

The Chester Ronning  
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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...*

## Looking Ahead

Beginning on January 10 the Ronning Centre will offer a series of lectures and conversations under the title "The Presence of the Word: Media and Truth-Telling". The public is invited to any and all of these evenings of learning and reflection. We begin by exploring the ways in which sacred texts, "the presence of the word", shape the minds and hearts of the faithful. What is the source of the power of sacred narratives and how do they come to transform the lives of many and bring about radical change in societies and cultures? Why is it that these same powerful texts and ideas can also be marshalled in ways that deepen alienation and suffering? What is our responsibility in the face of blasphemy? How has the presence of the Word moved some women and men to act far beyond their own self-interest and seek to draw life from death?

Over the course of thirteen weeks, we will also explore a set of news stories in which the presence of the Word and the power of propaganda wrestle with each other. Their subjects will range from Omar Khadr (who is in prison in Guantanamo) to Shirley Sherrod (who ran afoul of the propaganda machine and lost her government job in the USA), from the current debate in Quebec (on proposed legislation that some consider to be introducing active euthanasia) to the rise of Christian nationalism in Canada (as argued by the Canadian journalist Marci McDonald). The way Word and propaganda are at play in the debate on the sacred site of Ground Zero and on the proposed Manhattan Islamic Center and mosque will also be considered.

The Ronning Centre has joined in two major research initiatives by colleagues at the North campus of the University that involve an international group of scholars. "New Millenarian Religious Traditions and World Dis/Order: Reading Text in Context" is anchored by Professor Mojtaba Mahdavi. Tentative plans are underway for a major workshop in June 2011. We are seeking support for this project from The Worldwide Universities Network. The second initiative comes from an invitation by Professor Andy Knight, and will draw scholars together to explore "Xenoracism and Extremism". The Social Science and Humanities Research Council Partnership Grant program has been asked to consider this proposal. The intention is for an international group of scholars to research and publish on these themes over the next five years.

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## THE AUGUSTANA DISTINGUISHED LECTURES JANUARY 2011

**Reading Beyond the Book: The Reader as Public Intellectual**  
Friday, 21 January, 3:30–5:00 p.m.  
Humanities Centre L-3

University of Alberta, Edmonton  
*This lecture is made possible through the generous support of the Hendrickson Memorial Endowment and is co-sponsored with the Interdisciplinary Program in Religious Studies and the Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta.*

**Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics**

Monday, 24 January, 7:00–8:30 p.m.  
C014, Classroom Building

Augustana Campus, Camrose

Tuesday, 25 January, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Founder's Hall 231, Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills, Alberta

*This lecture is made possible through the generous support of the Hendrickson Memorial Endowment and is co-sponsored with Prairie Bible Institute.*



Dr. Coleman will also animate a Philosophers' Café in Edmonton on 22 January 2011 at 1:00 p.m. For details, see the calendar on pages 20–21.

## A Spiritual

DANIEL COLEMAN

Dr. Daniel Coleman, professor of English at McMaster University, holder of the Canada Research Chair in Critical Ethnicity and Race Studies, winner of the 1998 John Charles Polanyi Prize, and author of several books, including *In Bed with the Word: Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics*, will deliver the Augustana Distinguished Lecture for 2010 in Camrose, Edmonton, and Three Hills this January.

In a recent interview with the Newsletter, Coleman talked about his work and some of the themes that he will focus on in his lectures, including the role of reading and spirituality in a life of cultural engagement.

For Coleman, reading is not a solitary, escapist activity that keeps us isolated, but instead, “the world of reading is not away from public life, but *towards* it. I feel a deep commitment and interest and concern for a kind of spiritual life that is alive to the society we live in.”

In various places, Coleman compares the similarity of prayer and reading, as both are focused ways of listening to the Other, recognizing the ways that all of our life grows out of our relationship to the divine and to each other. “My own life and my own way of thinking and my own peace and solidity are not something I create in isolation,” Coleman explains. “I reach out to others to have that affirmed and to make it grow and recognize my interdependence. Prayer and reading are both like that.”

Likewise, both prayer and reading give a welcome relief from the ego. “If I have to be the master of my own destiny, then what happens when I don’t understand—when I’m feeling lost or facing completely unknowable, unsolvable things like death or sickness. . . . Those are moments when we are so glad to be able to reach out to the thoughts and experiences of others who wrote a book or the Other that is God the Creator, the divine.”

# Dimension of Reading

TO DELIVER AUGUSTANA LECTURES

The pace of reading also has something to recommend it in our high-paced, screen-focused culture. Reading helps us to slow down and attend not only to our own souls, but also to empathize with the experience of others. “It’s easier to be generous if you don’t feel in a hurry,” Coleman notes. “I know of no spiritual tradition that encourages multitasking.”

Screen culture is not all bad, however, as it gives us a sense of openness that is “lovely”, according to Coleman. “Who wants a society of closed people? I believe in living in the tensions—to have that openness but also the capacity to attend and commit that reading gives us.”

When we focus our attention in the ways that books can allow us to do, new worlds can open up to us. We can learn about peoples and cultures that may have been previously unknown to us. For Coleman, “encouraging people to read beyond canons and traditions” is one way to create an appetite for stories outside of one’s own experience that open us to the world of the Other. “One of the virtues of reading is that it requires you to generate meaning. Because it’s active, not passive, it requires you to invest in different ways. That doesn’t happen if you are just ‘surfing.’”

Not only can reading open us to other cultures, but it can create very real social and political change in people’s lives. In his book *In Bed with the Word*, Coleman relates the story of Ethiopian converts who learned to read and write as part of their conversion. Because they were no longer getting everything mediated by the chiefs, but could read for themselves, this resulted in almost immediate political and economic change.

A similar movement in today’s society can be found with adult literacy, where learning to read is not something that takes people away from society, but brings them more and more into it, giving them a kind of independence and power to break old family systems that may entrench them in poverty.

“It’s a great privilege to be working as a professor in a non-religious environment doing this work with students every day,” explains Coleman. “The tension is finding the balance between the different perspectives made open by the secular tone and yet also still having a vocabulary for the spiritual elements of what books and reading can do. I like what the Ronning Centre is doing in this regard,” notes Coleman appreciatively.

— Rebecca Warren

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## Want to open up your world?

Here are two books that Daniel Coleman has enjoyed that help readers think about their connection to the Other.

*A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* by James De Mille—This sci-fi book is about a guy who gets blown off course in the South Seas and encounters a mythical sub-Antarctic people whose values are opposite to European values. According to Coleman, “This book feels like a post-modern, post-colonial book but was written in the nineteenth century.”

*Mr. Pip* by Lloyd Jones—Taking place on a South Sea island where there is a civil war going on, this book explores what it would be like for a tiny village where everything has been destroyed except for a book: *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. A white guy in this native society tries to teach this to the children. “It’s amazing the way he crafts the social implications of reading and the world it creates amongst these kids’ minds in a time of extreme duress,” Coleman explains.

## Answering the Question of the Stars

Speaking to a packed crowd of community members, students, and staff at the Augustana Campus in Camrose on November 19, 2010, Father José Funes, Director of the Vatican Observatory, demonstrated both his wisdom and his humour in an hour-long presentation on “Why Science and Faith Matter to Each Other”.

Father Funes explained that science, “like everything human”, has always been important in the Catholic tradition. Though often people perceive a division between science and faith, there is actually a kind of symbiosis where they live together to the benefit of both. Father Funes pointed out that “science also consists of institutions and human relations”, while religion also contains within it elements of the rational. Science can help purify our image of God from irrational elements and religion and ethics can protect us from potentially dehumanizing elements of science.

The Vatican Observatory traces its beginnings to calendar reform back in the sixteenth century, and from that point forward has existed

as one of the oldest astronomical institutes in the world. Their mission is to be a bridge between science-astronomers and the church. As Father Funes explained, “People are sometimes surprised to see that there are believers who are able to do good science with research and at the same time to believe in God. . . . Unfortunately, the image today is that the scientist is an atheist; that’s not true.”

One function of astronomy is to help us move beyond ourselves and understand better where we are and also who we are. Father Funes recounted a plea by Pope Benedict: “Never allow yourselves to become narrow.” With all the mysteries of the universe at our door, there is always more to ask, more to explore.

Dr. Neil Comins, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Maine, likewise suggested we need more forums for dialogue among the disciplines.

Dr. Comins joined Father Funes and David J. Goa, Director of the Ronning Centre for the

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### *Director’s Desk continued from page 1*

This winter will see a number of the Centre’s Research Fellows engage in two extended consultations. One will focus on the changing shape of Evangelicalism in Canada and the other will explore the current state of the Liberal Protestant tradition and its capacity to engage the challenges facing liberal democratic society. While these consultations are not intended as public events, our interested readers are invited to contact us and we will let you know details of our work so you may join in thinking along with us.

You may read more about these consultations in this edition of the Newsletter.

One final note: In March we have organized a symposium, “Religious Perspectives on the Civil Life”. We are pleased that the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture has joined in this work along with ECMC Chair in Islamic Studies at the University of Alberta, The King’s University College, Edmonton, and St. Mary’s University College in Calgary. The symposium will be held in both Edmonton and Calgary. You may read more about this in the pages to follow. We invite you to attend and participate as we think together about the gifts of religious perspectives and the fragile nature of civil society.

– David J. Goa

## DISTINGUISHED ASTRONOMERS EXPLORE THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE

Study of Religion & Public Life, for a conversation at the Telus World of Science in Edmonton framed around the question, “Are We Alone in the Universe?” This question captured the imagination of the public, and tickets were sold out well in advance.

The evening began with a five-minute “tour of the universe” on the giant dome of the Margaret Zeidler Star Theatre, beginning with the starry sky above Edmonton and moving farther and farther out of the galaxy into the edges of the universe.

Father Funes and Dr. Comins took turns discussing the reasons why it may be possible to consider life on other planets. “We live in a universe of a hundred billion galaxies each with a hundred billion stars; maybe those stars have planets like our sun has a system, so maybe there is life out there”, said Father Funes. It was easy to picture this after the tour of the universe the audience had just seen.

Dr. Comins led a fascinating explanation of the Drake Equation and the masses of various stars to consider the number of possible planets that might be able to host intelligent life, using an apt metaphor by comparing it to the number of Ford trucks that might be found at the West Edmonton Mall. The answer? Not as many as you would guess, but still quite a few!

So *are* we alone in the universe? “While it’s a question that science simply can’t answer yet,” explained David J. Goa, “both men suggested that it could be a possibility. Those who attended this event left with a greater sense of how big the universe is and how many mysteries remain yet untold. It’s always a wonderful thing to engage scientists who love the kind of knowledge their discipline has given to the world, who have a sense of



*Father Funes speaks to a Ronning Centre audience in Camrose.*

where the discipline might be going in the future and for whom that has given them a deepened sense of wonder and a profound sense of humility.”

In summarizing his talk, Father Funes quoted Dante’s *Inferno*, “Midway on the journey of our life, I found myself in a forest dark . . . then we emerged to see once more the stars.” And emerging into a cold night after listening to men in love with the mysteries of the universe, there was only one response: we looked up to see, as if for the first time, the beautiful questions in the stars above our heads.

— Rebecca Warren

*This article was originally written for  
the Lutheran Quarterly.*



## Point & Counterpoint

— David J. Goa

### “To the Least of These”

A number of years ago I watched several episodes of “Eyes on the Prize”, a made-for-television retrospective on the American civil rights movement. All of the key women and men who worked in the movement were in it. They were shown in news clips and then again in conversation about the events that unfolded from the late 1950s through to the 70s. The best and worst of America. Sometimes the worst becoming the best.

Throughout each episode songs, texts, and images drawn from the Scripture gave voice to a call to action, to an ethical demand, to the meaning of the struggle and its aspirations for a better society, one in which black and white would sit down together at the same counter, ride together in the same part of the bus, be served together by the same “blind” justice.

Having grown up with the language of the Bible, it was humbling for me to hear and see the power of those life-giving words transforming our neighbour to the south. It was also telling just how much of the archival footage used in the series was shot in churches both in the South and the North of America. Biblical language provided words for the struggle. Churches provided shelter and hospitality for those on the march. Here was the capital of Christian culture at work, transforming a virulent politics. People were brought together, lines of demarcation were broken.

Recently I talked with my friend and colleague Ibrahim Abu-Rabi’, ECMC Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Alberta, about the work of Arlette Zinck, Professor of English and Dean of Arts at The King’s University College. A few years ago Denis Edney, a Canadian lawyer from Edmonton, spoke at King’s about Omar Khadr. Khadr was in the military prison at Guantanamo, having been captured in a fire fight in Afghanistan and

charged with the murder of an American serving in the military. Edney’s concern for this child soldier, for international law, and for our government’s responsibility to its citizens had been pricked; so he had taken up Khadr’s defence.

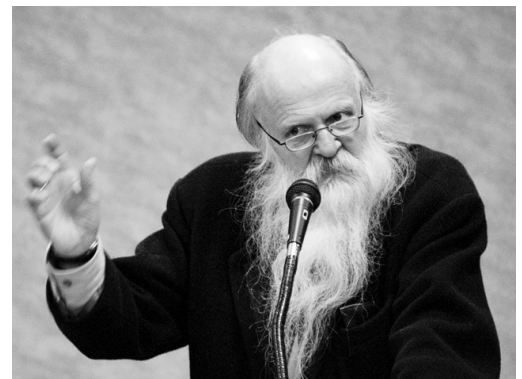
The details are readily available to anyone who wishes to learn about them. It is a tragic and disturbing story. At thirteen, Omar was taken by his father, a committed militant, from their home in Ontario to a training camp in that wounded country that has been at war for decades.

Professor Zinck and others at King’s began to study the case, meeting with various government officials and seeking opportunities to move the conscience of our nation. Professor Zinck established a correspondence with Khadr. She was called to testify following the trial at the hearing for sentencing and spent the better part of a week in Guantanamo.

Ibrahim invited a number of our Muslim friends to his home for an evening to listen to Arlette speak of her understanding and experience.

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





## Point & Counterpoint

— Dittmar Mündel

# De-radicalizing Muslim-Christian Relations

“Does it help me understand Islam? I am so woefully ignorant and need to know more.” This was the question a mature student asked me recently in talking about our Religion and Public Life course “The Presence of the Word: Media and Truth-telling”.

I told her that while this was not a course on Islam, we did examine how the media has covered Islam in such cases as Omar Khadr, or the so-called mosque at Ground Zero. Amongst other texts we shall be reading Edward Said's *Covering Islam*. He shows that from popular to academic literature, from print to visual media, a very slanted version of Muslims is emerging that often serves certain political interests.

By way of contrast, a Christian pastor told me – a fellow clergyperson – that we at the Ronning Centre should be more critical when allowing Muslim scholars and clergy present their understandings of Islam. He indicated that we (that is, Christians) should correct Muslims in their misunderstanding of who Jesus really was. Our primary role should be to evangelize. If I had been fast enough, I could have responded with the words that the eminent Islamicist and Lutheran missionary, the Rev. Roland Miller, once said here at Augustana. As I remember it he said in essence: There will be no hope of Christians converting Muslims unless they, like Jesus, are willing to suffer and die for them and with them. Unless Muslims see a convincing understanding of God as self-sacrificial love in our persona and our political actions, how can they trust our words that “God is love”?

So, to say the least, these two snippets of conversations show that the responses to our offerings of courses, lectures, seminars that have dealt with Islam has been varied.

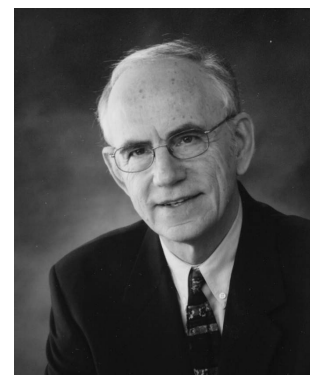
Why does the Chester Ronning Centre carry on with this work of engaging Muslims and Christians in dialogue and hearing of their struggles and theological interpretations? As recently as this September in his Luther Lectures in Regina, Dr Miller stated that de-radicalizing Muslim-Christian relations is the most burning issue in the world today. That would be mandate enough, since about 53 per cent of humanity is either Muslim or Christian.

Dr Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Alberta, shares that vision. He has years of experience in the process of “de-radicalizing” in his teaching of Muslim-Christian relations at Hartford Seminary and now in joining the work of the Chester Ronning Centre through guest lectures and his many connections to a variety of Muslim thinkers in many parts of the world.

At a CRC seminar he responded to a question why he didn't sound angry when looking at the injustices Palestinians had experienced. He said that he had to choose whether to spend the rest of his life being frustrated and extremely angry how he and fellow Palestinians have been dealt with or

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





Recent decades have seen the steady decline of attendance at mainline churches. At the same time, Evangelical churches in Canada have experienced widespread growth. While the number of Evangelicals per capita in Canada pales in comparison to our neighbours in the south, Evangelicals make up a significant percentage of the Canadian population (10–12%) and represent a sizeable portion of Christians in this country.

Evangelicalism is notoriously difficult to define, but works very hard to distinguish itself from Fundamentalism. David Bebbington has offered the most widely accepted definition. “There are four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism” (David

## Evangelicalism in Canada:

W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2–3.)

This definition is intentionally broad and consequently includes a wide swath of Christian believers. Typical Evangelical denominations in Canada include various types of Baptists, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Evangelical Missionary Church, and even the Pentecostal Assemblies. This definition is also broad enough to include evangelically minded members of other denominations, so it is not amiss to speak of Evangelical Anglicans or Evangelical Lutherans, for example.

Traditionally, the activism that Bebbington alludes to has mostly concerned proselytizing. However, in recent years there has been an increased interest in actively influencing the wider culture with a socially conservative platform. In the United States this agenda has been pursued by ‘the Religious Right’. Many

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*“To the Least of These” continued from page 6*

She gave an account of how she got involved and of why finally this young man, among all the others in our suffering world, had come to rest on her heart. She quoted Matthew 25, the parable of the sheep and goats as Christians commonly call it. It was the text she began with in her testimony before the military tribunal at Gitmo. She was compelled by what Jesus Christ had asked of her, a person seeking to be a disciple of the one who calls for healing all divisions. What must it have been like for those in the courtroom that day to hear Arlette recite Matthew 25? The power of this narrative must have led more than one person to ponder whether or not they were a goat.

In the conversation at Ibrahim’s home, a number of my Muslim friends pondered what she

and the King’s community had done on behalf of one “of the least of these.” They pondered whether or not a Muslim would intervene in a similar way on behalf of a Christian imprisoned under similar circumstances. Without hesitation I could name a few who would.

The King’s University College has Christian capital – story, text, and song – that calls those who make it a place of learning and commitment to account, even to account when the costs are high. Arlette has said to me that a school that claims to work out of its Christian faith has no choice. Odd to me that our public institutions privatize such commitments, having lent all their capital to honour, personal and institutional prestige, and the careful negotiation of the shoals of public opinion. The public and the private are not always what they seem.



## What Can Be Its Role?

look up to the presidency of George W. Bush as the crowning achievement of this movement. More recently there has also been a movement in Evangelical churches towards issues of social justice, although historical fears of the Social Gospel still loom large in the background.

Some have begun to see the extent of contemporary Evangelical activism in Canada as a pressing question. Is Canada developing its own version of ‘the Religious Right’, a Canadian Moral Majority? This is precisely what Marci McDonald is arguing in her new book *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*. Canadian Evangelicals have a history of developing along their own trajectory. That is to say, they are both *Canadian* and *Evangelical* and as such tend to be less militant than their American cousins.

In light of these considerations, the Ronning Centre is beginning a new consultation on

the role of Evangelicals in Canadian culture. This consultation will seek to engage the Evangelical community to get a better feeling of what is happening ‘on the ground’, so to speak. We shall be gathering together a roundtable of Evangelical pastors and leaders to discuss the role of Evangelicalism and culture, focussing on the question of the role of Evangelicalism in Canadian politics.

Do Canadian Evangelicals continue to have an antithetical relationship with Canadian culture? What role do Canadian Evangelicals believe they should play in the political agenda of Canada? How should Evangelicals look to their future role in Canadian culture?

The Ronning Centre will be joined in this inquiry by various faculty members from The King’s University College.

—Jeffrey A. McPherson

*Dr McPherson is a Ronning Centre Research Fellow  
and President of the Canadian Evangelical  
Theological Association (CETA)*

### *“De-radicalizing Muslim-Christian Relations Continued from page 7*

whether he would go the heart of Islam and engage with openness Christians of the countries that had done serious damage to his people. He chose the latter course.

Dialogue is not the same as saying “anything goes” or “it doesn’t really matter what you believe”. Both Dr Miller and Dr Abu-Rabi’ are very articulate about their faith and how they understand God, humans, and the world. They are clear on the differences between the Christian faith in Jesus as God’s final revelation and the Islamic acceptance of the Qur’an as God’s final revelation. However, in

contrast to trading in stereotypes or monologues, both of them do the necessary work required by love, namely of understanding the other on their own terms, before showing how they put the world together themselves.

What allows us to de-radicalize Muslim-Christian relations? What is the key to dialogue? The answer would be *humility*: that is, not clinging to even our best articulated understandings of God as God and as a source of power that we have over others; but emptying ourselves so that we can become fellow humans and maybe, like Jesus, taking on the form of the servant and being obedient to God even through misunderstandings, suffering, and death.

## The Role of Religion

# Building Healthy Rural Communities

Eight rural clergy and intern pastors gathered in Camrose from 22 to 26 November to study how, through ministry and leadership, they can assist their communities to become more healthy. We explored some of Martin Luther's and Wendell Berry's theology. Both agree that the task of ministry cannot be separated from the tasks of daily life in our various vocations, just as we can't minister to the soul as something separate from the body.

Faith, for Luther, if it is real, is always incarnate, embodied in concrete works of love within our various roles such as parents, citizens, workers, or makers of culture. Wendell Berry in "The Body and the Earth" makes a corollary claim: "To fail to employ the body in this world at once for its own good and the good of the soul is to issue an invitation to disorder of the most serious kind" (in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, Norman Wirzba, ed. (Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2002), 101).

Applied to rural ministry, this would imply that we have to be engaged in keeping rural communities ecologically, economically, politically, socially, and culturally healthy. All these factors are interrelated. If we know that our economic activity, for example, harms God's creatures or creation, neither our communities nor our souls can be healthy.

To explore the interrelationship of these five factors, the participants did field work in Armena, New Norway, and Millet. They used "photo voice" as one way of bringing key images of what is going on in these communities to the class for discussion. They also had focus groups and did individual interviews with members of the community.

They synthesized their rapid diagnostic of the health of the three communities by using a 'tree of life' drawing to represent the various

aspects and their relationships: the soil represents ecology, since everything that happens to the tree is connected to and impacts the earth, air and water of the community—and beyond. The roots are the various economic activities that feed the tree. These may be shallow roots, such as limited oil and gas exploration until that resource runs out; or they may be long roots stretching sideways into the neighbouring larger centre such as Camrose. The trunk represents politics and governance. Here we showed how or whether people have voice and power to shape their community. The branches represent all the social networks and services of the community, and broken branches or stumps show what no longer is available to seniors or youth in the towns and hamlets. The crown represents the culture that nourishes or under nourishes the tree. Individual leaves could be the values, beliefs, traditions, forms of worship that shape the life together.

To help us to reflect on, and analyze our observations, we had Don Ruzicka, a farmer and devout Roman Catholic, show and tell us how he takes the stewardship of creation seriously. He shifted from the dominant industrial model of agriculture to one that focuses on the nurture and care of the land and all its bio-diverse creatures. Of course, he too has to "make a living" and raises free range pigs, turkeys, chickens, and some cattle. But he and his wife Marie are simultaneously making a life of enjoying the return of trees and grasses, and many species of birds, including the return of the meadowlark.

Dr. Glen Hvenegaard helped us to examine how resources are managed or mis-managed in Alberta. Dr. Roger Epp, Dean of Augustana and political scientist, had us explore the political deskilling that has happened in rural Alberta (and beyond) in the last decades. Who does in fact shape our rural communities

or even the nature of our businesses and farms, if it is not the people living and working there?

Each day we would then reflect theologically on what we had seen, heard and thought about. How can we be of use to help others be glad that they have the joyful burden of farming? How can we ourselves and members of the rural communities break out of political or economic patterns that damage not only our land, water, and air, but also our rural communities and our very souls? How can our ministry be of use in reconnecting rural folks to one another, to their land, and to their communities?

The Bible has powerful counter-narratives to the stories of endless economic growth and progress that dominate public discourse. Good preaching and teaching and worship is crucial so we can hear and sing a different tune. Clergy also need to be community leaders helping community members take the first steps out of the captivity to the dominant way of looking at rural communities: at the land and its people as God's good creation. But how can they help others, unless they themselves are also doing good concrete work which does not split the body and earth from the spiritual?

— Dittmar Mündel

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David J. Goa Speaks in Istanbul

## “Ways of Imperfection”

“To worship is the most basic of human desires, the desire for God, and it brings with it the greatest of challenges”; this was the premise of an address by David J. Goa, Director of the Chester Ronning Centre, in Istanbul recently.

Goa was an invited speaker at an international symposium, “The Risale-i Nur : Knowledge, Faith, Morality and the Future of Humankind”, held by the Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture from 3 to 5 October.

The Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture sponsors the study and dissemination of the Risale-i Nur, an extensive, groundbreaking commentary on the Holy Qur'an, and other works by the distinguished Muslim scholar Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (d. 1960). Nursi is notable for having advocated co-operative relations between Muslims and other peoples of faith.

In his address, entitled “Ways of Imperfection”, Goa pointed out many analogies between Islamic and Orthodox Christian religious practices such as prayer and fasting.

Citing the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”, Goa observed a “deep synergy” with the teachings of Said Nursi on human “impotence” in matters of religion.

“Being poor in spirit is knowing I cannot save myself; that I cannot heal myself; that I have no defence against the enemy, against death, spiritual and otherwise, in all its complex forms that daily greet me. It is that awareness that Said Nursi came to . . . that we need God's help and mercy more than we need anything else”, Goa said.

The Director of the Istanbul Foundation, Dr Faris Kaya, will be visiting Alberta in March to participate in a series of symposia sponsored by the Chester Ronning Centre, designed to explore religious perspectives on civil life from a variety of faith traditions.

—Nicholas Wickenden

*Video files of the presentations from this conference can be found online at:*  
<http://nursistudies.com/news.php?nid=231>

# Religious Perspectives on Civil Life

RONNING CENTRE TO SPONSOR SYMPOSIA IN EDMONTON AND CALGARY

On Friday and Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, the Ronning Centre will bring three traditions into conversation in a two-day symposium focused on religious perspectives on civil life: the neo-Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper, the Islamic perspectives of Said Nursi, and the Lutheran perspective hammered out through the struggles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The symposium will be held at The King's University College in Edmonton.

On Monday and Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, we shall gather at St Mary's University College, Calgary, and bring the Islamic perspective of Said Nursi, Roman Catholic thought since the Second Vatican Council, and the Hesychastic tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy into conversation, with each of them putting forward their finest thinking on the civil life and the gifts of faith to engage it.

Lectures and roundtable discussions will deal with each of the following themes:

How does each tradition understand the private sphere, the public sphere, and the secular?

How do spiritual disciplines central to each tradition prepare the faithful for active citizenship?

What lessons can be drawn from a concrete and recent example within each tradition of its way of responding to the struggles found in the communities of another tradition?

What are the sources within each tradition that cultivate a life-giving stance towards the other?

The following scholars will be thinking together:

Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', ECMC Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Alberta  
Syed Farid Alatas, Professor of Sociology, National University of Singapore

Mark Charlton, Professor of Political Science, St Mary's University College, Calgary

Michael DeMoor, Professor of Social Philosophy, The King's University College, Edmonton

Michael Duggan, CWL Chair of Catholic Studies, St Mary's University College, Calgary

David Goa, Director, Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, University of Alberta

Franz Volker Greifenhagen, Professor of Religious Studies, Luther College, University of Regina

Cam Harder, Professor of Systematic Theology, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon

John Hiemstra, Professor of Political Studies, The King's University College, Edmonton

Faris Kaya, Professor, Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture, Turkey

Bilal Kuspinar, Professor of Philosophy and Education, Ahlia Univesity, Bahrain

Stephen Martin, Professor of Theology, The King's University College, Edmonton

Bob McKeon, Roman Catholic Archdiocese, Edmonton

Nil Nellis, a Ronning Centre Research Fellow

Hans-Dittmar Mündel, Professor of Religious Studies and Associate Director, Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, University of Alberta

George Papademetriou, Professor of Theology, Holy Cross Seminary, Brookline, Mass.

Thomas A. Papademetriou, Professor of History, Richard Stockton College, Pomona, New Jersey

Archbishop Lazar Puhalo, Monastery of All Saints of North America, B.C.

Zeyneb Sayilgan, PhD candidate, Georgetown University, Washington, DC

William Van Arragon, Professor of History, The King's University College, Edmonton

Arlette Zinck, Professor of English, The King's University College, Edmonton

This event is being organized by the Ronning Centre and the ECMC Chair in Islamic Studies in conjunction with the Istanbul Founda-

tion for Science and Culture (<http://www.iikv.org/english.htm>), which was established to study the thoughts of Said Nursi through such means as discussions, seminars, and workshops. We are delighted to be partnering also with The King's University College and St Mary's University College in the symposiums.

*There is no charge for this event and all are welcome to attend, but we ask that you please **register** by sending your name and contact information to [rebecca.warren@ualberta.ca](mailto:rebecca.warren@ualberta.ca).*

**Religious Perspectives on Civil Life:  
A Ronning Centre Symposium (Edmonton)**  
18-19 March 2010  
9a.m.–4 p.m. each day  
King's University College  
9125 – 50<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Edmonton, Alberta

**Religious Perspectives on Civil Life:  
A Ronning Centre Symposium (Calgary)**  
21-22 March 2010  
9a.m.–4 p.m. each day  
St Mary's University College  
14500 Bannister Road SE  
Calgary, Alberta

### An Interfaith Conversation

## Caring for the Souls of the Young

At one time, with their Middle Eastern robes and scholar's turbans, they must have seemed exotic figures in Edmonton. Following their extensive participation in Ronning Centre events in 2009 and their gracious hosting in Damascus of a number of individuals connected with the Centre, Shaykh Dr Abdulfateh al-Bizem, Mufti of Damascus, and Shaykh Dr Hussam al-Din Farfour, Vice-Rector of the Al-Fateh Islamic Institute in that city, are simply old friends.

While in Edmonton, they gave a number of lectures within the Muslim community and the public, as well as participating in a Ronning Centre Consultation on "Caring for the Souls of the Young" at The King's University College on 11 December. They were joined by Dr Harry Fernhout, President of the College.

In his remarks, Shaykh al-Bizem stressed the centrality of knowledge in the Islamic faith – most fundamentally, knowledge of God, but proceeding from that, knowledge of right worship and of justice in human affairs; knowledge that was to be followed through

with action, and would equip the young to resist the preponderance of matter over spirit in much of the modern world.

Dr Fernhout contrasted two concepts of Christian education: one that limited it to prayer and Bible study, the other promoting a spiritual and not merely intellectual engagement with all studies. A Christian university, he argued vigorously, should alter the ethos of education "from transaction to transformation", inspiring the young to live faithfully up to their beliefs.

Shaykh Farfour addressed the issue of the appeal of violence to the young. He found standard school and university curricula "empty of spiritual formation" and advocated a revival of the traditional goal of Islamic education – *hikmah*, "wisdom" – as an effective means of combating what he described as the "New World Disorder".

*The presentations and the active discussion that followed were recorded and are now available in audio at <http://www.crcaudio.ca/>*

## What Is the Future of

In 2008 we were privileged to have Roger C. Hutchinson spend a month with us giving a variety of lectures, including his Augustana Distinguished Lecture titled *Ethical Choices in a Pluralistic World*. We published this lecture along with a series of reflections on various ethical issues in Canada. On one lovely September evening we invited many of Roger's longtime colleagues who had spent the better part of their lives working for churches on social justice and ecumenism to gather at Trinity Lutheran Church in Edmonton and reflect on where they had been and what the future holds. Lutherans were joined by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Mennonites, as well as men and women from the Reformed and United Church communities.

We prepared dinner and settled in for an evening of conversation on the halcyon days of the church's social justice work, the 1960s and into the 80s, when most of those present were actually employed by churches and church committees. For a brief time, various people spoke appreciatively for those years together. Then attention turned to what happened to the social justice and ecumenical work of the church in the 1990s until today. A marked pall fell over the gathering. Anger and frustration, disappointment and cynicism poured forth. Some of those gathered finished their remarks by saying they no longer either believed or attended the churches whose work they had been so committed to. Story after story recounted the failure of church leaders to continue this significant work. Most of the positions within churches devoted to this work were cancelled and the church, we were told, turned inward becoming preoccupied with either piety or what were deemed moral issues of little consequence. The best did little to reignite concerns for justice and the worst laboured at building barricades of separation between the faithful.

I had studied a little with Paul Tillich in Chicago and, on that September evening, his presence overwhelmed me. How would it all sound to this remarkable theologian who, as well as anyone in the twentieth century and better than most, had articulated a vision for the kind of work that, for both the church and the society, now seemed to be at an end?

Then toward the end of the evening our distinguished guest Roger Hutchinson, with his optimism and far reaching vision, stood and spoke just a little. He reflected on his early recognition of the need to translate the language of faith and action bequeathed to him by the church of his childhood. This language need to become a public language of use politically and for community development and he and Moira and many who were present had set about that task. He talked of how successful they had been in creating a public language rooted for them, of course, in the language of faith and action. He paused for a moment and then spoke quite personally about what appeared to be an unintended consequence of successfully carrying forward this translation.

For many of us, he said, our children had heard what we had said and taken it to heart. The church and its community were now of little or no interest to them. They devoted their energy for social change to other organizations.

As I listened a number of questions hung in the air. Are we seeing the end of liberal Christianity and its gift to civil society? If so, what is the range of consequences both for churches and for society? What is replacing the communities of the faithful? Are the children Roger spoke about finding communities or only ethical fraternities that may flourish for a season around an issue or set of issues and then vanish? How distinct is that from the church of their parents? Is it possible to remain thoughtful about the ethical life, committed to action

## Liberal Christianity?

and agile in responding, redeeming the times, without a community of sojourners, the church?

Or, is what the church once was simply taking on a new form? What happens to the ability of good people when community evaporates, when the ballast provided by a long cultural memory disappears, when models of saintly lives and lives of self giving are the exception instead of part of your weekly diet of text and song? What happens when deep and compelling ethical concerns are not hinged with the cultural and religious capacity for beauty, no room for poetry, for song, no room for being?

And, there are other questions raised in our initial conversations of this theme. Part of the gift of liberal Christianity was to overcome a spiritualized or “otherworldly” form of Christianity that did not take creation and incarnation seriously. Did the movement toward a “this-worldly” religion become, in Bonhoeffer’s words, a shallow activism? In the long run is it indistinguishable from secular activism and, if it is not, does that really matter? What is the relation of the personal to the social in liberal Christianity? What is the relation of worship of and faith in Jesus to social action? Does a focus on “structural sin”, the sins of economic, cultural and political systems overshadow a reflection on personal

separation from God, creation, and neighbours? Is there a renaissance of liberal Christianity which wants to keep prayer and social action together in some form? Is the so called “immerging church” talking up some of the gifts of the liberal tradition? When does social critique rooted in liberal Christianity become simply another ideology?

The Ronning Centre will bring a variety of people together to reflect on the genius of liberal theology, on how it developed through the twentieth century and what, given that development, it now offers. We will consider whether the foundations of this rich and historically fruitful theological tradition ought to be revisited. What are the sources of its vitality in our present age?

Our work will begin with several consultations with those who continue to stand within this tradition and care for its ability to speak a healing word both to the church and to society. From these conversations we hope to shape a variety of lectures, seminars, and conferences bringing forward what is best in what is surely one of the most fruitful veins of Christian thinking and action in the last century in North America. I invite those who are interested in joining in this consultation to contact me.

— David J. Goa

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

February 2009 Augustana Distinguished Lecture  
**Global Crises, Local Churches**  
 CYNTHIA MOE-LOBEDA with  
**Active Hope in the Midst of the**  
**Babylonian Captivity of the Rural**  
 DITTMAR MÜNDEL

October 2009 Augustana Distinguished Lecture  
**On the Way to Muslim-Christian Understanding**  
 FRANZ VOLKER GREIFENHAGEN

2008 Augustana Distinguished Lecture  
**Ethical Choices in a Pluralistic World**  
 ROGER HUTCHINSON

Each publication is \$15.00 + GST. To order, e-mail  
[rebecca.warren@augustana.ca](mailto:rebecca.warren@augustana.ca)

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



# Philosophers' Cafés for Winter 2011

## At Edmonton

The winter 2011 Philosophers' Cafés in Edmonton will focus on the general theme of "What makes an excellent life?" The term 'excellent' is carefully chosen here as alluding back to the Greek notion of aretê, and an excellent life is not the same as what we call the "good life".

All sessions at: Steeps, The Urban Tea House  
11116 – Whyte (82<sup>nd</sup>) Avenue, Edmonton

### General Theme: What Makes an Excellent Life?

#### Greek Philosophers on How to Live Well

*Animateur: Martin Tweedale*

Saturday, 8 January 1:00–3:30 p.m.

#### *Via Activa* versus *Via Contemplativa*: The Life of Community Involvement versus the Life of Observation and Reflection

*Animateur: Daniel Coleman*

Saturday, 22 January 1:00–3:30 p.m.

#### Who is Happiest of All?

*Animateur: Mark Anielski*

Saturday, 5 February 1:00–3:30 p.m.

#### Is a Religious (Theistic) Worldview a Help or Hindrance to Living an Excellent Life?

*Animateur: Stephen Martin*

Saturday, 19 February 1:00–3:30 p.m.

#### How Much Freedom of Choice Does One Need to Live Excellently?

*Animateur: Don Carmichael*

Saturday, 5 March 1:00–3:30 p.m.

#### Are Deep Attachments to Other Human Beings a Necessary Part of Living Excellently?

*Animateur: Suzette Phillips*

Saturday, 26 March 1:00–3:30 p.m.

## At Camrose

*General Theme: "God Preserve Me from Ideologies"*

Each café will focus on a significant book on religion and public life in Canada and the USA. We encourage you to read the book listed for each topic ahead of time if you are able. The thesis of each book will be introduced and we will engage the author and each other in our discussion.

All Sessions at Merchants Tea & Coffee House  
4857 - 50th Street, Camrose

*All are welcome whether or not you have been able to read the book.*

### Theme 1: Is the Liberal and Political Left Exhausted?

*Animateur: Dittmar Mündel*

Read: *The Death of the Liberal Class* by Chris Hedges

Friday, 14 January 8:30–10:00 a.m.

### Theme 2: Does the Political Right and Left Misunderstand or Misuse Religion?

*Animateur: Jeffrey McPherson*

Read: *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* by Jim Wallis

Friday, 18 February 8:30–10:00 a.m.

### Theme 3: Has the Religious Right Taken Over Ottawa?

*Animateur: David J. Goa*

Read: *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* by Marci McDonald

Friday, 25 March 8:30–10:00 a.m.

### Theme 4: What is the Proper Stance of Religion in the Public Sphere?

*Animateur: Peter Leblanc*

Read: *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics after the Religious Right*

by E. J. Dionne

Friday, 29 April 8:30–10:00 a.m.

## What Did Luther Really Think About Women?

Questions from readers have been sparked by a statement by Vangie Bergum and Susan Andrews Grace in the Ronning Centre Newsletter of Fall 2010. They wrote: “Martin Luther asserted that women’s vulnerability and irrationality prevented them from knowing God, and led to a lack of social and political equality.” This may call for clarification.

The authors’ train of thought was suggested by the third chapter of Lilian Calles Barger, *Chasing Sophia: Reclaiming the Lost Wisdom of Jesus* (San Francisco, 2007).

Luther’s attitudes to women have been discussed by a number of other scholars, and in 2003 Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks published a careful selection of the evidence in English translation under the title *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge University Press), which will be cited as K & W in what follows.

Luther’s basic position was the characteristically ambivalent one that he set out in his *Lectures on Genesis*, 1535: “this sex [woman] may not be excluded from any glory of the human creature, although it is inferior to the male sex” (K & W 26).

Such inferiority was not to be explained on the ground of the Fall. Luther did assert that Eve by her very nature “was pure and full of the knowledge of God to such a degree that by herself she knew the Word of God and understood it” (*Lectures on Genesis*, 1535, K & W 25), and again that “if the woman had not been deceived by the serpent and had not sinned, she would have been the equal of Adam in all respects” (ibid., K & W 26).

But these assertions were quickly qualified; “in the perfect nature”, Luther continued, “the male somewhat excelled the female” (ibid., K & W 27). In particular, as he said elsewhere, “Eve was not as intelligent as Adam” (*Lectures on I Timothy*, K & W 20). If the

serpent (the Devil) had tried to deceive Adam instead of Eve, “he might well have received a different answer” (ibid., K & W 20).

It followed naturally that woman, who in any case was created simply as a helpmate for man, was unfitted for public duties. “The Law [i.e., the Old Testament]”, he approvingly remarked, “withholds from women wisdom and governance” (*Table Talk* no. 6567, K & W 31). Another of Luther’s dicta was that “when they [women] talk about matters other than those pertaining to the household, they are not competent” (no. 1054, K & W 28). In a word, “the rule of women never accomplished anything good” (no. 2847b, K & W 197).

It is not surprising that Luther found women’s understanding of theology inadequate to allow them to preach or lecture in public. From preaching, he declared, “the Holy Spirit has excepted women, children, and incompetent people . . . but chooses (except in emergencies) only competent males to fill this office” (*On Councils and the Church*, 1539, K & W 75).

Women might prophesy, as Joel had foretold, but prophecy was not equivalent to preaching. “The four daughters of Philip were prophetesses. A women can do this. Not preach in public, but console people and teach. A woman can do this just as much as a man” (*Sermon on Joel 2:28*, 1531, K & W 61). Bearing in mind the New Testament injunctions that women should keep silence in church (I Corinthians 14:24, I Timothy 2:12), Luther also did not let women in church pray aloud (cf. A.J. Schmidt, *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology* (Macon, GA, 1989), 153).

There were inconvenient apparent counter-examples that, occurring as they did in Scripture itself, Luther had to take seriously.

—Continued on page 18

*Luther Continued from page 17*

The careers of Deborah and others showed that “women have prophesied and thereby attained rule of men, lands, and people” (*Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, 1532, K & W 62).

Luther got round these cases by arguing that such women had had a special call from God and were therefore isolated exceptions to the general rule.

Even Luther’s vigorous rejection of the celibacy practised by priests, monks, and nuns, and his powerful commendations of Christian marriage, implied no radical amelioration in the status of women. Marriage had its drawbacks and could be seen more as a duty than a pleasure; “it had to be, for if men must marry women, whom they view as deficient in humanity, the external rule of ‘duty’ necessarily must be invoked” (Beverly Wildung Harrison, in Judith L. Weidman, ed., *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity* (San Francisco, 1984) 144; cf. K & W 186).

Luther’s personal conduct was characteristically more considerate and humane than his polemics would suggest. As his recent editors put it: “In his loving and flexible deeds Luther may gain a certain redemption in the eyes of modern and independent women who from their twenty-first century milieu react viscerally against this man’s insistence upon Everywoman as the totally subordinate housewife.” (K & W 9.)

But he never budged from his theoretical patriarchal stance, and to arrive at a balanced assessment of his attitude to women the modern reader must weigh the divergent tendencies that shaped his words and actions even more subtly than he himself was able to do.

—Nicholas Wickenden

**TOM FAULKNER, PHD**

July 24, 1945–July 13, 2010

Passed away peacefully at the River-view Health Centre in the arms of his anam cara, Lesley, and with his best friend, Griff, by his side. Tom was predeceased by his parents Charles and Mae Faulkner, and by his former wife Patricia Sinclair-Faulkner in 2002. He is survived by his son Matthew (Jen) and their children Aaron and Joshua, and by his daughter Kate. Tom is also remembered by his brothers Bill (Martha) and John (Mary Anne), and by the Sinclair family, Deborah (David), Scott (Rosalynd), and Kathryn (Roger), as well as by numerous nieces and nephews.

Tom was a lifelong scholar of the mystery which is religion. He began his teaching career at Dalhousie University in 1975, and taught in the Faculty of Religion until 2004. He was President of St Andrew's and St Stephen's Universities from 2004 to 2006, and completed his career as an Associate Professor of Church and Society and Director of the Ridd Institute for Religion and Global Policy at the University of Winnipeg.

Tom was an avid guitarist and banjo player and a member of several choirs. He loved his students, and was a strong advocate for social justice in the world. He will be lovingly remembered for his intense glare, his passion for the world of academia, his brilliant mind, and his Tilley attire!

## In Memoriam Aeternam

Tom Faulkner departed this world on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 2010. He had served on the Advisory Committee of the Ronning Centre and given several superb lectures in our various program offerings over the last three years. Tom always brought insight, balance, and good sense to discussions at our committee meetings.

I first met Tom as a listener. He was giving a paper at the annual Learned Societies conference, as it was called some twenty-five years ago, and my first thought was, how unusual to hear a Liberal Protestant thinker engaging with the life and influence of a man soon to become a Roman Catholic saint! Tom had become fascinated with Brother André (Alfred Bessette, 1845–1937), a simple Holy Cross Brother who spent most of his life as a porter at Notre Dame College in Montreal.

I had heard many stories of Bro. André when I lived in Montreal in 1968. It seemed that virtually every family in *la belle province* had been touched by his healing hand. I talked with Tom about my encounters with the memory of Bro. André and our conversation moved from the life of this saint to the power of folk piety and our need to pay more attention to the living religious tradition in our scholarship. Tom also studied religion and war and the codes of warriors and lectured widely on the subject over the years.

Last year he was invited by the Pakistan Navy War College to help think through how the military can engage with child soldiers. He had been working with Gen. Romeo Dallaire and the United Nations in drawing up a field manual to prepare the blue helmets for their encounters with the children who were being used as frontline troops in so many places.

In my last conversations with Tom we had started to plan a series of consultations explor-



ing what has happened to the Liberal Protestant tradition in Canada. Both of us were concerned by the kind of depression that has swept over this wing of the church and by the need for all dimensions of the Christian church to be strong. We need the best thought brought forward on the complex and demanding issues we increasingly face in the public square.

Tom had a rare mind and heart. He was one of the last classical Liberal Protestant thinkers. He was comfortable in his own skin. He loved his own church and the Christian tradition. He saw the gifts at the heart of the United Church of Canada and was a loyal critic around its foibles and follies. While critique was important and few could do it as well as he, critique was never the point. Critique was always in service to unveiling a deeper meaning so that our life together in the world might be richer and filled with the joy of service.

We have lost a fine person with a fine mind. We are richer for knowing him and sorrow at his departure. When Pope Benedict XVI canonized Brother André on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the sanctity of Tom Faulkner was in the precinct. May his memory be eternal.

— David J. Goa

# Calendar of Coming Events - Winter 2011

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

## JANUARY

### **Greek Philosophers on How to Live Well**

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Martin Tweedale*

Saturday, 8 January, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House

11116 – Whyte (82<sup>nd</sup>) Avenue, Edmonton

### **Is the Liberal and Political Left Exhausted?**

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Dittmar Mündel*

Read: The Death of the Liberal Class by Chris Hedges

Friday, 14 January 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House

4857 – 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Camrose

### **The Conviction of Things Not Seen: The Role of Faith in a Post-Modern World**

*A Ronning Centre Consultation with Jeffrey McPherson*

*(PhD in Religious Studies from McMaster University)*

Tuesday, 18 January, 9:25–10:40 a.m.

G202, Convocation Centre

Augustana Campus, Camrose

### **Reading Beyond the Book: Reader as Public Intellectual**

*Augustana Distinguished Lecture 2010 with Daniel*

*Coleman (Professor of English at McMaster University)*

*Lectures made possible through the generous support of the Hendrickson Memorial Endowment Fund and co-sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Program in Religious Studies and the Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta*

Friday, 21 January, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Humanities Centre L-3, Univ of Alberta, Edmonton

### **Via Activa versus Via Contemplativa: The Life of Community Involvement versus the Life of the Mind**

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Daniel Coleman*

Saturday, 22 January, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House

11116 – Whyte (82<sup>nd</sup>) Avenue, Edmonton

### **Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics**

*Augustana Distinguished Lecture 2010 with Daniel Coleman*

*(Professor of English at McMaster University) Lectures made possible through the generous support of the Hendrickson Memorial Endowment Fund and co-sponsored by Prairie Bible Institute*

Monday, 24 January, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

C014, Classroom Building

Augustana Campus, Camrose

### **Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics (cont'd)**

*Augustana Distinguished Lecture 2010 with Daniel Coleman*

Tuesday, 25 January, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Founders Hall 231

Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills, AB

## FEBRUARY

### **Eco-Spiritual Ethics in the Holy Qur'an**

*A Ronning Centre Consultation with May Naguib*

Wednesday, 2 February, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Room N111, King's University College

9125 – 50 St NW, Edmonton

### **Who is Happiest of All?**

*A Philosophers' Café introduced and animated by*

*Mark Anielski*

Saturday, 5 February, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House

11116 – Whyte (82<sup>nd</sup>) Avenue, Edmonton

### **The Highest Public Calling: Bridging to a Better World**

*A Ronning Centre Forum with Ellen Parker,*

*NDP Candidate*

Tuesday, 8 February, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

2-004, 2nd Floor Meeting Room, Forum

Augustana Campus, Camrose

### **Radical Islamism: From Afghanistan to the Arab World**

*A Ronning Centre Seminar with Ibrahim Abu-Rabi'*

*(ECMC Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Alberta)*

Monday, 14 February, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

C014, Classroom Building

Augustana Campus, Camrose

### **Does the Political Right and Left Misunderstand or Misuse Religion?**

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Jeffrey McPherson*

*(PhD in Religious Studies)*

Read: God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It by Jim Wallis

Friday, 18 February 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House

4857 – 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Camrose

# Calendar of Coming Events - Winter 2011

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

## Is a Religious (Theistic) Worldview a Help or Hindrance to Living an Excellent Life?

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Stephen Martin (Associate Professor of Theology at King's University College)*

Saturday, 19 February, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House

11116 – Whyte (82<sup>nd</sup>) Avenue, Edmonton

## The Story that Love Tells: A Christian University's Reading of the Omar Khadr Case

*A Ronning Centre Consultation with Arlette Zinck (Dean, Faculty of Arts and Associate Professor of English, King's University College)*

Monday, 28 February, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

C014, Classroom Building

Augustana Campus, Camrose

## MARCH

## How Much Freedom of Choice Does One Need to Live Excellently?

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Don Carmichael*

Saturday, 5 March, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House

11116 – Whyte (82<sup>nd</sup>) Avenue, Edmonton

## Conversations on Women, Feminism, and Islam: A Roundtable Discussion with Muslim Women Educators and Community Activists

*A Ronning Centre Symposium co-sponsored with the ECMC Chair in Islamic Studies and Women's Studies Program, Univ of Alberta*

Wednesday, 16 March, 3:00–5:00 p.m.

Humanities Centre Lecture Hall 4

University of Alberta, Edmonton

## Religious Perspectives on Civil Life

*A Ronning Centre Symposium co-sponsored with the ECMC Chair in Islamic Studies University of Alberta, King's University College, St. Mary's University College, and the Istanbul Foundation for Science & Culture*

Friday, 18 March, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Saturday, 19 March, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

King's University College

9125 – 50 St NW, Edmonton

Monday, 21 March, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, 22 March, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

St. Mary's University College

14500 Bannister Road SE, Calgary, AB

## Has the Religious Right Taken Over Ottawa?

*A Philosophers' Café animated by David J. Goa*

Read: The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada by Marci McDonald

Friday, 25 March 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House

4857 – 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Camrose

## Are Deep Attachments to Other Human Beings a Necessary Part of Living Excellently?

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Suzette Phillips (Psychologist)*

Saturday, 26 March, 1:00–3:30 p.m.

Steeps, The Urban Tea House

11116 – Whyte (82<sup>nd</sup>) Avenue, Edmonton

## APRIL

## Damned If You Do, Damned If You Don't

*A Ronning Centre Seminar with Beth MacKenzie*

Monday, 4 April, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

C014, Classroom Building

Augustana Campus, Camrose

## Covenants and Public Life in Puritan New England

*A Ronning Centre Seminar with William Van Arragon (Assistant Professor of History, King's University College)*

Wednesday, 6 April, 12:30–2:00 p.m.

2-004 2nd Floor Meeting Room, Forum

Augustana Campus, Camrose

## What is the Proper Stance of Religion in the Public Sphere?

*A Philosophers' Café animated by Peter Leblanc*

Read: Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics after the

Religious Right by E. J. Dionne

Friday, 29 April 8:30–10:00 a.m.

Merchants Tea & Coffee House

4857 – 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Camrose

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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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**For more information on giving opportunities to the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public life please call 780.679.1558**

#### CHESTER RONNING CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

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**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:

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1-800-590-9992 ext. 1183  
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bonita.anderson@ualberta.ca



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