

Oklahoma Wesleyan Worldview Institute

for Christian wisdom in contemporary culture



THE MISSION IN BRIEF

Anchored in Bartlesville and the Oklahoma Wesleyan University community, the Oklahoma Wesleyan Worldview Institute speaks to Oklahoma, to the nation and to the world, bringing biblical wisdom to bear on pivotal issues of contemporary life.

Ideas move men and nations. Sound ideas foster a free and morally responsible society; flawed ideas corrode it. As the living academic heart of the restored, historic La Quinta Mansion, the Institute will examine the key ideas of our day in this light, through events and research on social philosophy, public policy, ethics and religion.

THE CONTEXT AND THE NEED

Americans have enjoyed unparalleled liberty and prosperity under history's longest-enduring written Constitution. Such an experience is rare, because liberty typically erodes toward chaos until tyranny steps in. But by connecting governmental protection of freedom with cultural protection of morality, Americans have enjoyed their freedoms with an awareness of moral limits and the common good.

Without moral virtue, liberty becomes a license for self-indulgence. If people are not forced by law to do what's right, it does not follow that they will do it voluntarily. The absence of coercion does not guarantee the presence of self-control. Sad to say, what the biblical concept of original sin would predict on this point has been proved by historical experience, as the streets of New Orleans in the aftermath of a hurricane grimly remind us. Given human nature, more is needed. A free society requires a culture whose families, associations, churches, businesses and communities exercise a moral power deeper than law.

In America, Christian wisdom originally made this possible. The Bible provided an idea of liberty that does not easily become an excuse for self-indulgence (because of God's commandments), and an idea of virtue does not lead its adherents to abolish liberty (because human freedom reflects the image of God). As Alexis de Tocqueville said in *Democracy in America*, "the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom" were opposed in France, but united in America. "Religion in America takes no direct part in the governance of society, but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions."

The early generations of Americans, Tocqueville observed, were able to establish something "great, per-

manent, and calm" because "while they were thinking only of the other world, they had found out the great secret of success in this." The God of the Bible instilled a wisdom that inclined them toward deferred rather than instant gratification, toward investment rather than consumption, and toward integrity rather than deceit in the ordinary dealings of personal and business life.

Biblical wisdom has this salutary effect because it is true. Those who believe that biblical wisdom is true — true even independent of its usefulness to the free society — are shaped by that wisdom. They in turn shape a free society more effectively than anyone else.

There was a time when America could afford to take biblical wisdom for granted. Commitment to the Bible and to moral truth was so widespread that biblical ideas permeated the minds and influenced the habits even of those who did not consciously endorse them. That comfortable era is gone. The great cultural institutions that were the guardians of American integrity have gradually abdicated their role. Rather than advancing the best of our civilization, these institutions — schools, universities, the media, libraries, museums, private and corporate foundations, arts organizations — have increasingly ignored biblical wisdom or made sport of it. Even churches have sometimes become incubators of pathologies rather than advocates of truth.

Can a free society afford this? Not if its freedom presupposes the integrity of its citizens. Do the ethical lapses underlying recent corporate failures — Enron, WorldComm, etc. — give us a glimpse into an unwelcome future? Does the outbreak of chaos in New Orleans after the temporary destruction of civil authority give us a still darker glimpse?

What if the whole practical dynamo of American stability and wealth actually stands on something intangible: on particular ideas, and more than ideas – truths?

To keep American culture from fraying beyond repair we must have explicit recourse to the ideas that were the original wellsprings of American success. We must have recourse to the truths revealed in the Bible, and to the practical wisdom that originally flowed from these truths into all issues of life and culture. This wisdom comes from God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who made himself known in Jesus Christ. If such a God has spoken, then there is a compelling reason to conserve and reveal objective truth as the means of liberating humanity from the consequences of sin.

THE PLACE: LA QUINTA MANSION

The university is blessed with the historic La Quinta Mansion, the original residence of oilman H.V. Foster, which is featured on the National Register of Historic Places. La Quinta currently houses the administrative offices and library for the university. This historic building has served the university and community well for nearly fifty years, but we believe there is a higher call for this facility. It is our desire to honor the history and integrity of La Quinta by using it as a home for the Institute's conferences, business meetings, community events, campus workshops and colloquia.

The Oklahoma Wesleyan Worldview Institute will establish La Quinta as a venue for examining the real-world consequences of political, ethical, and theological ideas. Our goal is to make La Quinta a residence where leading thinkers can live in residence for a weekend, a week, or perhaps even a semester offering their expertise. La Quinta will thus become a place where scholar and student live together, eat together, study together, and learn together in a kind of living-learning experience that recalls the residential colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. The result will be a better understanding of the prevailing ideas of our time and the consequences these ideas have for our culture – and a dramatic and effective use of this historic mansion.

When its own programs are not in session, the Institute will make La Quinta available to corporate and civic groups as a conference center.

THE PLAN

Oklahoma Wesleyan University provides a strong foundation for the Worldview Institute. The university's superb faculty can serve as the natural starting point for Institute activities. Moreover, the university is already beginning to receive national attention for its unapologetic commitment to objective truth and to Christian higher education, and the Worldview Institute will build on and amplify this recognition.

The university seeks to build on these strengths by developing the operations of the Institute over a multi-year period of three phases:

- Pilot phase: 2005-2006 academic year
- Launch phase: 2006-2008 academic years
- Fully operational phase: 2009 and following?

This defines the calling of the Oklahoma Wesleyan Worldview Institute. When other cultural institutions abdicate their role, new ones must be created. The Institute will eagerly take up the task through lectures, publications, conferences and in-residence programs. Through these activities, the Institute will explore and rediscover Biblical wisdom, articulate it afresh for our time, and bring it to bear on pivotal issues of contemporary life.

Among other things, the Institute will host leading scholars and thinkers of our day, inviting them to conduct lectures and seminars in their areas of expertise, even living in-residence in the La Quinta Mansion, serving Oklahoma Wesleyan University students, other students coming to the Institute from other universities, and the informed public in northeast Oklahoma.

The pilot phase, already underway, involves a series of key lecture events and the establishment of a web presence for the Institute featuring events, publications and resources like an online speaker's bureau. The university President, Dr. Everett Piper, and the Institute's Executive Director, will promote awareness of the Institute's plans and assemble a Board of Directors, Board of Advisors and initial Fellows as resources permit.

The launch phase will identify a final name for the Institute, establish selected Centers (as described below) and orchestrate a nationally publicized launch event and schedule of first-year activities. We anticipate offering three or four on-campus lecture/seminar events each academic year, along with ongoing resource development and outside speaking by the Executive Director and Fellows of the Institute.

The fully operational phase will depend upon completion of a university library that will free La Quinta Mansion to be wholly devoted to the Institute and its in-residence programs.

RESOURCES NEEDED

Oklahoma Wesleyan University has dedicated itself to the establishment of the Institute by reorganizing personnel to make leadership available, and by setting aside seed money for a variety of initial events; moreover, the university will increase this investment in coming years. The Institute's full vision, however, plainly exceeds the university's current resources. The core activities of the Institute will involve expenses for hosting prominent speakers, including top-flight hospitality for public events. Stipends for Fellows of the Institute will be required to secure the time and produc-

tivity of prominent scholars and promising younger thinkers. When La Quinta is fully available, some revenue can be generated by fee-based learning events and by its use as a conference facility for outside groups. Ultimately, however, if the Worldview Institute is to thrive it must operate from meaningful launch gifts and an endowment that can support core expenses. In addition, the success of the Institute is linked to the university's plan to construct a new library facility to house the collections now housed in La Quinta Mansion.

NAMING THE INSTITUTE

We are employing a descriptive name during the pilot phase: the Oklahoma Wesleyan Worldview Institute. We are gathering ideas for a more distinctive name, including suggestions like Pathfinder Institute, Logos Institute, Veritas Institute, and Christ and Culture Institute. We are also seeking outside sponsorship to financially underwrite the Institute, and such sponsorship may have a bearing on the name.

PROJECTED "CENTERS" TO BE ESTABLISHED

At the formal launch of the Institute, its work will be organized in a variety of specialized "centers" to be established as need and sponsorship arise. Among projected Institute centers are:

- Center for Truth in Law and Public Policy
- Center for Ethics in Business Leadership
- Center for Christ in the Arts
- Center for Wesleyan Faith and Life
- Center for Native American Christianity
- Center for Science and Christian Faith
- Center for Marriage and Family
- Center for Fidelity in Christian Higher Education

PERSONNEL AND GOVERNANCE

The Institute will be organized on the following lines:

- *Executive Director or "Dean"*: directs the activities of the Institute and its Centers
- *Board of Directors*: governs the Institute; comprised of University President, Executive Director, local civic and intellectual leaders.
- *Board of Advisors*: advises the Institute; comprised of leading scholars and public figures in academe and public policy.

- *Fellows, Senior Fellows and Scholars-in-Residence*: scholars affiliated with the Institute and one of its Centers, either in residence or at a distance, who undertake the hands-on idea-creation work of the Institute.
- *Associates*: active citizens from outside academe affiliated with the Institute and one of its Centers who represent the Institute to the public and assist with specific projects.

SELECTED PROJECTS IN PILOT PHASE

- Dr. Gary Cockerill lecture series on biblical inerrancy and current culture, Oct. 4-6, 2005
- Dr. Jim Nelson Black lecture on "The Freefall of the American University," Oct. 12, 2005
- Thematic emphasis on "Ethics in Leadership." Speakers and essays focusing on ethical foundations of entrepreneurship and corporate life. Next speaker: Dirk Dozier on November 3, 2005.
- Dr. William Adrian, Provost Emeritus of Pepperdine University, has been named a 2005-2006 Fellow of the Institute, focusing on Christian issues in international higher education.
- Dr. Graham Walker is an invited participant in *World Magazine's* online issues blog site: <http://zeitgeist.worldmagblog.com/zeitgeist/>. His most recent posting, on September 15, 2005, was titled "Republican-Controlled House Endorses Gay Ideology." In it he argues that hate crime legislation is a threat to religious liberty as well as a threat to the civic affirmation of truth.
- Dr. Graham Walker's article, "When Evangelical Colleges Turn Liberal," will be published in *The American Spectator* in the November 2005 issue. In it he argues that some evangelical colleges are going the way of secularism. Seeking to demonstrate that "I'm not a fundamentalist," evangelical academics craft rhetorically evangelical justifications for whatever is coming down the pike from liberal academe.
- Dr. Graham Walker will speak at the *Redeeming Reason Conference* at the University of Chicago November 3-4, 2005: <http://www.redeemingreason.org>. He is featured on the program with Dallas Willard, George Marsden and others, and will speak on: "Engaging God's World: A Wesleyan Perspective." He will argue that Calvinism and Postmodernism are first cousins. Presuppositionalism (Calvinism) mirrors incommensurability (Postmodernism). This has consequences for epistemology and thus for education.
- Dr. Graham Walker will speak at the *Intercollegiate Studies Institute Leadership Conference* on November 5, 2005: <http://www.isi.org/programs/conferences/leadership/fl05.html>. In Chapel Hill, N.C., He will speak on: "How We Can Rescue Hayek's Economics from His Ethics." He will argue that F.A. Hayek's evolution-based ethical philosophy undermines the free-market social order he sought to vindicate. Hayek's view is not conservative, not valid, and not necessary, because biblical ethics offers better foundations for his approach.
- Book project by Dr. Graham Walker: *The Founders on God and Government: A Sourcebook*. In conceptual stage; addresses issues unresolved by recent Supreme Court decisions on Ten Commandments.
- Thematic emphasis on "The Relativist Temptation in American Christianity." Colloquia and essays on biblical inerrancy, sexuality, ethical lapses, etc.
- Institute website with resources and online publications.
- Creation of a "speakers bureau" of OWU faculty and others.
- Outside possible speakers to be invited (could be cosponsored with OK Council for Public Affairs): Charles Colson, Os Guinness, William Bennett, J.C. Watts, Sean Hannity, Tom Coburn, Jim Inhofe, Rick Santorum, Michael Novak, Marvin Olasky, Robert Bork, Robert George, and Rick Scarborough.

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