest University, set the conference tone with an opening keynote that argued for a space for religious institutions in the middle ground of higher education. Both prescriptive and descriptive, his talk challenged conference participants and the whole BC community to recommit to the liberal arts.

The first panel discussion, moderated by author and Vanity Fair editor Cullen Murphy, offered an historical overview of the shifts away from religion and liberal education in the academy. Historians Andrew Delbanco (Columbia University), Mark Noll (University of Notre Dame) and Julie Reuben (Harvard Graduate School of Education) contributed expertise in different periods of American history and provided their own visions of a fruitful future for religious reflection on college campuses.

Mark Massa, S.J., Dean of Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry, moderated the second panel, which brought together three current college presidents, John Jenkins, C.S.C. (University of Notre Dame), Jane McAuliffe (Bryn Mawr), and Philip Ryken (Wheaton College). All three reflected on the distinct ways in which their institutions’ religious communities contributed essential resources to the project of liberal education, often at the most fundamental levels. Each also spoke about the unique challenges of attending to religious diversity within a context of religious commitment.



*Jane McAuliffe*



*Nathan Hatch*

Richard Morrill, former president of the University of Richmond and current president of the Teagle Foundation, delivered a lunchtime keynote address that focused on defining the value of the liberal arts in more than just economic terms. He called for a greater attention to life’s “big questions” at colleges and universities, rejecting as incomplete any tendency to dismiss the potential answers found in religious traditions.

The final panel, moderated by New York Times columnist Mark Oppenheimer, explored the ongoing tensions inherent in pursuing the aims of liberal education alongside religious commitments. Author Susan Jacoby joined Interfaith Youth Core founder Eboo Patel and Yale philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff to consider ways to balance the particularity of faith convictions amid the diversity of a pluralized academy and world, outlining opportunities for religious institutions to contribute to the common good.

Boston College president William P. Leahy, S.J. delivered the closing remarks. Emphasizing the crucial need for vision, mission and leadership at religious universities, his comments laid the foundation for a continuing implementation of the conference’s insights at Boston College.

For a more thorough recap of this conference, along with audio, video, transcripts and more, visit [bc.edu/boisi](http://bc.edu/boisi) and click on the conference link at the bottom right of our home page. ■

# Individuals, Institutions and Religious Freedom

Should our laws aim to protect the religious practices and beliefs of individuals or groups, or both? Are these ends at odds with one another? What sustains the free exercise of religion in the United States? On November 29 the Boisi Center hosted legal scholars Richard Garnett and Gregory Kalscheur, S.J. to address these questions in a lively forum on religious freedom. Garnett, a prolific scholar and legal commentator, is professor of law and associate dean for faculty research at the University of Notre Dame School of Law. He began by noting that “religious freedom is a human right, grounded in human dignity, essential for human flourishing.” The special protection the Constitution gives to religion is a recognition that religious freedom is “part of the very structure of a free society, not merely a grudging concession made by a tolerant sovereign.” Religious freedom protections aren’t accidents or anachronisms; they are “features, not bugs” in our laws.

Garnett argued that religious freedom is properly protected in this country by a secular government and its secular laws—not to marginalize religion but rather “to protect religious freedom in private, in public, in civil society and in politics.” Still, these stout legal protections are insufficient without a robust cultural commitment to religious freedom. Quoting Archbishop Charles Chaput, Garnett said that the Constitution is “just another elegant scrap of paper unless people keep it alive with their convictions and lived witness,” something Garnett said was under threat today.

Religious freedom is equally essential to individuals as it is to institutions, Garnett argued, and institutions have inherent rights to religious freedom that are not merely derivative of individual rights. Indeed, individual and institutional religious freedoms are complementary, not conflicting. If we reduce religious freedom to the individuals exercising it, we overlook the institutional contexts that shape individuals in society



*Richard Garnett*

as well as the communal aspect of religious experience.

Boston College law professor and associate dean of arts & sciences Gregory Kalscheur, S.J. offered a response. Kalscheur agreed with Garnett’s account of religious freedom as intrinsic to both individuals and institutions, and strongly endorsed the Supreme Court’s recent decision in *Hosanna Tabor*, which maintained

“religious freedom is a human right, grounded in human dignity, essential for human flourishing.” Kalscheur



# Latinos, Religion and the American Electorate

With a burgeoning population and increasing national political participation and prominence, Latino voters promised to be a decisive factor in the 2012 elections. On November 1, the Boisi Center hosted a panel featuring Alan Wolfe, Susan Eckstein, and Luis Lugo to discuss various dimensions of the Latino vote in the 2012 elections.

Alan Wolfe, director of the Boisi Center and professor of political science, illustrated the larger political context in which the discussion about the Latino vote takes place. In 1969 political scientist Kevin Phillips correctly predicted the rise of the conservative Republican movement in his book *The Emerging Republican Majority*. In 2002 as conservative Republicans continued to maintain a firm grasp on national electoral power, political scientists John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira predicted that the nation would soon experience a political realignment in favor of the Democratic party in their book,



# Facts and Fears in the “Global War on Terror”

A 23-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency's clandestine services, Glenn Carle retired in 2007 as the Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Transnational Threats. Having spoken at the Boisi Center about interrogation policy a year earlier, Carle returned on November 14 to discuss the current state of the “Global War on Terror,” or GWOT, to a packed room in Fulton Hall. He centered his talk on a discussion of two “fears” and four “facts.”

The first widespread fear, stoked by the government and media alike, Carle said, is that al Qaeda is a coherent global organization with operations in up to eighty countries, when in reality it is dangerous but only fully operational in six countries. The second fear driving the GWOT is nuclear terrorism, but Carle said the odds of terrorists stealing a major nuclear weapon or constructing one themselves is “infinitesimal.”

Four facts are key to understanding the current context, Carle noted. First, al Qaeda is a relatively small organization with goals quite distinct from Hamas, the Taliban and other terrorist organizations; and we know that it has been “decimated” by U.S. attacks in the last decade. “It’s hard to be a terrorist,” Carle told the audience. “The life expectancy is short and there aren’t a lot of themselves is “9aC



**O**n November 14 the Boisi Center hosted a lunch



# the boisi center for religion and american public life

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## Spring 2013 Events

### **The Future of Catholic Periodicals: Finances, Faith and the Digital Age**

February 20, 2013 • Gasson 100 • 5:30-7:00pm

*Speakers:* Paul Baumann, *Commonweal*, Meinrad Sherer-Emunds, *U.S. Catholic*, Matt Malone, S.J., *America*; moderated by Tom Roberts, *National Catholic Reporter*. Co-sponsored by the Church in the 21st Century Center

### **Poverty and American National Priorities**

February 26, 2013 • Higgins 300 • 7:30-9:00pm

*Speakers:* Eric Gregory (*Princeton University*), Susan Crawford Sullivan (*College of the Holy Cross*), William Julius Wilson (*Harvard University*); moderated by Erik Owens (*Boston College*)

### **The Papacy after Benedict XVI**

February 27, 2013 • Higgins 300 • 7:30-9:00pm

*Speakers (all from Boston College):* Rev. James Bretzke, S.J.; Sr. Mary Ann Hinsdale, IHM; Rev. Robert Imbelli, Rev. James Weiss; moderated by Rev. Mark Massa, S.J.

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### **Prophetic Action and Imagination**

Ernesto Cortes, *Industrial Areas Foundation*  
Tuesday, March 26, 2013 • Heights Room • 5:30-7:00pm

*Boisi Center, 12:00-1:15 pm; RSVP required to richarsh@bc.edu*

### **My Experience as the U.S. Youth Delegate**

Brooke Loughrin, *Boston College*  
February 6, 2013

### **Youth Civic Engagement**

Meira Levinson, *Harvard Graduate School of Education*  
February 28, 2013

### **What is Liberation Theology?**

Roberto Goizueta, *Boston College*  
March 12, 2013

### **Cosmopolitanism in Constitutional Law**

Vlad Perju, *Boston College*  
April 11, 2013

### **Religion, State and Education: Turkish and American Perspectives**

Erik Owens, *Boston College*  
April 17, 2013