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The BOISI CENTER *Report*

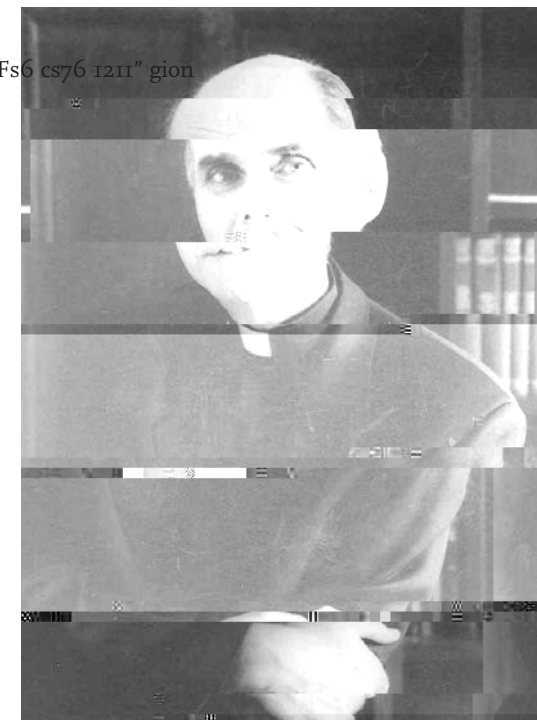
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THE BOISI CENTER FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

JANUARY

FROM THE DIRECTOR

23 Professor Ali Banuazizi,
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Hehir Speaks on “Order, War and Terrorism: Drawing Moral Lines”

On November 1, 2001, The Reverend J. Bryan Hehir, Chair of the Executive Committee of Harvard Divinity School and noted scholar in the field of international relations and Catholic social teaching, offered his perspective on the United States’ response to September 11 to an audience at St. Ignatius Church. In a lecture entitled “Order, War, and Terrorism: Drawing Moral Lines,” Father Hehir stressed the need for foreign policy to take more seriously the role of religion in international politics, and noted that the phenomenon of terrorism represents a new challenge for understanding the ethical dimension of war.

Part of the challenge posed by the events of September 11 is that they raise anew the question of religion and its connection to politics—but it is a question that current foreign policy institutions are ill-prepared to answer. With a secular focus stemming perhaps from the reaction against religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, modern western foreign policy operates on the assumption that it is possible to understand the world without understanding religion. Hehir pointed out that virtually no foreign-relations textbook published in the U.S. has even one chapter on religion, and that foreign ministries lack designated positions for experts on religious issues. Yet, as Hehir asserted, the idea that one

could understand the collapse of communism in Europe without considering a Polish Pope in alliance with Solidarity, or the struggles in Latin America without reference to the Catholic Church,

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On October 31, Martin Marty, a noted scholar of religion and the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago, came to St. Ignatius Church at Boston College to give a talk on "The Logic of Fundamentalism: Responses to September 11." In his talk, Marty drew on insights from the six-year Fundamentalism Project he directed for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences from 1987-1993. One of the results of the project, which studied fundamentalist groups in 23 different religions, was that it became possible to understand fundamentalism itself as a distinct kind of movement that is in part a reaction to modernity.

How fundamentalists experience modernity, and its attendant pluralism and relativism, can be characterized, said Marty, in terms of a number of particular features. Central to fundamentalist movements is their self-definition as "the old time religion," a return to a pure past before the intrusion of modernity.

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Hollenbach Discusses .

Against a Background of Tragedy

On the morning of September 11, the Boise Center received a phone call relating the news that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City. As the morning progressed, we watched in horror as news of the attacks on the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon unfolded on our television screen. As the time for our lunch seminar approached, we decided

Kathleen Norris Visits the Boisi Center

As part of its sponsorship of the second annual Belief and Non-Belief Symposium, “Evil: The Artist’s Response,” the Boisi Center invited author and poet Kathleen Norris to a luncheon discussion on the subject of hope. Joined by other writers and faculty from the English, Political Science, Sociology and Theology departments, Norris led a lively conversation about the nature of hope in American society, particularly in light of the events of September 11.

For Norris, the consequences of September 11 for hope had a lot to do with the nature of people’s hopes. Those accustomed to depending solely on themselves, seeking to be in control through wealth and status, would find those hopes shattered or sorely questioned by the terrorist attacks. On the other hand, people whose hopes were directed outward, toward a community or a religious faith, would have the kind of resilience expressed in the Psalms: “they hear evil news and do not fear.”

Participants agreed that it was important to make the distinction

between hope, a deep spiritual virtue, and optimism, a more fragile kind of expectation dependent upon externals. Many felt that September 11 had challenged America by stripping away a naïve, “blind” optimism and forcing this “culture of distraction” to learn to

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