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The Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life Newsletter

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From the Director's Desk...

Remembrance and Prospect

On the 2nd of July Research Fellow of the Ronning Centre, fine friend and colleague, Professor Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', left this life while on a research trip to Jordan. The coroner reported that a heart attack took his life. He was buried in Nazareth, the city of his birth, several days later. Over the last three years Ibrahim and I did about one hundred public events together, at Augustana, in Edmonton and Calgary and in Syria and Turkey. We worked in the university, in public and religious settings. For both of us religion and its place of significance in public life was too important to be left to the academy, the tradition too rich to be confined to the past, and, the living community of faith too important and interesting to be ignored. You can read more about the significance of his work in this newsletter. We are deeply touched by his departure and grateful for his life with us.

In the academic year 2010-11 the Centre had ninety-three events in various places in Canada and in Turkey where we have developed a fruitful working relationship with the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture. More than seven thousand people have participated in our offerings this last year. This does not include the twenty-thousand plus who attended the opening of the Istanbul Foundation's triennial conference in October, where several Centre fellows had an opportunity to talk. You can find a summary of the Ronning Centre work in our annual report posted on our website.

Among our publications this year was *Global Crises, Local Churches* with essays by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Dittmar Mündel. *A Religious Institution in Contemporary Syria*, edited by Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' and David Goa, came out in July. Ibrahim and I did this book in order to nurture our relationship with colleagues in Syria and make available to the larger public the work of the Fatih Islamic Institute as it endeavours to reach across the Muslim world. A number of the essays seem particularly poignant given the recent political developments in Syria. In August *Pietism and the Challenge of Modernity* with essays by Cam Harder, Eugene L. Boe, and David Goa was published. Our publications are now readily available through the Augustana Bookshop and online from our website.

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Directors' Desk continued from page 1

This year, the Centennial of Augustana, also saw Dean Roger Epp complete his time of teaching and service and move to Edmonton to take up a position in the Political Science department of the north campus. Roger was central to the founding of the Ronning Centre and a champion of the work we do and its civil purpose. Roger will remain a Research Fellow of the Ronning Centre and we anticipate seeing and hearing from him often. Our gratitude is beyond measure. We are also pleased to welcome our new Dean, Allen Berger, and look forward to his leadership. In the following pages you may read about Dean Berger and about the work we plan for 2011-2012 including the various public lectures and forums. We look forward to continue thinking together with many of you.

—David J. Goa



Aryn B. Sajoo

THE AUGUSTANA DISTINGUISHED LECTURES FOR OCTOBER 2011

By Aryn B. Sajoo

Law, Faith, and Ethics: Narratives of Public Islam

Public religion is as insistently vital a phenomenon of our age as secularism. For Muslims, the domain of everyday ethics provides a rich canvas for the interplay of public and private, faith and modernity while providing a critique of utilitarian choices that ordinarily mark the workings of law in public life.

Thursday, 20 October, 7 pm, Room 2-004
Augustana Campus, Camrose

'But how is his reason?': The Ethical Tradition in Islam

The dance of reason and tradition has found particular expression in Muslim ethics in the idea of *maslaha* – the public good, understood as a rational way of going beyond the letter of the law in pursuit of “ultimate” objectives. Moral reasoning, then, becomes a critical facet of faith in action.

Friday, October 21, 7pm, Edmonton
Location to be Announced

Amy B. Sajoo to Speak

Islam's Engagement with Politics and Society to be Focus of Augustana Distinguished Lectures

Opening up the varied vistas of Muslim ethics and mapping the capacity of Islam to engage with modern civil and democratic society will be the objective of Professor Amy B. Sajoo, who has been chosen to give the 2011 Augustana Distinguished Lectures. We are delighted to have Professor Sajoo, author of a series of noteworthy publications focusing on Muslim ethics and civil life, present our flagship lectures for the year.

Professor Sajoo was educated at the University of London (King's) and at McGill University, Montreal, where he received his doctorate. He grew up in the Ismaili community in Kenya and Tanzania. He went on to serve with the Canadian Human Rights Commission in Ottawa (1989-1992) and returned to the federal Justice Department in 1999. He was the 1993-1994 "Canada Fellow" at Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, where he completed the book *Pluralism in Old Societies and New States* (1994).

This was the beginning of a series of projects on the interface of civil society and human rights – with particular regard to the role of

religion in democratic life. Collaborative work at McGill, Cambridge University, and the Institute of Ismaili Studies (London) has resulted in several books, including *Civil Society in the Muslim World* (2002), *Muslim Ethics: Emerging Vistas* (2004), and *Muslim Modernities: Expressions of the Civil Imagination* (2008).

***Why should the tag
"Muslim" or "Islamic"
be seen as limiting
rather than empowering
the scope of civil
society as an imagined
community, where the
bonds of citizenship are
buttressed by those of
moral commitment?***

—Amy B. Sajoo

Professor Sajoo is Scholar in Residence at Simon Fraser University's Centre for the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and Cultures. He is a superb public intellectual. He is at ease with the rich well-spring of Muslim thinking back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad as he is with engaging a wide spectrum of current challenges, from abortion and euthanasia to genetic manipulation and the ethics of organ donation and transplants. His thinking focuses on the relation of the secular and religious and on what it means to live a good life faithfully in a modern pluralistic society.

Professor Sajoo has taught at SFU since 2003 in the departments of Political Science and History, and more recently in the Seniors Program. He is also a frequent commentator in the news media – including the *Globe and Mail*, *Vancouver Sun*, and CBC Radio.

—David J. Goa

Augustana Welcomes New Dean

As of August, Allen Berger has taken over the helm of the Augustana Campus in Camrose. He comes after a long career advocating for the liberal arts, most recently as provost and vice-president academic at the University of Maine at Farmington. Berger is active in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), an organization started in the United States where Augustana has the distinction of being the first Canadian member.

“My arrival at Augustana is symbolically timed”, Dean Berger notes. “Roger Epp was the dean that ushered Augustana through the merger, and the institution also recently celebrated its centennial. This appears to be an optimum time to ask the question, ‘What’s the next chapter we want to write in the history of this institution?’ ”

Berger’s research as a cultural anthropologist puts him in good stead to do the kind of work that writing the next chapter will require. “Joining a new community in an administrative role requires the same skills of observation and empathy that are so important in anthropological field work”, Berger notes. And it’s clear from anyone who spends time talking with him that he excels at both.

The unique mission of public liberal arts institutions appeals to the new dean. “To combine the kind of commitment to residential, holistic, arts-and-sciences based education where students get close attention from full-time highly credentialed faculty with the mission of the public sector to the civic arena, to public service, to promoting access to higher education, to affordability—that seems to me a noble enterprise.” And that sense of purpose is not limited to those in the administration: “One of the things I found in Maine and I imagine I will find here at Augustana”, Berger notes, “is that nobility of purpose appealed to

the faculty and staff that we recruited. They were there not just out of a commitment to their disciplines, which was of course meaningful and important, but they were there because of the role the institution played within the higher education landscape.”

A long-time resident of small towns similar to Camrose, Berger sees the relationship between a university and the community in which it’s housed as extremely important. “Our agenda for students is not just to prepare them for careers, it’s also to prepare them to lead personally meaningful lives and to prepare them to be engaged, active citizens with well-developed leadership skills.” One of the best ways to do that is to root students in connections to the community in which they are living. “I’m a firm believer in place-based learning”, Berger explains. “It’s through a commitment to place that students develop the skills and values ... to be actively engaged in whatever places they live. Our job is to foster opportunities for them to practice meaningful forms of engagement in this *particular* place.”

Berger’s research, as well as his love of family and travel, has given him many opportunities to visit different places in the world and practise that same kind of engagement with each particular place. Whether it’s doing field research in Sardinia, standing in a cool stream fly fishing, or walking the streets of Manhattan—he loves it all.

The Ronning Centre’s fall Religion and Public Life Café series in Camrose will feature a talk by the new dean. He will speak about his own experience exploring the role of religion in public life through a court case with the Gideons International.

As part of an interfaith marriage (Berger is Jewish and his wife is Protestant), the reli-



Photo by Christopher Thrall

gious upbringing of their children was always a complex matter. “We always felt that this was also a very private matter”, Berger explains. “So we were—to put it mildly—thunderstruck when we learned that in Indiana and across that portion of the Midwest sometimes referred to as the Bible Belt, it was very common for public schools to allow the Gideons to come in to proselytize elementary students. My wife and I were stunned that the leadership of the local schools—administrators and the school board—thought that this was an appropriate role for a public school. We also believed that it violated the First Amendment of the United States Constitution”. With a child in fifth grade who was part of the presentation by the Gideons, the Bergers decided to file a letter of complaint. It was soon obvious they were going to have a fight on their hands, as the school board did not reply privately to that letter, but instead informed the local newspaper which created a front-page headline, “Local Parent Wishes to Ban the Bible”. The Bergers were represented by the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) and though they initially lost in federal district court, they

won on appeal to the federal district court in Chicago and the Supreme Court let that ruling stand.

We look forward to the wide range of gifts and experience that Dean Berger brings to the Augustana campus and to hearing more of his thoughts on the Gideon case and church–state relations when he speaks in December. We warmly invite you to attend and get to know him better.

—Rebecca Warren

A RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE CAFÉ

Gideon Walked Out

animated by Allen Berger

(Dean of the Augustana Campus)

Friday, 2 December, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House

4857 – 50th Street, Camrose



Point & Counterpoint

— David J. Goa

How do I apply my faith to politics?

Christian thinkers and activists, conservative and liberal, tell us that political acts and policies and challenges to them are acts of faith, *autos-da-fe*. They reflect what we hold dear, including our treasured values and sense of what is important, what we aspire to and with whom we wish to align ourselves, our ambition to win or remain at the centre of power. Politics is religious, an expression of faith. It is so for Christians and atheists, for all. Why? Because religion is how we bind things together. Politics also binds. It binds us either to new forms of bondage, limitation and marginalization, or to each other in ways that deepen our ability to be mutually responsible.

What of party politics, our ideological alignment? All party politics is anti-ecclesial, contrary to the vocation of the church, the vocation to gather together in a community of faith binding each to all across deep difference. Political alignments are a form of warfare, warfare by another name. Parties square off against each other, define the terms of their relationship in opposition and seek the defeat of the other. The right does it. The left does it. Progressives do it. Conservatives do it. It is deemed normal as the way of the world.

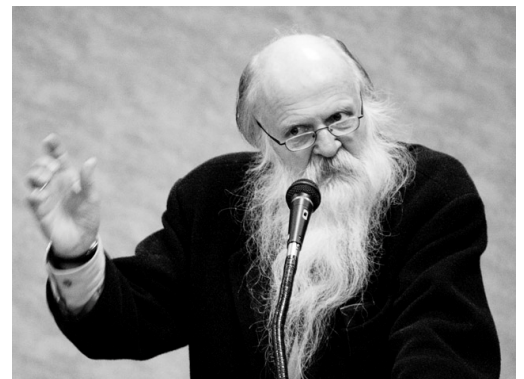
Party politics reduces each person to a uniform set of allegiances, a small set of single issues. And the other parties are the enemy, reduced to symbols of what is driving our common life to ruin. My utopian dream is in danger of running aground on the shoals of your utopian dream. It is so for liberals. It is so for conservatives, for progressives and reactionaries, for left and right. Each party occupies its own tree house. Once you learn the password, a simple-minded set of single issues, you are admitted. Tree house politics is puritan, without complexity, without common

decency, without honouring those who dwell in a different tree house.

Where is faith to be found in the midst of this tragic political warfare, these inward looking fraternities with their appetite for reducing everything including people into symbols of what is driving our world to perdition? The Christian faith invites us to the recovery of our priestly capacity and our prophetic vocation. Each of us, in and through baptism, is restored to our Christ-like nature, our capacity to bless and to heal. The stance of faith holds together the priestly and prophetic dimensions of the human nature. Our appetite for self-interest is disciplined and our capacity to be present to the other is nurtured. Each of us is called, said Luther, and Luther knew more about this than most, always and only to solidarity with the poor, with orphans, widows, the naked, hungry, imprisoned, and estranged. They are, as Jesus Christ makes so clear, our neighbour even if we live in a gated community or behind locked doors. When we are illumined by faith we bind up the wounds of others including those presumed to be enemies.

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David J. Goa, Director, speaking at an international conference on human rights.





Point & Counterpoint

— Dittmar Mündel

How do I apply my faith to politics?

When we confuse faith with a set of beliefs, we will tend to support those political figures and parties that seem most aligned with our beliefs. In the current warm-up to the Republican primaries in the United States, it seems that every presidential candidate has to show that they believe in God and in the “faith of our fathers”. This profession seems mandatory to be able to get the vote of the significant block of voters on what is called the Christian Right. So “God” and certain conservative social values become the shibboleth for seeing who belongs and who doesn’t. People end up voting for economic and military policies that in fact contribute to the destruction of God’s creation, the destruction of land and of the social fabric and the solidarity between people – all in the name of God.

When there still was a Left in the US or Canada, that is, one that had any traction, they similarly had their shibboleth. Being critical of religion, that is, not having this set of beliefs that were called “faith”, seemed to be part of the package to be truly liberal in social values and in economic policies. No wonder that Jim Wallis puts as the subheading to his book *God’s Politics* “How the Right gets it wrong and the Left just doesn’t get it”.

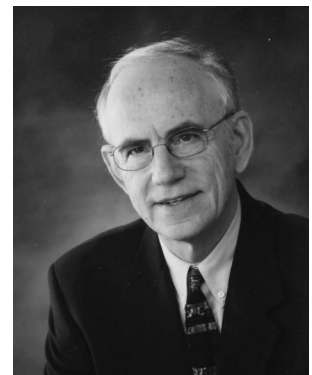
Faith, however, is not primarily a set of beliefs, but trust. Thus Luther says famously, “Whatever you put your trust in is truly your god.” So if we trust the Creator of the World, we cannot put our ultimate trust in any human ideas about our society or about the economy. Such trust makes those ideas into an ideology. Our supposedly rational but complete trust in them makes these ideas into an idol. As a result, one of the major roles of people of faith is to expose the idols of our age in our political life, that is, in our civic life to-

gether that seeks to make decisions for the common good. People of faith don’t “have the answer” to the various environmental, economic, political, social, and cultural issues that face our communities or our country. But they do have a well-developed sense of when statements of political parties or of politicians are inviting the citizens of a country to put their trust in idols. Idols, when stripped of their divine pretensions, their status of being able to save us, or to give the ultimate answer to all questions are usually creaturely and limited goods. However, once elevated to something absolute, this limited good will destroy humans and creation.

Let us take but one example: In our recent political elections, all parties spoke of the need for stimulating “economic growth”, as if a growth economy – in spite of us living on a finite planet – were an absolute necessity. Bill McKibben points out so well in *Deep Economy* that the idol of economic growth leads us to identify having more with having a better life. Up to a certain point that is true. For example, when my family arrived in Canada from

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Dittmar Mündel has been a faculty member of Augustana, teaching in Religious Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies since 1980.



Point & Counterpoint—David J. Goa
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When we abandon our faith we retreat into the tree house of our ideological purity, our misunderstood self-interest.

I ask the Amish question: what will this political act, this policy, do to my community? As Jesus Christ pointed out in the parable of the good Samaritan, we always choose our neighbour, those who we admit to our community. And since we choose, we will, if we have faith, choose those considered by the natural community to be an enemy.

That is why the stance of faith knows no political allegiance. Nothing of faith is rendered to Caesar because Caesar, or our favourite political party, owns nothing except utopian dreams and capacity for fraternal allegiance. Politics does shape our life together. In our priestly and prophetic capacity and with the stance of faith we are invited to participate in its organized inadequacies. But the Christian model for such participation is not the party but the *ecclesia*. The church gathers all together in its work to “make all things whole” precisely because and only because we share the divine image and are taught to treasure the mystery at work in the depth of every human being, including those we thought were enemies. Christian faith calls us from our ideologies. The stance of faith opens many and varied ways for holding the world together, more ways and with a greater diversity of spiritual friends than we ever imagined. In the kingdom that is coming, the commonwealth of God which we serve out of faith, lions lie down with lambs.

*This article was originally written for
 The Canadian Lutheran.*

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Ronning Centre Occasional Papers

Pietism and the Challenges of Modernity

DAVID J. GOA, CAM HARDER, and
 EUGENE L. BOE

\$5.00

A Religious Institution in Contemporary Syria: The Fatih Islamic Institute and Its Religious Scholars

Edited and with an introduction by
 IBRAHIM M. ABU-RABI' and
 DAVID J. GOA

\$19.95

*Publications can be ordered through the
 Augustana Bookstore by calling
 780-679-1139.*

*Recordings of many Ronning Centre events
 are also available online:
<http://www.crcaudio.ca/>*

Point & Counterpoint—Dittmar Mündel
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post-war Germany, having more space for living and gardening, having more tools to do the work, being able to buy a piano with the first paycheck, etc. was in fact better than what we had in bombed out Düsseldorf. However, that did not mean that having more and more stuff and technologies after a certain point would make our life any better. Bill McKibben points out that in the mid 1950s in North America more and better started to part ways and in fact that those who had more and more were not only stressing the environment and their communities more, but were less happy than before. Thus a blind belief in ongoing “economic growth” which necessitates the creation of a consumer culture is destructive to land and community. It is exposed as an idolatrous belief by people who put their trust in God.

Another role of people of faith in the political realm of making decisions for the common good is to have the search for truth rather than propaganda and mantric phrases be the key of our joint conversations. Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, in *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*, gives many strategies of how we can be stewards of words. Three strategies most relevant to our political discourse are: “Tell the truth”; “Don’t tolerate lies”; and “Stay in Conversation”.

Our political parties proudly proclaim that they make “evidence based decisions”. However, it is noteworthy how much of the evidence is ignored, as in the case of supporting asbestos mining in Quebec, or even suppressed, as in the government’s refusal to let one of their own scientists from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans speak freely to the press on her recently published research on sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. So in

the quest for truth, we cannot accept partial evidence.

However, truth is more than a collection of facts. Truth is ultimately relational. Facts need to be seen as embedded into social relations and into the network of the complex strands that make up the mystery of nature. By moving beyond facts to relational realities, we also begin exposing the lies that are made publicly for the sake of votes or for appeasing those who may be upset by certain proposed laws.

A crucial point is “to keep in conversation”. We must move beyond slogans, sound bites, and pre-packaged thoughts to ongoing conversations about the common good and how best to move toward it through political action. Our faith demands that we be careful and thoughtful with the words we use, and thus that we expose the shallow and simplistic language that passes for political speech.

Two among many ways of expressing one’s faith in the political realm are thus in exposing contemporary idols that pass as unexamined absolute truths, since idols always destroy, and in learning to speak the truth in love when we deal with the complex issues of our life together.

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 Centre” in the search box
 and “liking” our page.



Our YouTube channel:
[ronningcentre](#)



Representing the Tradition of the Apostle Thomas

Mar Thoma Bishops Bring Ecumenical Outlook to

The understanding of ecumenism “has changed from the unity of the churches to the unity of all in the inhabited earth”.

This was an observation by the Rt. Rev. Dr Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Bishop of the Mar Thoma Church in North America and Europe, who explored the implications of the change for his church in the course of an address to a Ronning Centre Consultation in Edmonton on 5 July.

The Church, he observed, “intercedes for the world by being conscious of the various needs of the people”.

Bishop Mar Theodosius was joined at the consultation by the Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas, one of the Diocesan Bishops of the church in Kerala, in southwest India, where the Mar Thoma church originated and has its headquarters.

The event was facilitated on behalf of the church by Dr Varghese Manaloor, Associate Professor of Economics at Augustana and on behalf of the Ronning Centre by Prof. David Goa.

The name “Mar Thoma” means “St. Thomas”, and refers to the church’s continuity with the original Christian movement in India, founded according to a strongly held tradition through the missionary work of Jesus’ disciple St Thomas, beginning in AD 52.

Largely isolated for centuries from Western Christianity, the St Thomas Christians in the age of colonialism were confronted with aggressive moves to incorporate them into first the Roman Catholic church of Portugal, then the Anglican Church.

The Mar Thoma Church of to-day took shape at the end of the nineteenth century among Indian Christians who, without becoming an isolated community, wished to maintain a church structure free of foreign influence. In 1947 it declined to merge with the Church of South India, but it is in full intercommunion with the Anglican Church and takes an active role in the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies.

It describes itself, as Bishop Mar Theodosius explained, as “apostolic in origin, universal in nature, Biblical in faith, evangelical in principle, ecumenical in outlook, democratic in function and episcopal in character.”

Central to its identity is the Western Syrian liturgy it has inherited – with certain reforms, such as omitting prayers to the saints – and now serves in Malayalam (the language of Kerala) and also in English. “The whole theology of the Church is embedded in the liturgy of the Church”, Bishop Mar Theodosius declared. “The Word of God and its contextual exposition is an integral part of our worship and we take both the ‘altar’ and the ‘pulpit’ seriously.”

Formerly the Mar Thoma Christians were treated by their Hindu neighbours as if they were another caste, but now, Bishop Theodosius reports, the influence of caste is becoming less. Relations with Muslims, he adds, are harmonious – “Friends are friends”.

Possessing a keen awareness of social needs, the Mar Thoma Church has been responsible for organizing an extensive array of educational and charitable institutions in its home territory. And, in line with a consistent tradi-

Ronning Centre Consultation

tion of reformation within the church, it is now confronting – not without much heart-searching – issues such as the status of women in worship.

The formation of communities of Mar Thoma Christians who had emigrated abroad led to the creation of a new “zone” of the church in 1982, which has since become the Diocese of North America and Europe, administered by Bishop Mar Theodosius from a base in New York. Three of the churches comprised in it are in Western Canada, in Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver.

Trinity Mar Thoma Church in Edmonton goes back to a congregation that began regular services in 1976. For Bishop Mar Barnabas this is a very familiar setting; before being called to the episcopate he served as the parish priest here from 1989 to 1993.

Bishop Mar Theodosius also has close ties with Canada, having taken his doctorate in theology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

The present vicar of Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Rev. Reji John, who also attended the consultation, cordially invited interested Edmontonians to visit his church and join in its worship.

After the formal part of the consultation, those present had the pleasure of being treated to a light lunch featuring South Indian fare.

—Nicholas Wickenden

*This article will also appear in
The Canadian Lutheran.*



*Bishops Mar Theodosius and Mar Barnabas
Photo by Reiner Loewan*



Chester Ronning in China

The visit of Peter L. Ronning to the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta in June of this year marked the extraordinary closing of a circle of associations that goes back to Chester Ronning's diplomatic career in China.

Peter L. Ronning is now the senior locally engaged Trade Commissioner at the Canadian Consulate in Chongqing, China. While in Camrose he met with David J. Goa and discussed in animated terms Chester Ronning's place in the history of China.

The chain of events that led Peter Liao, as he was then known, to his association with the Ronning family began in 1997, when Canada (the first country to do so) opened a consulate in Chongqing, the metropolis of southwest China. He was one of the first two locally engaged employees of the consulate.

One of his first tasks was to have framed for display a copy of an old photograph from 1945, showing, as the consul told him, Chester Ronning, on his first diplomatic posting as First Secretary of Canada's embassy in China (then located in Chongqing) along with the Ambassador, Victor Odlum, and the Chinese staff.

Soon, his interest awakened, Peter Liao began to research the story of Canada's relations with China, and recognized Chester Ron-

Peter L. Ronning Visits the Chester Ronning Centre

ning's pivotal role in furthering them. One of the sources of information that he was fortunate to encounter was *A Journey between Two Chinas*, by Seymour Topping of Columbia University in New York – the husband of one of Chester's daughters, Audrey.

Audrey, a distinguished photographer who had travelled extensively in China, herself published in 1998 a valuable collection of old and new photographs of the country under the title *Dawn Wakes in the East*. Peter, through his position at the consulate, received a presentation copy.

Peter resolved to have Chester Ronning's book, *A Memoir of China in Revolution*, translated into Chinese. Not without difficulty, he succeeded in contacting Seymour and then Audrey Topping, who approved his project on behalf of the Ronning family. The translation was carried out at the Canadian Studies Centre at Southwest University, and was published in 2007 with funding from that university and the Government of Canada.

In December 2007, the Toppings, together with three other members of the Ronning family connection, visited China for the book launch, and Peter met them for the first time. They immediately formed a cordial relationship, so that Audrey eventually proposed, and the rest of the family agreed, that Peter Liao should be adopted – informally, but as an expression of affection – into the Ronning family. Peter now added "Ronning" to the English form of his name.

For his services to Canada, Peter L. Ronning has received a Government of Canada Merit Award in 2004, a Canadian Minister of International Trade Citation for International Commerce in 2007 and a Canadian Public Service Award of Excellence in 2009.

Thomas Merton Exhibit to Open at Augustana Campus

An exhibition of thirty-five framed black and white photographs by Thomas Merton from the collections of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky will open to the public in September at the Augustana Campus Library. The exhibit is being hosted by the Chester Ronning Centre.

The Thomas Merton Society of Canada has borrowed the exhibit for a year, during which it will tour across Canada at various universities and libraries. This is a rare opportunity to view Thomas Merton's photography, one you should not miss. Judith Hardcastle, Thomas Merton Society of Canada Program Director and Merton scholar, points out that "Merton's photographs express the Zen perception of our immediate world as ever changing, impermanent, but with a unity of all things." Thus, the title of the exhibit – *A Hidden Wholeness: The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton*.

Thomas Merton was a Trappist monk at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky for twenty-seven years. He is best known today for his spiritual writings on contemplation and his own personal spiritual journey that led him to study Eastern religions, especially Zen Buddhism. Merton was also a visual artist of considerable talent exploring drawing, calligraphy, and photography. Merton used the camera to isolate images – small things normally gone unnoticed.

These photographs invite us to an "aesthetic illumination" in which we see the "mundane" and the "spiritual" as one. As Merton writes, Zen "seeks not to explain but to pay attention, to become aware, to be mindful; in other words to develop a certain kind of consciousness...". It is this experience to which Merton invites us to "come and see" as we view these photographs.

A Hidden Wholeness: The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton is co-sponsored by the Thomas Merton

Society of Canada and the Chester Ronning Centre at the University of Alberta Augustana Campus.

GALLERY TALK

Thomas Merton: A Man for Our Times, by Judith Hardcastle, Program Director, Thomas Merton Society of Canada. Tuesday, September 13 at 7:00 pm in room 2-004, Augustana Campus).

EXHIBIT HOURS

The exhibit is open whenever the Augustana Library is open. For current hours, check: <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/>

"Merton's goal for the photographs was one of spiritual and intellectual transcendence, but they function on an aesthetic level so pure as to be visually transcendent as well. That's almost too much to expect from photographs and an achievement not often seen these days." —Evan Gillespie, Tribune Correspondent

Photo courtesy of the Thomas Merton Society.



A Lecture Series

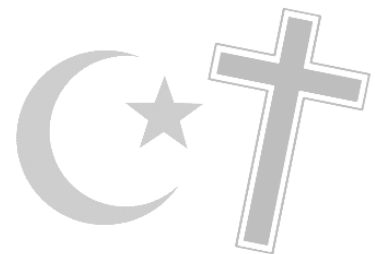
The Christian Responsibility to Muslims

As a little child I walked by Al-Rashid Mosque near the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton and pondered its two towers each adorned with a new moon. In the 1970s I first ventured inside, met many Muslims who became friends and began work to understand how the tradition of Islam and its faithful understood the Divine, the human nature, the revelation and the prophet, and how we ought to live “the beautiful pattern of conduct”.

This was largely a Lebanese community until later in the 70s when the whole of Dar al-Islam came to make Canada its home. The transformation, both for the House of Islam and for the Canadian landscape, through the next decades was remarkable. Muslims from Algeria to Yemen, Iran to Uganda, Palestine to Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom to Uzbekistan, Turkey, and Malaysia, from virtually every country with a significant Muslim population, came and with them Islam’s various wings, Sunni, Shi’ah, Ismaili, Ahmadiyyah, and others. Muslims committed to a secular society along with those identifying with the Wahhabi movement or various Arab or Muslim nationalist thinkers came. The extraordinary migration out of Africa of the Ismailis under the leadership of the Aga Khan with his civil vision is surely one of the most significant Canadian stories of this period. Turks and others whose faith was renewed through the encounter with the teaching of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi or Fethullah Gülen as well as those who adopted one form or another of political Islam came. An extraordinary variety of cultural traditions and religious perspectives enlivened the Canadian landscape.

All this while the geo-political landscape of much of our world moved towards a number of wars, revolutions, and movements for a re-ordering of society much of which touches on or is defined by the painful struggle with modernity and globalization.

When Professor Ibrahim Abu-Rabi‘ came to lecture for the newly created ECMC Chair in Islamic Studies we talked about the geo-political issues facing Muslims and Christians in much of the world and shadows this cast in Canada. His appointment to the ECMC Chair made it possible to join in working both in Canada and in Syria and Turkey. My own thinking benefited enormously from conversations with devout Muslims in Syria and Turkey and the pathways Ibrahim and I walked together. I dedicate these lectures to his blessed memory and invite you to walk those pathways with me and consider how we may do just a bit more than what we think we are capable of, out of the best within our faith tradition, to heal the wounds inflicted in the past and set about renewed life-giving relationships for the sake of the future.



THE FOUR LECTURES

Lecture 1

Turning Persons into Symbols

We begin our thinking together by examining the landscape of images that incite fear and anger, divide people, and turn whole communities into symbols. Mischief masquerades as freedom of speech; virulent secularists join preachers of religious hatred in fuelling violence. How ought we to respond to those who imagine themselves as zealous for the truth? What relationships temper propaganda, bridge divisions, and restore civil life and the capacity of religious communities to free themselves from the merchants of hatred?

Monday, 21 November, 7:00 p.m.

Messiah Lutheran Church, Camrose

Tuesday, 22 November, 7:00 p.m.

Advent Lutheran Church, Calgary

Thursday, 24 November, 7:00 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Edmonton

Lecture 2

Landscape of Christian – Muslim Conversation

In our second consideration I invite you to think and discuss the various pathways we need to walk in order to resist the colonization of faith by those who would use it to deal death, explore how to enter into spiritual friendship with those who long for such friendship, consider our stance in the face of those in the grip of fear and violence, and map the trajectory of conversations, political and theological.

Monday, 28 November, 7:00 p.m.

Messiah Lutheran Church, Camrose

Tuesday, 29 November, 7:00 p.m.

Advent Lutheran Church, Calgary

Thursday, 1 December, 7:00 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Edmonton

Lecture 3

Conversations Ancient and Modern

Eastern Christianity and Islam share one landscape and have lived side by side since the seventh century and continue to do so today. The conversation between them in a shared landscape has been very different from the rhetoric of Western Christianity and Europe, shaped, in large part, by the crusades. What may we learn from the conversations Muhammad (ca.570-632) had with Christians; St John of Damascus (c.655-c.750), a key figure in the court of the Caliph, had with Muslims; St Gregory Palamas had with various Muslim theologians; and the Caliph had following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453? May we learn anything from these conversations that can help us in the twenty-first century?

Dates to be set for Winter Term

Lecture 4

Thinking About the Prophet Muhammad

Muslims treasure the memory of the Prophet Muhammad as they do that of all the prophets. In my conversations with Muslims over the last several years I realize many of them have been deeply troubled by the images of Muhammad as well as the image of Jesus Christ that circulate in the modern West. They also ask why it is Christians have such awful images of Muhammad when they have such revered images of Jesus Christ. In our reflection together I will offer a new way for Christians to think about Muhammad, a way that is deeply Christian and free of the tragic historical legacy of such images.

Dates to be set for Winter term

Blessed Are the

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers”. But how does one take that seriously, if one like Father G. Simon Harak, SJ, is living in the United States, which always seems to be at war somewhere, even if it is Reagan’s “star wars”, or George W. Bush’s war against a technique as in the “war on terror” or against a substance as in “the war on drugs”?

Father Harak not only taught moral theology and ethics at Fairfield University and conducted retreats on Jesus and nonviolence, he also knew his personal actions had to be consistent with his teaching. So when the sanctions were imposed on Iraq, he felt he had to devote himself full-time to peacemaking. He resigned his teaching position and helped to found “Voices in the Wilderness”. As a member of “Voices in the Wilderness”, he travelled three times to Iraq, openly defying the US and UN sanctions, to bring medical supplies and toys to children in Iraq, and to attend an international conference on the sanctions in Baghdad, as the only American. He also wanted to show Iraqis and Iraqi children especially that “Americans” should not all be identified with the policies of their government at that time.

In one case, this proved to be very difficult. Although Simon is an Arab-American and thus could visually be acceptable to the children of this particular classroom, the very introduction of him as an *American* made some of them so anxious they wet themselves or hyperventilated or rushed from the room. They saw Simon not as the person that he was but only as the symbol, “the American enemy” that was starving the country and dominating the skies with their airplanes. “Voices in the Wilderness” was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times: in 2000, 2002, and 2003.

Since his visits to Iraq, Father Harak made over two thousand presentations on Iraq and the sanctions on radio, TV, church, university and other public venues. As America was under a constant media barrage “selling” the upcoming need to invade Iraq, Simon joined the War Resisters League and in 2003 became the National Anti-Militarism Coordinator, where he organized a National Speakers Bureau on war profiteering. He himself then devoted his research energies on uncovering and exposing some of the major profit motives of leaders of big corporations who were invited to give ad-

New (and Old) Ways

There are a multitude of ways to keep up with the latest events at the Ronning Centre, so be sure you don’t miss a thing by exploring some of the options listed below.

Web Page This fall the Ronning Centre web page has a new look, along with the entire Augustana Campus website. The update includes a more extensive listing of publications and a cleaner, more intuitive way to present information on events and activities. You can check it out at: www.augustana.ualberta.ca/ronning

Future additions to the Ronning Centre web page will include a “Press Room”, where staff, fellows, and research associates will respond to breaking news stories as well as commenting on current events of interest. We also hope this will become a portal for journalists and other members of the media to access more easily the expertise of the Centre to enlarge the public conversation around controversial and complex issues.

Facebook Fans For those of you on facebook, you can find the Ronning Centre by typing “Ronning Centre” into the search box at the top

Peacemakers

vice on national defence to the American president. For their companies it would be very profitable, if America went to war in Iraq. Father Harak's arguments are quite compelling that, among other reasons, the war in Iraq was a "war for profit", paid for by the American taxpayers and soldiers and the lives of countless Iraqis. The Bechtels, Haliburtons and Loughheed Martins of this world made profits in the billions, while the US Treasury is being depleted to unheard of levels.

Because of his research and activism, Father Harak was invited to help create and direct the Centre for Peacemaking at Marquette University and to teach theological ethics there. In schools in the Milwaukee area, he also teaches alternative ways of conflict resolution.

Among the many publications he wrote or edited, I want to highlight three. His first major piece was *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (Paulist, 1993, republished, Cokesbury 2001). Using some of Aristotle's thought, Father Harak examines how one can cultivate the good or virtuous passions in

shaping our character so that it can be loving, forgiving, and nonviolent. His most recent research has been into all the hateful and violent attitudes that are evident in politically powerful groups that call themselves Christian. The book he is currently writing on the subject is appropriately called *Vicious Passions: The Deformation of Christian Character*. And it is no surprise, given his life-time commitment to cultivating, teaching, and practising being a peacemaker, that he should have edited *Non-violence for the Third Millennium: Its Legacy and Its Future* (Mercer University Press, 2000).

We are delighted that Father Harak has agreed to be one of our Augustana Distinguished Visiting Fellows this winter. He will, among other things, speak on War-profiteering and conduct a retreat on "Jesus and nonviolence". Look for the CRC events for March 2012 to see the topics, places and venues of Father Harak's different ways of helping us to explore why we need to be peacemakers and how we can do this in a world at war.

—Dittmar Mündel

to Keep in Touch

of the page. If you "like" the page, you will see updates and postings in your news feed.

YouTube and Other Videos The Ronning Centre's YouTube channel is "ronningcentre". We post videos from the Edmonton Philosophers' Cafes and may be adding other lectures and talks as we are able. You can also find other video recordings on the "Events" page of the new website, including talks and lectures by Centre staff.

Audio Site A treasure trove of audio recordings from past Ronning Centre events can be found

on the Audio Recording site maintained by Reiner Loewan. The site can be found at www.crcaudio.ca.

Email List If you are interested in receiving notifications by email of Ronning Centre events, please send your name and email address to rebecca.warren@ualberta.ca and she will be happy to add you to our news list.

"Snail" Mail If you prefer to receive our fall and winter calendar of events with a hard copy mailed to you through Canada Post, please send your name and address to rebecca.warren@ualberta.ca and she will be sure you get a copy.



Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', an expert on contemporary Muslim thought, died suddenly of a heart attack on July 2 while attending a conference in Amman, Jordan. He had been Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary from 1991 to 2008. When Dr Abu-Rabi' came to Hartford Seminary in 1991, he was the first full-time Muslim faculty member at an accredited Christian seminary. He also served as Co-Director of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations and Senior Editor of *The Muslim World*.

From 2008, Dr Abu-Rabi' taught at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta. He was the first holder of the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities Chair in Islamic Studies, the first teaching and research chair of its kind in Canada.

Dr Abu-Rabi' received his PhD at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. His dissertation topic was "Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt: An Intellectual Biography of Shaykh 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud". He also earned a Master of Arts at Temple, and a Master of Arts at the University of Cincinnati.

Dr Abu-Rabi' had a special interest in contemporary Islamic thought and movements,

and the interaction between Muslims and Christians in the Muslim world. He was a modernist and was society-centred. Dr Abu-Rabi' was in many ways Western-orientated in a positive sense. This meant that he, as an intellectual, saw no contradiction between learning from the historic Islamic tradition and incorporating the best features of Western analyses. This was clear in his 1995 book, *The Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* as well as in his later writings. He wrote critically about Islam and about major modern Islamic theologians. He balanced his critical comments with themes of Islam in the Western world.

Dr Abu-Rabi' travelled widely in the Muslim world and believed that building bridges among faith communities is necessary in a highly globalized world. While at Hartford Seminary, he helped place the Seminary in a leading position in the field of Muslim-Christian relations around the world.

Dr Abu-Rabi' was a committed advocate of serious interfaith dialogue and activity. Some of his major work in this regard was done with the Al-Fatih Islamic Institute in Damascus, Syria. He worked closely with Shaykh Hussam al-Din Farfour, the head of this institute. At one time, seven students from the institute studied at Hartford Seminary. He

Ibrahim Abu-Rabi‘

AH 1375 – 1432

1956 – 2011 CE

advocated and worked to bring about Muslim–Jewish as well as Muslim–Christian interfaith dialogue.

Students came from many countries – among them Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Indonesia, Singapore, and Pakistan – to study with Dr Abu-Rabi‘. At the Seminary, Rabi‘ was extremely popular with students. His hospitality at his home was outstanding, and he made sure students received both an excellent academic experience and a comfortable living experience.

In recent years, Dr Abu-Rabi‘’s research interests turned to Turkey, focusing in particular on the writings of the 20th-century thinkers, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen. Dr Abu-Rabi‘ published numerous articles and 19 books, the most recent of which are the edited *Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought* and the edited *Challenges and Responses of Contemporary Islamic Thought: The Contributions of M. Fethullah Gülen*.

He worked closely with the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture and helped plan their numerous conferences that dealt with Nursi and his multi-volume work, the *Risali-i Nur*. In co-operation with this foundation, Dr Abu-Rabi‘ edited and wrote essays for three books on Said Nursi and the *Risali*. The books are: *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*; *Spiritual*

Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi’s Risali-i Nur; and *Theodicy and Justice in Modern Islamic Thought: The Case of Said Nursi*.

In 2006 he was the Senior Fulbright Scholar in Singapore and Indonesia at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. In 2009 Dr Abu-Rabi‘ became a director of the International Council for Middle East Studies (ICMES), a relatively new think tank in Washington, DC. At the time of his death he was directing a major ICMES project, the writing of a new book on religion and state in the Middle East. This book, when completed, will consist of essays written by scholars from Middle East countries and will be dedicated to the memory of Ibrahim Abu-Rabi‘.

Dr Abu-Rabi‘ spoke Arabic, Hebrew, English, French, and Turkish. He was born in Nazareth and is a graduate of Birzeit University on the West Bank.

He leaves his wife Fatima and two children, Yasmin and Yusuf.

— Heidi Hadsell
President, Hartford Seminary
(with contributions from
Norton Mezvinsky)

IN MEMORIAM IBRAHIM ABU-RABI'

The Generosity of Friendship

Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' stood in Dar al Islam. He had learned to treasure the way the Qur'an values the intellect, and strove for a recovery of study and knowledge among Muslims. He practised the spiritual disciplines bequeathed to the faithful, praying and chanting at home and with friends and in mosques in various parts of the world. He worked at the compassion central to the faithful Muslim's understanding of the divine, knowing that to this, however difficult it may be, God calls each of us.

Perhaps most of all, Ibrahim anchored his life and work in the hospitality we read about already in the Hebrew Bible, the hospitality we see again in the life of the Prophet and his companions and in Arab culture, and meet with now in Palestinian society at its best. In our common work through the Ronning Centre over the past three years, many of us have seen the fruitage from his long and demanding journey.

When Israel invaded Gaza in January 2009 I watched with horror. Surely there must be alternatives. On the second day I called my colleague and friend. We sat together saying nothing. It was a long, active silence. After an hour or so Ibrahim spoke. He talked of his experience of the trauma of colonization as a child in Nazareth and as a student at Birzeit University. Then he told me that as a young scholar he came to fear that the relentless suffering of the Palestinian people would turn his heart to bitterness and anger, and that in this

way he, too, would be colonized and rendered impotent. Now in his fifties, as he watched what was unfolding in Gaza he feared his soul would wither if he did not begin to work and speak with renewed vigour about the struggle of the Palestinians.

A year ago, when we were working with our friends at the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture in Turkey, we took one of our long meandering walks at night through the streets and along the harbour of the city of the world's desire. After midnight we refreshed ourselves in one of the little kiosk restaurants on the lower level of the bridge across the Golden Horn. I sat looking towards the Rustem Paşa Mosque. The moon on its night journey rose over the mosque and glimmered on the water. Such moments fill one with gratitude for being in life, for friendship, and for the wonderful work that has been laid before us.

Ibrahim talked of his intellectual formation, his early valuing of Marx and critical theory. Then he turned the conversation to speak about his renewed relationship to the disciplines of Islam, about the language of gratitude and wonder it offers and what it means for us to bow before the Maker of the worlds. Finitude meets the Eternal and we are filled with gratitude, and hospitality becomes our natural habitation.

Or so it was for him in both his intellectual and spiritual life, in the life he shaped with Fatima and their two children, Yasmin and Yusuf. Always when we invited scholars to come to Ed



Dr Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' was the first holder of the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities Chair in Islamic Studies at the University of Alberta in Edmonton and was largely responsible for building the relationship between the Chester Ronning Centre and the Fatih Islamic Institute in Damascus, Syria.

monton and join in our work he and Fatima would invite a wide range of people into their home, people from various wings of Islam and other faiths, students and professors, engineers and imams and musicians and more, all making up a vital community of friendship. Many were asked to speak a few words, others to chant and play the music of the human heart. Here faith and reason, scholarship and piety, friends and strangers moved easily together. And now, every time I read the narrative of the Hospitality of Abraham and Sarah, my memory moves back to the Dar al Islam he made with Fatima. May his memory be Eternal.

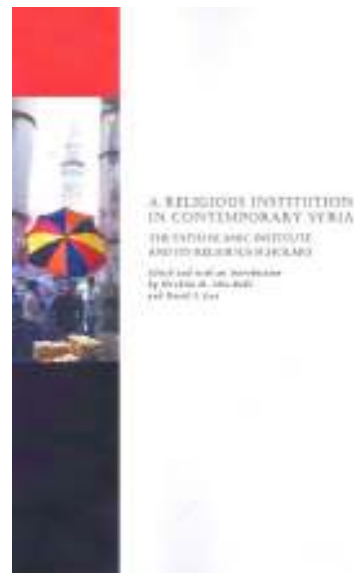
—David J. Goa

Just published July 2011

Edited and with an introduction by
IBRAHIM M. ABU-RABI'
and DAVID J. GOA

A Religious Institution in Contemporary Syria: The Fatih Islamic Institute and Its Religious Scholars

*This book is available for \$19.95
from the Augustana Bookstore, and
can be ordered by calling
780-679-1139.*



Ronning Centre Cafés for Fall 2011

At Edmonton

The fall Philosophers' Cafés in Edmonton will focus on the general theme of "What makes a healthy society?"

The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the health of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.

—Daniel Patrick Moynihan, US Senator

Many philosophers since the Enlightenment have thought society could function very well without community and a common culture. This position was largely forged in reaction to the wars of religion that ravaged Europe in the 16th and 17th century and arguably has contributed since to a disintegration of community and the watering-down of common culture within liberal democratic societies.

Having experienced the application of that thesis over the last hundred years, in this series we revisit its salient ideas and seek to think again about the importance of culture and community for a healthy society and the challenges associated with them. In the end the question is whether the notion of "we" has any real substance, or whether we are just a bunch of "I's" and we're better off that way.

All sessions from 1:00 – 3:30 pm
Steeps, The Urban Tea House
11116 – Whyte (82nd) Avenue, Edmonton

Café dates and animateurs (for weekly topic and further details, see calendar on pages 23-24):

- September 17: Don Carmichael
- October 1: Gordon Laxer
- October 15: Jenny Berkenbosch
- October 29: Rebecca Warren
- November 12: Lisa Kline
- November 26: John von Heyking
- December 10: David Goa

At Camrose

In the fall and winter term we invite you to conversations on spiritual pilgrimage for our Religion and Public Life Cafés in Camrose. Each of our animators has moved into a world of understanding distinct from the one in which they were raised. The perspectives will vary enormously. Taken together they will speak both to the gravity of the modern quest for a meaningful life and to the gifts and challenges that accompany both the spiritual life and religious institutions.

All sessions from 8:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m.
Merchants Tea & Coffee House
4857 - 50th Street, Camrose

Spiritual Pilgrimage

Animateur: David Goa

Friday, 16 September 8:30–10:00 a.m.

From an Exclusive to a Broad Faith

A Religion and Public Life Café conversation with Ray Sawatsky and David J. Goa

Friday, 14 October, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

A Community's Journey Guided by the Imam of the Day

Animateur: Azim Jeraaj

Friday, 4 November, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

My Journey to Humanism

Animateur: Frank Friesacher

Friday, 18 November, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Gideon Walked Out

Animateur: Allen Berger

Friday, 2 December, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Calendar of Coming Events - Fall 2011

For up-to-date information where details are not complete, please check the Ronning Centre website or call 780 679 1146

SEPTEMBER

Thomas Merton: A Man for Our Times

A Ronning Centre Consultation with Judith Hardcastle

Tuesday, 13 September, 7:00 p.m.

Roger Epp Conference Room (2-004)

Augustana Campus, Camrose

Spiritual Pilgrimage

A Religion and Public Life Café animated by

David J. Goa (Director of the Ronning Centre)

Friday, 16 September, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House, Camrose

Does a Fair Society Need an Overarching Community and Common Culture?

A Philosophers' Café introduced and animated by

Don Carmichael (Professor of Political Science,

University of Alberta)

Saturday, 17 September, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House, Edmonton

OCTOBER

Powerdown to a Post-carbon Future

A Philosophers' Café introduced and animated by

Gordon Laxer (Co-director of the Parkland Institute)

Saturday, 1 October, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House, Edmonton

The Clash of Civilizations: Christian Zionism

A Ronning Centre Seminar with Rabbi Daniel Friedman

Monday, 3 October, 3:00 p.m.

10-4 Tory, Political Science Conference Room

University of Alberta, Edmonton

The Manifestations of Xeno-racism after Norway

A Ronning Centre Seminar with Andy Knight (Professor of Political Science, University of Alberta)

Tuesday, 11 October, 7:00 p.m.

Augustana Campus, Camrose

From an Exclusive to a Broad Faith

A Religion and Public Life Café conversation

with Ray Sawatsky and David J. Goa

Friday, 14 October, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House, Camrose

Can “Localism” Revive Community and Challenge Consumer Society?

A Philosophers' Café introduced and animated by

Jenny Berkenbosch (Artist and Co-owner of

Sundog Organic Farm)

Saturday, 15 October, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House, Edmonton

Church as Sanctuary

A Ronning Centre Consultation with Richard

Hergesheimer (Pastor of First Lutheran Church in Vancouver)

Monday, 17 October, 7:00 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church

10014 – 84 Avenue, Edmonton

Tuesday, 18 October, 7:00 p.m.

Messiah Lutheran Church

4810 – 50 Street, Camrose

Wednesday, 19 October, 7:00 p.m.

Advent Lutheran Church

11 Scenic Acres Gate, Calgary

Law, Faith and Ethics: Narratives of Public Islam

Augustana Distinguished Lecture 2011 with Ayn Sajoo

(Scholar in Residence, Simon Fraser University's Centre

for the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and Cul-

tures) Lectures made possible through the generous sup-

port of the Hendrickson Memorial Endowment Fund

Thursday, 20 October, 7:00 p.m.

Roger Epp Conference Room (2-004)

Augustana Campus, Camrose

‘But How Is His Reason?': The Ethical Tradition in Islam

Augustana Distinguished Lecture 2011 with Ayn Sajoo

(Scholar in Residence, Simon Fraser University's Centre

for the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and

Cultures) Lectures made possible through the generous

support of the Hendrickson Memorial Endowment Fund

Friday, 21 October

Edmonton (Location TBA)

Calendar of Coming Events - Fall 2011

For up-to-date information where details are not complete, please check the Ronning Centre website or call 780 679 1146

Is Social Networking Creating a New Politics?

*A Philosophers' Café introduced and animated by
Rebecca Warren (Ronning Centre)*

Saturday, 29 October, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House, Edmonton

NOVEMBER

A Community's Journey Guided by the Imam of the Day

A Religion and Public Life Café animated by Azim Jeraj

Friday, 4 November, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House, Camrose

The Highest Public Calling: A Conversation on Religion and Public Life

A Ronning Centre Forum with James Rajotte

(MP Edmonton, Leduc)

Wednesday, 9 November, 7:00 p.m.

Leduc Alliance Church, 5503 Black Gold Dr, Leduc

What Are the Limits to "Reasonable Accommodation"?

A Philosophers' Café introduced and animated by Lisa Kline

(PhD in Political Science, University of Alberta)

Saturday, 12 November, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House, Edmonton

Covenants and Public Life in Puritan New England

A Ronning Centre Seminar with Will Van Arragon

(Assistant Professor of History, King's University College)

Thursday, 17 November, 2:00 p.m.

N101, King's University College

9125 – 50th Street, Edmonton

My Journey to Humanism

A Religion and Public Life Café animated by

Frank Friesacher

Friday, 18 November, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House, Camrose

The Christian Responsibility to Muslims: The Landscape of Christian–Muslim Relations

Ronning Centre Occasional Lecture Series by David J. Goa

Monday, 21 November, 7:00 p.m.

Messiah Lutheran Church, 4810 – 50 Street, Camrose

Tuesday, 22 November, 7:00 p.m.

Advent Lutheran Church, 11 Scenic Acres Gate, Calgary

Thursday, 24 November, 7:00 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, 10014 – 81 Avenue, Edmonton

Canada and Civil Religion

A Ronning Centre Seminar with John von Heyking (Associate

Professor of Political Science, University of Lethbridge)

Friday, 25 November, 3:00 p.m.

N110, King's University College

9125 – 50th Street, Edmonton

Can the Cultivation of Civic Democracy Unite into One Country a Variety of Ethnic Cultures and National Identities?

A Philosophers' Café animated by John von Heyking

Saturday, 26 November, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House, Edmonton

The Christian Responsibility to Muslims: Conversations Ancient and Modern

Ronning Centre Occasional Lecture Series by David J. Goa

Monday, 28 November, 7:00 p.m.

Messiah Lutheran Church, 4810 – 50 Street, Camrose

Tuesday, 29 November, 7:00 p.m.

Advent Lutheran Church, 11 Scenic Acres Gate, Calgary

Thursday, 1 December, 7:00 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, 10014 – 81 Avenue, Edmonton

DECEMBER

Gideon Walked Out

A Religion and Public Life Café animated by

Allen Berger (Dean of the Augustana Campus)

Friday, 2 December, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House, Camrose

Is a Diversity of Religious Communities a Help or a Hindrance to a Healthy Society?

A Philosophers' Café introduced and animated by

David Goa (Director of the Ronning Centre)

Saturday, 10 December, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House, Edmonton

BUILDING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The Ronning Centre Distinguished Visiting Fellows Endowment provides the Centre with a nimble way of bringing creative thinking on current issues and themes into its work. The fellowships will attract scholars as well as public intellectuals to contribute thoughtfully and constructively to the discussion of the complex themes. James and Sonja Hendrickson in a challenge to our community, continue their pledge to match gifts to this endowment.

"It is our hope that others will value the work of the Centre and join us in this effort so the endowment can grow to its full potential." — James & Sonja Hendrickson

The Ronning Centre Student Internships provide opportunities for Augustana students to work directly with Centre staff on research projects and program development, expanding their knowledge and understanding while developing the sensitive skill set needed by the next generation of scholars and public intellectuals to engage in the many demanding issues of religion and public life in restorative ways.

The Ronning Centre Annual Fund and Friends publications enhance the ongoing work of the Centre making it possible for many to learn and contribute to the understanding of religious perspectives on public life and public understanding of religious perspectives.

To find out how you can be a part of this visionary endowment and for information on matching funding please contact:

Bonita Anderson
Director of Development
University of Alberta
Augustana Campus
1-800-590-9992 ext. 1183
or 780-679-1183
bonita.anderson@ualberta.ca



Photo of Chester Ronning with a young Queen Elizabeth, courtesy of the Noel and Wendy Cassidy Collection.

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We have endeavoured to make this list as accurate as possible.

Please accept our apologies if your name has been omitted or misspelled and please let us know so we may correct our records.



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CHESTER RONNING CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

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Chester Ronning Centre

for the Study of Religion and Public Life

focuses its work on a set of issues and themes that demand our attention whether or not we are religious. In their day, many of the founders of Augustana engaged similar issues and themes that daily flash across every news broadcast and galvanize the attention of today's scholars. The demand is for a more complex attention to be paid to these issues, an attention that is both inclusive and critical.

Our Purpose is to cultivate a deep understanding of issues and themes at the intersection of religion, faith and public life and to do so in the public sphere and in religious spheres.

Our Goals are to focus the work of scholars on issues and themes where religion, faith and public life intersect and to nurture the public conversation as well as religious understanding of these issues and themes through:

- interdisciplinary research and publications shaping a new community of scholars and public intellectuals;
- thoughtful and ethical reflections which draw on religious sources associated with human rights, our care for the life of the world and our understanding of difference;
- expanding and communicating an understanding of the vital role of religious perspectives and their complex sources as they are brought to bear on public discourse in our communities;
- deepening the understanding within religious communities of the fragile and complex nature of the public sphere in a pluralistic society.

Our Mission is to nurture a hospitable context that brings forward the finest thinking of women and men of faith and the depth and texture of their traditions in conversation with public intellectuals and various secular ideologies on the nature and shape of public life in our age of pluralism.

The following suite of activities shapes the work of the Centre and engages students, scholars, public intellectuals and activists in the following ways:

- the annual Chester Ronning Centre Forum on Religion and Public Life;
- Augustana Distinguished Lectures – an annual event funded by the Hendrickson Memorial Endowment;
- cafés, study circles, seminars, consultations and conferences;
- ongoing research and Ronning Centre publications.

For more information please see
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