

# *The BOISI CENTER Report*

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## **From the Director**

With this issue, we bring to a close the first year of programmed activity at the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life. It has been a successful and gratifying experience, and our ability to bring such noted figures as Professor Lord Robert Skidelsky, Judge John T. Noonan, Professor Seymour Martin Lipset, and Congressman Barney Frank to the Boston College campus, has, we hope, rewarded our audiences as well.

As in last semester, our mainstay has been the semi-monthly luncheon seminars, through which we continue to expand our outreach to the larger Boston area community and to bring together faculty, students, and community members for lively discussions on such topics as faith based organizing, community policing and the churches, and religious differences in political participation. If you have not already done so, we invite you to make the trek to 24 Quincy Road and join us for one of our presentation / discussions which are posted on our website [www.bc.edu/publife](http://www.bc.edu/publife).

This spring also marks the publication of my latest book, *Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice*. In this work I continue the approach I began in *One Nation, After All*, asking ordinary Americans about the ways in which they understand and negotiate some of the basic virtues of our society, such as loyalty, honesty, forgiveness, and self-discipline in their everyday lives. This

approach stems from the belief that it is important for a democracy to take into account the stories that people tell about themselves and their own condition. Americans have their own views about human nature, God's power, political authority, virtue and vice, the content of character, and individual responsibility. They will not, we can be fairly sure, express themselves with the brilliance and clarity of Socrates, St. Paul, or Immanuel Kant. But there is often something dignified and instructive about the ways in which people consider the conditions of themselves and their society. We live in a society where, for the first time, each individual has the freedom, as well as the challenge, of forging a moral life for themselves instead of following strict conventions. I document these struggles in my book. If the individual authors of these accounts do not always offer the examined life, they can and do offer the experienced life. Morality for them is not based on abstractions but on consequences. Because they live with the choices they make, their views are neither frivolous-nor frivolously adopted.

As we retire for the summer to our books and beaches, we look forward to engaging new audiences and new ideas in Fall 2001. We encourage all of you to contribute to the Boisi Center's activities and look forward to your participation next year.

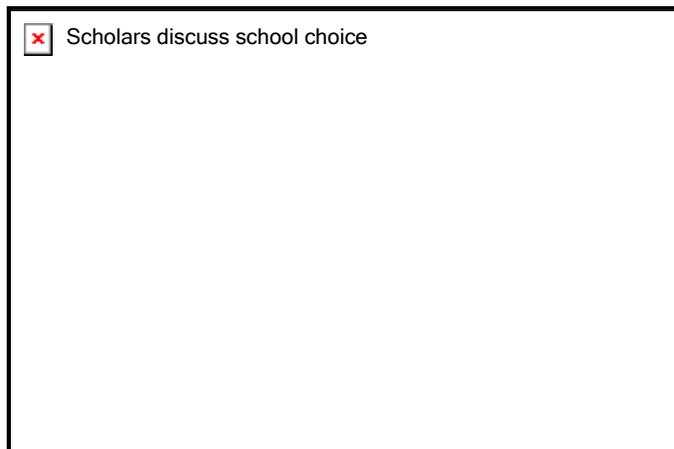
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### **Conference Examines Moral Aspects of School Choice**

On March 9 and 10, the Boisi Center held its first conference as over one hundred scholars, activists, and educators from around the country joined together to address the moral and normative aspects of school choice. With support from the Smith Richardson Foundation, the Boisi Center invited twelve speakers and four discussants to examine and discuss the use of parental choice for educational reform and its relation to such topics as pluralism, equality, the ecology of institutions, and American constitutional law. Papers given on the first day of the conference focused on the various philosophical arguments that have been made both for and against the introduction of market forces into education.

During the panel on pluralism and school choice chaired by David Hollenbach, Amy Gutmann, Meira and Sanford Levinson, and Nancy Rosenblum examined the interrelationship of the rights of children, parents and the state, the normative importance of different kinds of pluralism (such as religious or ethnic diversity), and the plausibility of the link between choice and pluralism. Stephen Macedo and Joseph Viteritti, at the day's second panel on equality and choice, probed the meaning and ramifications of the concept of equity, especially in light of the current trend amongst reformers to target disadvantaged urban children whose parents lack the resources to make choice a meaningful option.

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**last century, while Joseph O'Keefe provided a thumbnail sketch of the current state of American Catholic parochial education.**

John McGreevy, Kathleen Mahoney, and Joseph O'Keefe discuss school choice

The second day's panels bridged the gap between normative and empirical analyses, first in the case of examining the likely institutional ramifications of school choice and secondly, in providing legal analysis of constitutional precedent in the hope of discovering where the US Supreme Court shall go next. Drawing upon historical and comparative social science research, Charles Glenn and Richard Mouw examined how the option of school choice had been implemented in Europe during the last century, while Joseph O'Keefe provided a thumbnail sketch of the current state of American Catholic parochial education and the institutional challenges it faces in the new millennium. On a panel on choice and law chaired by John Garvey, legal scholars Martha Minow, Rosemary Salomone, and Michael Perry generally agreed that current constitutional precedent was in need of clarification by the Court, although there was less general agreement on the direction such a landmark decision would take.

Notwithstanding a late winter Nor'easter during the weekend, the conference was quite an intellectual success and an excellent opportunity to introduce the Boisi Center during its inaugural year of activities. As Center Director Alan Wolfe noted at the close of the conference, the preceding two days of debate and discussion both promoted an interdisciplinary meeting of minds from diverse religious and methodological backgrounds and intellectually challenged major scholars to address serious, contemporary but largely neglected philosophical problems.

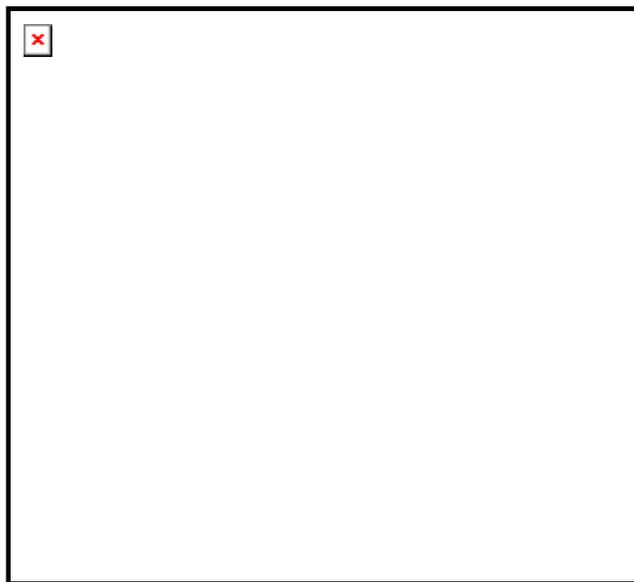
In order to share the conference's philosophical insights with the larger academic world, a volume containing all the delivered papers is expected to be published shortly. Additionally, the Boisi Center will be constructing an on-line resource web site on school choice containing both abstracts of all the conference papers and regularly updated links to current research on the topic. To learn more, go to the [school choice resource web page](#).

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## Lively Exchange on Faith-Based Initiative

On March 19th, the Boisi Center hosted a roundtable discussion on President Bush's new Faith-Based Charitable Funding Initiative featuring U.S. Congressman Barney Frank, Dr. Wendy Kaminer of the Radcliffe Institute and the *Atlantic Monthly*, Dr. Dennis Shirley of the Lynch School of Education, and Dr. Charles Glenn of Boston University. Dr. Alan Wolfe, director of the Boisi Center, served as moderator for the evening. ([Click for additional online resources.](#))

In one of the liveliest events of the semester, panelists and audience members engaged in an informed debate that often ranged beyond the specifics of the Bush proposal. Congressman Frank saw Bush's initiative as marking an important shift in the conservative position regarding social welfare. In the 1980's President Reagan suggested that government was the problem, rather the solution to social welfare problems. "Now," said Frank, conservatives are saying that "...government is not the problem, but the source of funds." Frank was not categorically against providing support to religious groups as long as they were not allowed to practice employment discrimination on religious grounds, and they did not use funds to "inculcate" their ideological beliefs. However, an audience member pointed out in the discussion period that such criteria breaks precedent, given that the government already funds numerous agencies that promote a set of ideological beliefs, using Planned Parenthood as an example.



**In the 1980's President Reagan suggested that government was the problem, rather the solution to social welfare problems. "Now," said Frank, conservatives are saying that "government is not the problem, but the source of funds."**

Alan Wolfe, Barney Frank, and Dennis Shirley address Bush's faith-based initiative

Both Professor Glenn and Professor Shirley, who have worked directly with faith based organizations, saw churches as important sites for addressing the problems within their communities. Glenn, who spent several years overseeing the busing policies of the Massachusetts' Educational System, felt that government alone could not stimulate productive energies in inner city communities. Professor Shirley, who has worked with alliances between schools and faith based groups in Texas agreed, stating that religious groups can be effective in aiding social problems because individuals in poor communities truly believe that their religious institution is the one institution that they actually own.

While acknowledging the virtues religion in general might provide society, panelists also acknowledged the invitation that the proposal offered for religious discrimination. Wendy Kaminer pointed to the example of religious groups who under current federal law have set up independent-secular foundations like Catholic Charities to receive government funding, and argued that this current system has worked well without opening up further constitutional arguments, "If it isn't broke, why fix it?"

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### **Judge John T. Noonan Gives Address on the Value of Religious Liberty**

On March 22, 2001, the Boisi Center welcomed church-state scholar and Appeals Court [Judge John T. Noonan, Jr.](#) as the third speaker in the Templeton Lecture series. Noonan offered remarks from his latest book, *The Lustre of Our Country*, on "why religious freedom is foundational for country and church."

Noonan argued that religious freedom remains the most basic freedom for believers and citizens alike, asserting that only religious liberty entails claims to authority that transcends the state, making it more fundamental than freedoms of speech or commerce. He noted that religious beliefs provide values that guide actions that are not always the values the governing elite favors-citing the abolition of slavery in the U.S., led by New England ministers who claimed that slavery was a "natural sin" that must be abolished.

Noonan outlined the views of James Madison and Voltaire in providing a history of religious liberty in distinct contexts. He recounted Madison's role in enacting the First Amendment and his conception of religious liberty as a "great barrier" to government invasion into the realm of conscience. Noonan contrasted this Madisonian vision of religious freedom with the French Enlightenment approach, which, he argued, amounted to "open war on the Roman Catholic Church in a Voltairian spirit!"

Turning to the present, Noonan conceded that court cases are easier to win on the grounds of freedom of speech than on religious liberty grounds, yet insisted that "religion can provide values in a way that mere speech cannot." On the process of deciphering which religious claims deserve protection by law in the various cases he hears, Noonan remarked, "you get to complete religious freedom step by step, not absolutely."

In response to a request from the audience, Noonan also provided an overview of theologian John Courtney Murray's legacy on helping

facilitate the Catholic Church's embrace of religious liberty after centuries of religious persecution. Noonan echoed the Vatican II insight that "only in freedom will you find the truth," concluding that freedom of religion is essential not only for country but also for religious communities themselves.

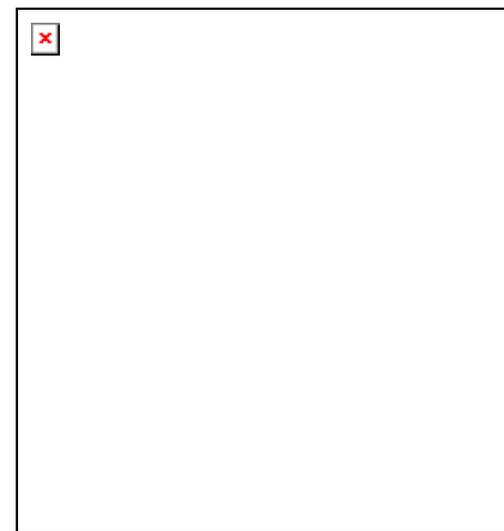
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### Lord Skidelsky Addresses Ethics and Economic Justice

On February 20, 2001 the second speaker in the Boisi Center's Templeton Lecture series, Professor Lord Robert Skidelsky, addressed a gathering of students and faculty in the Fulton Debate Room of Gasson Hall. Lord Skidelsky, whose third volume on the life of the economist John Maynard Keynes will be published in the U.S. this spring, focused on the relationship between ethics and economic science in Cheyenne's work. (An online version of [KEYNES AND THE ETHICS OF CAPITALISM](#) is available.)

Skidelsky recalled for the audience that in its infancy, economics was considered a "moral science." Keynes himself was strongly influenced by G.E. Moore's *Ethica Principia*, whose ethical criteria appears throughout much of Keynes' work. Keynes was ultimately interested in the kinds of social and economic relationships that would lead to a moral society. He saw the pursuit of capital as a means to an end, but not necessarily as a "good" end in and of itself, ranking it below public service in the natural hierarchy of values. For Keynes a life devoted to making money requires that avarice be the highest value, whereas he felt the pursuit of money needed to be tempered by a sense of fairness and justice.

**Skidelsky argued that Keynes would endorse medieval laws against usury and avarice and felt that inflationary measures were unjust. Extreme inflation or deflation robbed hard-working individuals of a "just price."**



Lord Robert Skidelsky speaks on John Maynard

## Keynes

Skidelsky argued that Keynes would endorse several medieval laws against usury and avarice. Keynes believed that charging interest was justified only to the degree that the lender recaptured their lost "opportunity" cost for that money, but not in order to make large profits. Skidelsky also noted that Keynes felt inflationary measures were unjust. He equated instability in the value of money with injustice. Extreme inflation or deflation robbed hard-working individuals of the medieval notion of a "just price."

During the question and answer period, Skidelsky and several audience members discussed the de-coupling of ethics and economics, and how they could be reunited. To that end, Skidelsky advocates a return to a more liberal arts curriculum in the universities. He views the study of philosophy and especially history as a way to offset the over-specialization of fields like economics and business in general which have little room for ethics.

In addition to his work on Keynes, Skidelsky is also the author of numerous works on post-collectivization including, *The Road From Serfdom: The Economic and Political Consequences of the End of Communism*. His career in public life includes a stint as a counselor to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and he currently serves in the House of Lords as a Conservative spokesman on the Treasury. He also serves as the chairman of the Social Market Foundation and is professor of political economy at the University of Warwick.

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### Professor Lipset Presents Final Templeton Lecture

On Thursday, April 19, 2001 Professor Seymour Martin Lipset presented on "Religion, Class and Politics in the United States" as the final speaker in the Boisi Center's 2000-2001 Templeton Lecture Series. Professor Lipset, a renowned political scientist and sociologist, is the Hazel Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford.

Professor Lipset's talk centered on religion and American exceptionalism, in particular the ways in which Protestant sectarianism has influenced American life. Lipset noted that "religion in America is qualitatively different from religion in the rest of the developed world." Focusing on the moralism characteristic of Protestantism, Lipset showed how this "exceptionalism" has influenced domestic and foreign policy. He cited domestic examples such as the abolition, civil rights, and prohibition movements being cast in moral terms. Moral purpose and language have also permeated U.S. foreign policy, Lipset argued, recalling President Reagan's "Evil Empire" language and the country's hesitations about doing business with China. Anti-war movements and conscientious objection are mostly American phenomena, he noted. "Americans always go to war because the other side is morally wrong in our conception," Lipset observed, in contrast to the interest-driven policies of most European nations.

Even with the continued rise of religious pluralism in the U.S., Lipset argued that these fundamental features have remained unchanged throughout American history. He noted, "While the U.S. is no longer entirely Protestant, major elements of Puritan values have

permeated and survived."

Responding to questions from the audience, Lipset spoke about the basic trends in religious and political affiliations. He noted a shift from certain religions generally voting within one party (Jews and Catholics voted Democrat and Protestants, Republican), to a link between religious and social conservatism that has split religious groups in their voting tendencies (the theologically conservative Jew, Catholic and Protestant alike voting Republican, for example).

Along with many other distinctions, Lipset is the only person to have served as president of both the American Sociological Association (1992-1993) and the American Political Science Association (1979-1980). A prolific writer, his major books include *Union Democracy*, *Political Man*, *Agrarian Socialism* and *The First New Nation*. His most recent publications are *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* and *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*.

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### **Luncheon Colloquia Bring Boston Area Scholars to Campus**

Every other Tuesday during the semester the Boisi Center hosts an informal gathering of students and faculty to have lunch, get to know one another, and share insights on topics presented by an invited speaker. In addition to speakers from campus that included Dennis Shirley, Kay Schlozman, Arthur Madigan, and our own Alan Wolfe, this semester we were also fortunate to have a roster of speakers from the greater Boston area sharing their work with us. Christopher Winship, the chair of the sociology department at Harvard University presented his work on the 10 point Coalition in Boston, and on another occasion, his colleague Sidney Verba, Professor of Government at Harvard presented the latest findings that he and colleague, Kay Schlozman, have gathered on religious and gender differences in political participation. From the greater Boston area we managed to attract Jay Demerath from UMass-Amherst to discuss his forthcoming book on world religion and worldly politics, and John Schmalzbauer from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, speaking on the religious backgrounds of noted academics and professionals. Lynn Davidman graciously agreed to commute from Brown University to share her ongoing research on secular Jews.

The Boisi Center is well started on its path to becoming a place where scholars from the Greater Boston area can gather to present their research and expect to receive constructive criticism of their ideas in a context that supports interdisciplinary conversation. Next semester we expect to host discussions on the work of Lisa Cahill, David Hollenbach, Nancy Ammerman, and Lucas Swaine among others. Please keep an eye out for our events on our website at [www.bc.edu/publife](http://www.bc.edu/publife) and to join our mailing list. If you wish to attend one of our colloquia, please don't forget to RSVP to Susan Richards at [richarsh@bc.edu](mailto:richarsh@bc.edu) to reserve a lunch!

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### **The Boisi Center Staff**

**Alan Wolfe** serves as the director of the Boisi Center and is a professor of political science at Boston College. Professor Wolfe is the author or editor of more than ten books, including *One Nation, After All* and most recently, *Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice*. Professor Wolfe is a contributing editor of *The New Republic* and *The Wilson Quarterly*. He also writes frequently for *The New York Times*, *Commonweal*, *Harpers*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Washington Post*, and other publications. Professor Wolfe has been a Fulbright Professor of American Studies at the University of Copenhagen. In addition to directing the Center, next year Professor Wolfe will be teaching a Political Science Honor's course in the fall - PO297 American Social Criticism and PO 722 Religion and Politics in the spring.

**Patricia M.Y. Chang** serves as the assistant director for the Boisi Center and is an associate research professor in the sociology department at Boston College. Professor Chang specializes in research that examines the organizational aspects of religion. Her recent work looks at the effects of organizational employment policies on gender inequality in denominational labor markets. She is currently working on a book that examines how theological understandings of authority affect practices of democratic participation in Protestant denominations. Next year she will teach a year long seminar on "The institutional ecology of faith based organizations."

**Susan Richard** serves as the Center's administrative assistant. Prior to coming to Boston College in September 1999, Susan worked at Boston University for eight years; the last five years she served as the Department Administrator for the sociology department. Susan is taking classes in the Program of Higher Education through the Lynch School of Education.

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