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Spring Lecture Series

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by James Koldenhoven

Spring Lecture Series

The Spring Lecture Series, which was sponsored this year by the Department of Foreign Languages, was held on February 13 and 14. The series focused on the general theme, "Global Awareness from a Christian Perspective: Language and International Education." The series began with a keynote address by Dr. Dick L. Van Halsema, President of Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The address was entitled, "Global Awareness from a Christian Perspective." The second lecture was presented by Professor James Graham, Associate Professor of English and Chairman of the Division of Cross-Cultural Studies at Central College in Pella, Iowa. The title of his lecture was, "How to Internationalize the College: Global Studies or Cross-Cultural Perspectives?" Dr. Philip E. Webber, Associate Professor of German and Linguistics at Central College, concluded the series with a lecture entitled, "Am I My Brother's Speaker?" A panel discussion in which all three speakers participated concluded the series.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Van Halsema, reminded the audience by way of several examples that North Americans have a tendency to be complacent and parochial with a very narrow view of the world. The task of a Christian college such as Dordt is to require and transmit a genuine Christian insight, but this must always be done against the background of a distinctively biblical worldview. This Christian worldview must be God-centered, Kingdom-oriented, and man-

date-directed. The speaker distinguished three different aspects of the mandate: the social, the cultural, and the gospel. He presented examples of ways in which this multi-faceted mandate could be applied in today's world. Students, during their college years, must seek opportunities for becoming more directly acquainted with our Father's world. He suggested that a student might live in China or in a Moslem country for a period of time as a teacher of English. To fulfill the commandment to love God with all of our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves means that we must seek a deliberate solidarity with our fellow human beings in other parts of the world.

The curricular implications of making college students more globally aware was discussed by Professor Graham. The speaker reminded the audience that any college which wants to internationalize the curriculum should have a rationale for doing so and should seriously study the implications before becoming involved. Why should a college go through the trauma of adding a Mexican or Japanese point of view to an already complicated curriculum? Graham suggested that international studies should not be an artificial device for simply adding another flower to a college's curricular bouquet. Rather, it should be done from a sound educational, theoretical point of view. That point of view should be one in which the college seeks to transform students, opening them up to a cultural perspective different from their own.

The speaker presented two approaches for internationalizing the curriculum. The first, Global Studies, would consist of adding from four to six new courses to the curriculum. These courses, taught by faculty members from different disciplines, would present global issues such as nuclear war, peace, energy, and economic exploitation. Professor Graham, speaking from personal experience, did not favor this approach as he warned that faculty members easily tire of bearing this burden: team-teaching is too demanding, and often the problems presented in such courses are viewed only from an American perspective. In describing the second approach, the speaker enumerated the advantages of a cross-cultural perspective added to already existing courses by means of specific units that deal with questions concerning ways in which people of other nationalities view various issues. The speaker's view was that this could be done in many existing courses, but that faculty members should be encouraged to seek help from resources on other campuses. Furthermore, foreign students should be encouraged to study at the local college in order to bring a cross-cultural perspective to the campus. He cited examples of ways in which faculty members could begin to teach courses cross-culturally.

The third speaker, Dr. Webber, reminded the audience that if we want to be our brother's keeper or speaker, our response to

our fellow human beings should not always be in the English language, even though that is the language most comfortable for us. He illustrated this by showing a map of the world organized not along the axes of political power or by geographic land mass, but rather according to population density. Notations of areas in which English is spoken as a native language or where English has official or semi-official status demonstrated clearly that we are presently able to be in direct communication with only a minority of the global community. The odds are against our being able to communicate with the peoples of the world in English! To be less culturally chauvinistic, the speaker argued, we must learn to understand what it means to have loyalties to smaller groups and we should learn to appreciate the interaction of regions and nations which lie beyond the horizon of our experience. The speaker concluded with a paraphrasing of St. Paul in I Corinthians 9:22. "If we are to be made all things to all people that by all means some may be saved, we have no choice but to be prepared to speak for, to, and with our brother and sister."

The lecture series generated a great deal of interest and discussion among the Dordt community concerning finding ways of being of service in God's Kingdom which is a universal Kingdom.

William J. Stronks