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Bringing God into the marketplace of ideas

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Biblical Reliability Conference to Tackle *DaVinci Code*

"*The DaVinci Code* is still the top-selling fiction book at the University of Minnesota student bookstore," said Robert Osburn, the Institute's executive director. "Since the majority no doubt think it's true, the time has come to clear away the distortions. The conference is designed to do just that, and much more."

The Biblical Reliability Conference: Cracking the DaVinci Code and Other Modern Fables that Discount the Trustworthiness of the Bible is scheduled for February 18 and 19 in Willey Hall on the University of Minnesota's West Bank campus.

"The idea that power-hungry fourth century church leaders suppressed so-called 'secret gospels' appeals to our love of intrigue. Besides that, there is a long-standing scholarly tradition that casts doubt on the trustworthiness of the Bible in areas of history and science," said Osburn.

Tackling these challenges will be two of the world's top scholars on biblical reliability, Denver Seminary's Craig Blomberg (see interview on page 3) and Walter Kaiser, President of Gordon Conwell Seminary. They will lecture and answer questions in seven different sessions Friday evening the 18th and Saturday afternoon and evening the 19th.

"With the help of nearly 30 church and campus ministry sponsors, we've been able to dramatically reduce the cost of a conference that would easily cost three or four times as

much in other settings," said Scott Noble, the Institute's communications and operations director. Registration fees are \$10 for students and \$25 for community members and are available online at www.maclaurin.org, by calling 763-226-5445, or by mailing the following form to the Institute's offices.

**\$10 for students*/campus ministry staff
\$25 for community members**

or **SESSION I: \$5/\$10**
SESSION II: \$7.⁵⁰/\$15
SESSION III: \$5/\$10

* international student
scholarships are available, please
inquire by calling 612-378-1935

For tickets, visit www.maclaurin.org, call 763-226-5445, or mail in the registration form below.

For more info, e-mail maclaurin@maclaurin.org, call 612-378-1935, or visit www.maclaurin.org

**Willey Hall, U of M (West Bank)
225 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455**



CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

SESSIONS	# OF STUDENTS	# OF ADULTS	TOTAL DOLLARS
ENTIRE CONFERENCE	_____ x \$10/ticket	_____ x \$25/ticket	= _____
SESSION I (Friday, 7-9pm)	_____ x \$5/ticket	_____ x \$10/ticket	= _____
SESSION II (Sat., 1-5pm)	_____ x \$7. ⁵⁰ /ticket	_____ x \$15/ticket	= _____
SESSION III (Sat., 7-9pm)	_____ x \$5/ticket	_____ x \$10/ticket	= _____
			TOTAL COST = _____

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PAYMENT TYPE: VISA _____ Mastercard _____ Cash _____ Check _____

Card # _____

Expiration date (mo/da/year) ____/____/____

Names of those attending (attach sheet if necessary)

1. _____
2. _____
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4. _____

* MAY WE ADD YOUR NAME TO THE MACLAURIN INSTITUTE MAILING LIST? Y / N (circle one)

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Institute's Lectures Change Minds to Change the Future

The Institute's Spring 2005 lecture schedule continues the tradition of showcasing leading Christian scholars and thinkers on campus. "Thanks to an incredibly supportive Board and generous donors, we're also bringing in top scholars to address other critical issues in our ongoing effort to 'change minds to change the future,'" said Bob Osburn, the Institute's executive director.

Dr. Nigel Cameron, one of the world's top Christian bioethicists, will address a host of issues related to stem cell research at his January 27 lecture (and a January 29 banquet lecture to Christian medical professionals). The inaugural Faith and Law Lecture on February 28 at the University of Minnesota Law School features a renowned scholar of religion and law, Judge Michael McConnell of the US 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. Udo Middelman, the Institute's Francis A. Schaeffer Fellow, speaks on March 8. A Roundtable on Faith and Scholarship on April 8 will feature the Institute's board chair and University of Minnesota professor, Dr. Bryan Dowd and Minneapolis-born Dr. John Schmalzbauer, now a leading researcher on religion in higher education.

"One more highlight is the April 19 appearance of Princeton University's Robert George, whose leadership of the James Madison program is perhaps one of the most strategic leadership development initiatives in higher education today," said Osburn. To learn more about these and other upcoming lectures, call 612-378-1935 or subscribe to the Institute's free e-mail newsletter by visiting our website at www.maclaurin.org.



Can We Trust the Gospels?: An Interview with Dr. Craig Blomberg

Dr. Craig Blomberg completed his Ph.D. in New Testament, specializing in the parables and the writings of Luke-Acts, at Aberdeen University in Scotland. He received his M.A. in New Testament from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He received his B.A., summa cum laude, from Augustana College. Before coming to Denver Seminary in 1986, he taught at Palm Beach Atlantic College and was research fellow in Cambridge, England with Tyndale House.

Dr. Blomberg has authored or edited 12 books, including *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (1987), *Interpreting the Parables* (1990), *Jesus and the Gospels* (1997), and *Neither Poverty nor Riches* (2001).

Continued on the next page ►

Schedule for the Biblical Reliability Conference

Friday, February 18, 2005 (6:00pm - doors open)

SESSION I 7:00pm - Dr. Kaiser, *Why Is the Reliability of the Bible Important in the Postmodern World?*

7:45pm - Q&A

8:00pm - Dr. Blomberg, *The DaVinci Code (Part I): Was There a Plan to Suppress "Secret" Gospels?*

8:45pm - Q&A

Saturday, February 19, 2005 (12:15pm - doors open)

SESSION II 1:05pm - Dr. Kaiser, *The Bible and Sex: Timeless Truth or Flawed, Provincial Ideas From Another Place in Time?*

1:45pm - Q&A

2:05pm - Open Forum on Difficult OT Passages (Kaiser)

3:00pm - Break

3:15pm - Open Forum on Difficult NT Passages (Blomberg)

4:15pm - Dr. Blomberg, *The DaVinci Code (Part Two): Was There a Conspiracy to Concoct a Divine Jesus?*

4:55pm - Q&A

5:15pm - Dinner (not provided by Conference)

SESSION III 7:00pm - Panel Discussion: *Can We Trust the Bible in Matters of History and Science?*

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Executive Editor: Robert Osburn
Editor: Scott D. Noble



Dr. Blomberg will be one of the speakers at the upcoming Biblical Reliability Conference in February. See page 2 for details.

MacLaurin: Why is the issue of biblical reliability important for the Church today?

Craig Blomberg: Unlike many other religions, Christianity (and Judaism before it) bases its central claims on God having acted in space and time through certain world events and characters in unique ways, most centrally through Jesus of Nazareth. If the core events enshrined in the biblical narratives, and especially in the narratives about Jesus, portray Him as fundamentally different from who He really was and what He actually said and did, there is no compelling reason for becoming or remaining a Christian.

MacLaurin: How has postmodernism affected the belief in the trustworthiness of Scripture?

Blomberg: I think the effects of postmodernism on skepticism are overrated. When I was in college a generation ago, existentialism made many of the identical claims that challenged Scriptural authority. In the first part of the twentieth century it was adherents of the Social Gospel who spawned various forms of skepticism. In the late nineteenth century it was Darwinian evolution, before that Marxism, before that the mythological approach to miracles, before that a Jeffersonian divorce of Christian ethics from its theological claims. And on and on. In another generation postmodernism will not be used, because something else will have emerged and post-post-modernism is too unwieldy. Every generation has its skeptics; every one has its believers. And every person must examine for themselves the evidence on each side to determine if they will follow Jesus or not. After all, if the Christian claim is right, their eternal destiny depends on making the right commitment.

MacLaurin: Why do you think *The DaVinci Code* is so popular?

Blomberg: While scarcely a literary masterpiece, it is a riveting cliffhanger, an intricate “whodunit” with lots of clever and unexpected twists of plot. But so are plenty of other books. There is no doubt that there is a segment, indeed a large segment of the world today, that delights in seeing traditional Christianity attacked

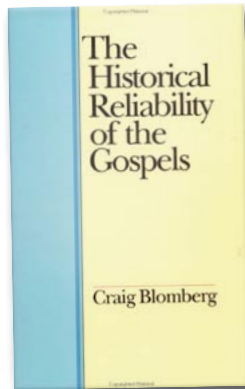
and supposedly debunked, for a whole variety of reasons, some of them more understandable and others less so.

What is astonishing is how gullible so many in the public are, not recognizing the sheer fiction of Dan Brown’s claim that references to all the documents in his novel are factual. The way one can tell that something more insidious is at work in this popularity is to observe the incredible reluctance for people to acknowledge the powerful historical arguments for the unique trustworthiness of the canonical gospels, while believing without any supporting evidence at all entirely fictitious claims of characters in this novel. Only people who desperately want the New Testament Gospels to be wrong would

be so biased. I certainly wouldn’t want one of them to be my doctor or lawyer!

MacLaurin: You’ve written a book about the historical reliability of John’s Gospel. Why is John’s Gospel so different from the other Gospels and should that cause us to doubt its reliability?

Blomberg: After years of doing radio and TV interviews and responding to questions like this orally and in print, and after figuring out how to boil many complex questions down into reasonable answers when one is allowed only a sound byte, I’ve never come up with a way to do that for this one that does it justice. Part of the answer is that John wrote somewhat independently of the other three Gospels, whereas they were all literarily interrelated. Yet at the same time, he knew what Christians by the end of the first century, a generation after Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote, already knew well and for the most part wanted to supplement rather than repeat what they knew. Part of it is John’s distinctive style, putting Jesus’ words into his own peculiar idiom, precisely because his sense of the Spirit guiding him gave him the freedom to do that. Part of it has to do with the fact that almost every major theme and form that appears so unique to John actually does occur in the Synoptic Gospels, just not all that often, and people who aren’t familiar in detail with the actual contents of the four Gospels, but who just rely on others’ summaries of the differences among them, may never become aware of the numerous subtle points of connection as well. But that’s just a start, and that’s why I wrote a whole book on the topic! ■



Upcoming Events 2005

All events are free and open to the public, unless otherwise noted.

This is a tentative list of this year's lectures. Be sure to check our web site (www.maclaurin.org) and subscribe to our e-mail newsletter (on our website) to receive confirmations.

MacLaurin Campus Lectures

- January 27 **Faith and Bioethics Lecture**, *Therapeutic Cloning: Why We Need a Global Ban*, **Nigel Cameron**, President, Institute on Biotechnology and the Human Future. 7:00 p.m., Room 2-530 Moos Tower
- February 28 **Faith and Law Lecture**, *Virtue, Republicanism, and Disestablishment of Religion at the Founding*, **Judge Michael McConnell**, 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. 7:00 p.m., University of Minnesota Law School, Room 25
- March 8 *Neither Machine nor Beast: The Wonder of Being Human*, **Udo Middelmann**, Francis A. Schaeffer Fellow of The MacLaurin Institute. 7:00 p.m., Atrium, Calvary Baptist Church, 2120 Lexington Avenue North, Roseville, MN.
- March 22 *John Paul II on Free Markets, Socialism and Economics*, **Jerry Reedy**, Professor of Classics, Macalester College. 7:00 p.m., Room 140, Nolte Center

- April 8 *Roundtable on Faith and Scholarship*, **John Schmalzbauer**, Blanche Gorman Strong Endowed Chair of Protestant Studies, Southwest Missouri State University and **Bryan Dowd**, Mayo Professor, Health Services Research, Policy, and Administration, U of Minnesota. 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Location TBD
- April 19 *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis*, **Robert George**, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University. 12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m., Room 125, Willey Hall (tentative).

MacLaurin Conferences and Special Events

- February 18-19 *Conference on Biblical Reliability*, **Walter Kaiser**, President and Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Old Testament, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary and **Craig Blomberg**, Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary. Willey Hall.
- March 1 **Continuing Legal Education Luncheon**, *Faith, Law, and Politics*, **Judge Michael W. McConnell**, 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., Minneapolis Club. One CLE credit (applied for). \$40 (\$20 students). Call 612-378-1935 to register.

Register now for the Biblical Reliability Conference!

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