



THE MacLaurin INSTITUTE

Spring/Summer 2005

*Bringing God into
the marketplace
of ideas*

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U of M Campus Challenged by Christian Worldview

This past academic year has been an important one. We noticed a sharp increase in attendance at many of our events and were pleased that the number of students attending our events has increased noticeably. This is crucial to our work at helping the next generation of teachers, scholars, business people, doctors, lawyers, etc. understand and be able to integrate the fullness of a Christian worldview. Below you will find responses from several people on one or more Institute-sponsored events of this past year.

Robert Osburn, Executive Director of MacLaurin Institute

"I've come here to have my beliefs challenged." A second-year student from Wisconsin, Ben had come to our Gay Marriage Debate last September. What impressed me about Ben's comment, made to a reporter from an area newspaper, was that his Christianity is confident, secure, and, yet, honest and open. He is committed to the biblical portrait of one-man, one-woman marriage, yet truly open to hearing the other side.

As the year went on, and most of our lectures were "full houses," we met many other students like Ben. A number of these students have become affiliated

with our new student group (Mars Hill Students), and virtually all come with a settled confidence that Christianity makes better sense of reality than the scientific naturalist and postmodern worldviews underlying their academic pursuits. These students, almost all of whom are very bright (with very high grade point averages), are not afraid to engage the culture around them.

As these students head toward careers in law, creative writing, K-12 education, public policy, business, and academia, our lectures, Christian studies library, web resources, and mentoring are part and parcel of what God is using to bring to bear the presence of the Kingdom of God on campus and off. Lives are being changed as minds are changed. That bodes well for a culture that desperately needs thoughtful Christian cultural leadership.

Derwin Halim, Graduate Student in Electrical Engineering and one of the student leaders of Mars Hill Students

The MacLaurin Institute rightly points out the importance of ideas and the university context in which ideas

have tremendous consequences in the lives of students, present and future. The Institute rightly stresses the necessity of God-centered ideas in the lives of students.

Armand Nicholi

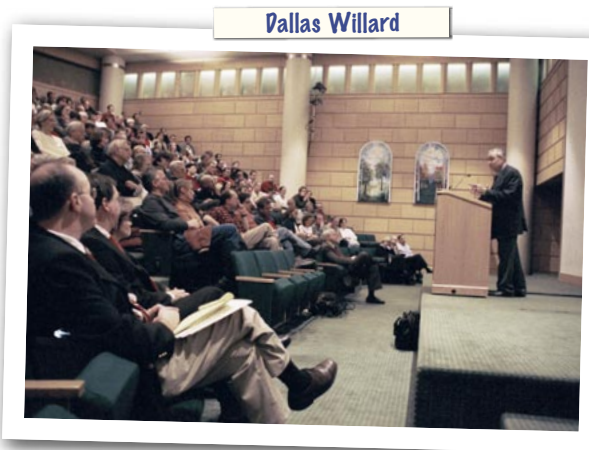


In this modern age, the complexity of the life of a community has increased substantially. Emerging new technology, tighter interactions of different parts of the world, various lifestyles and social issues present tremendous challenges. And I think the Institute has done a great job in addressing these challenges by bringing in competent speakers, who tackle these tough issues from a distinct Christian perspective and present to the University of Minnesota God-centered ideas for a better society. Various topics, which the Institute brought to the surface, underscore the different facets of living in this modern age and the pressing concern for Christian engagement.

Matthew Kaul, junior Interdisciplinary Studies major

There are few people who I can say, with utmost certainty, have had an eternal impact on the course of my life. My parents, certainly, and a few of my closest friends and teachers have played such a role. In November 2004 I had the opportunity of meeting another such influence, Dr. Dallas Willard.

Dr. Willard, giving the annual Holmer Lecture, spoke on the question *Moral Education in the Academy: Optional or Necessary?* The lecture provided a critical appraisal of the academy's claim not to dispense moral knowledge to students. Willard unabashedly took bearers of this belief to task, claiming that universities promote a very explicit moral code. This morality promotes specific values such as compassion, tolerance, and pacifism. While these values are certainly to be commended and pursued, they are also "fragmentary, shallow, and legalistic" in not providing ground for moral development. Thus, they are unfit to guide life. Dr. Willard demanded that the academy admit the role it plays in the moral development of students. Until it does so, the "disparity between intellect and character" will grow ever wider.



Although the lecture was excellent, it was not the highlight of the evening for me. As a member of Mars Hills Students, I was able to meet with the Holmer

lecturer for a post-lecture discussion. Talking with Dr. Willard, I was struck not only by his sheer intellectual presence, but moreover by his humility, sincerity and graciousness. Here was a man who truly took the teachings of Christ seriously, and put them into daily practice, even while talking with an unknown group of undergrads.

With his own gifted tongue, and through the goodness of his heart, Dr. Willard deeply probed the richness, joy, and sober intoxication to be found in Jesus Christ. These are truly the treasures neither moth nor rust will ever destroy, nor thieves will ever break in and steal from me.

Georgia Noyan, junior English and Philosophy major

As a result of efforts made by The MacLaurin Institute to bring Christianity "into the marketplace of ideas" at the University of Minnesota, I have been fortunate to take advantage of the unique opportunity of attending various keynote speakers. One such speaker, Judge Michael McConnell, spoke on the topic of "Law and Morality." Judge McConnell discoursed on the origins of our law, arguing that they are profoundly religion-based. He commented on the secular perversion of the idea of the separation of church and state and concluded that religion played a major role at the founding, and it does so now.

He further contended that people who claim that we need to have legislation divorced from the influence of religion do, themselves, discard this undeniable truth. They foolishly maintain that they are open minded when in fact they are living by another code of ethics that compels them just as strongly as Christians are compelled by Christ. Judge McConnell's lecture was a most enjoyable one, and it was very encouraging to hear at a secular university. ■



Institute Board Chair Discusses Future

Dr. Bryan Dowd is Mayo Professor, Health Services Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota. He is also the Board Chair for the Institute.

MacLaurin Institute: Tell us about your background and how you came to be involved with the Institute.

Bryan Dowd: I'm a native of Georgia. I attended college at Georgia Tech and Georgia State and the University of Pennsylvania where I received my PhD in public policy analysis. My wife Susan and I have been married for 32 years, and we have a daughter who is a junior at the University of St. Thomas. I became involved with MacLaurin through conversations with Bob Osburn and William Monsma in the late 1990s. I served on the board for several years before becoming board chair.

Institute: How have you seen the work of the Institute impact lives or the University as a whole?

Dowd: The Institute is a source of real intellectual diversity at a University that needs a lot more intellectual diversity. Within the past few years we have sponsored or cosponsored lectures by academic luminaries such as Robert George of Princeton University, Dallas Willard of the University of Southern California, Alvin Plantinga of Notre Dame and Gilbert Meilaender of Valparaiso University. To my knowledge these people have never been invited to speak by any academic department of the University of Minnesota.

Institute: What are some of the challenges to the Institute's mission of "bringing God into the marketplace of ideas?"

Dowd: One challenge is the notion that religion is not a legitimate area of academic inquiry. This is ludicrous in light of 2,000 years of Christian scholarship, the role of religious institutions in creating the modern university and analytic work of renowned scholars like Alvin Plantinga. Nonetheless, you hear otherwise rationale people trying to advance that notion.

Another barrier is the idea that a publicly-funded university must be timid about its treatment of religion. Of course, the call for timidity is entirely one-sided. As I pointed out in a recent editorial, a professor at the University of Minnesota who spent class time explaining why she thought the claims of Christianity were true probably would be gagged by an American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit, whereas a professor who spent

class time explaining why she thought the claims of Christianity were false undoubtedly would be protected by free speech. The call for timidity not only is an affront to academic freedom, but it also threatens publicly-funded universities with moral, cultural and intellectual irrelevance.

There should be no barrier to public universities airing overtly religious perspectives on topics of current interest, and no barrier to doing research on the relationship between religion and other "variables" of interest in society like mental health, divorce, voting patterns or social attitudes.

Institute: Where do you see the Institute and its work five, 10 or 20 years down the road?

Dowd: God will have the final word on the future of both the University and the Institute, but I'm very optimistic that public universities will reclaim a leadership role in religious inquiry. I'm certain that the Institute will be in the middle of that work, and 20 years from now will be viewed as an early and pivotal influence. Within the university, there is a surge of interest in religion among younger faculty in sociology, philosophy and other fields. So the future of the "supply side" is encouraging.

On the "demand side," I think we're in the middle of one of the "Great Awakenings" that happens every 100 years or so in Christianity. A recent nationwide survey by UCLA found that 75 percent of college juniors report that they pray, that religion is personally helpful to them and that they discuss religion and spirituality with friends. However, 56 percent said that their professors never provide opportunities to discuss the meaning and purpose of life and 62 percent said their professors never encourage discussions of spiritual or religious matters.

Among the general public, more people are beginning to understand the university's contribution to our culture and they are becoming impatient with the peculiar absence of moral imperative, moral education and moral inquiry at our nation's top universities. At the University of Minnesota we exhort our students to be "civically engaged," but offer no reason why they should be civically engaged. We're beginning to face the choice between expanding our menu of worldviews or becoming irrelevant, and I don't think the younger university faculty wants to spend their careers being irrelevant. ■



Christian Studies Course – No credits Fall of 2005

Subject: *Daniel and the Minor Prophets*

Teacher: Bruce Olson, MDiv



This study of Daniel and the Minor Prophets will prove to be stimulating, rewarding, convicting and relevant. From Daniel we will focus on prophecies of the kingdoms of this world from his time (about 2,600 years ago) to beyond our time, even to the return of the King of Kings! Plus we will search for lessons essential for personal growth as we mature in our walk with the LORD.

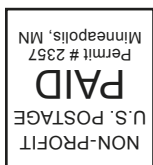
The impact the “Minor” Prophets had is “major!” They were prophets in the sense that they predicted future events. To be sure, there is much prediction to be found in these books. But they were prophets primarily in being heralds or preachers, who in very clear terms declared the truth of God. For centuries God spoke through His “servant the prophets.” But the relevancy was not just for the ancients, God’s clear Word is for our day as well.

This course will meet for 10 sessions, starting **Monday, September 19 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.** at the Institute office (2221 University Avenue SE, #120, Minneapolis, MN 55414).

The cost is \$85.00, which includes a workbook for the study.

For more information or to register, e-mail bolson431@msn.com or call 952.471.0401.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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