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INCIDENTALLY. . .

by James Koldenhoven

PROFESSOR STOKER ON CAMPUS (CONTINUED)

Reported here is the second of three lectures given by Professor Hendrik G. Stoker (emeritus) from Potchefstroom, South Africa. A report on his third lecture will be prepared for a subsequent issue of Pro Rege. The Stoker lectures are on cassette tapes and may be purchased for \$3.00 each by writing Dordt College Media Center.

Dr. Stoker's second lecture focused on the significance of "man as the image of God" for what he called "a philosophic and for particular scientific anthropologies." The purpose of this lecture grew out of his concern in the first lecture which spoke to the need for a contextual meaning in which the Christian performs his task of scientific inquiry.

Basic to the meaning of Christian scientific inquiry is the question of man's being an image bearer of God. A right understanding of "image" must precede scientific work, such as theological anthropology, philosophical anthropology, physiological anthropology, etc. Stoker referred to the various areas of scientific work as anthropologies and noted that if one understands the Biblical meaning of "image" then the various "scientific" anthropologies "create a virtually coherent family." In this view the various sciences are contextually one whole.

Stoker focused on the meaning of "image bearer" by saying, "The uniqueness of man, as well as his unity, fundamentally depends on his being God's image." This, he said, must be understood as an analogy in which God and man are related by likenesses, but only after being fully aware of God and man's heterogeneity and qualitative differences. God reveals himself in His Word and Work (Creation), and man is an aspect of that Work. There will always remain what Stoker called a "radical difference between God and man," noting further that this difference will be known "in His Word where we are told who God is and who man is."

While maintaining the radical difference between God and man, Stoker provided two ways in which "image" can be understood.

The first and fundamental analogy of "image" is to be found in man's intimate personal connection which God, which even the

angels do not share. In its simplest language, the analogical meaning of "image" lies in what the Scriptures refer to as being "a child of God." "This," said Stoker, is "the basic, fundamental analogy of man as image of God that should be taken as the basis for a philosophical anthropology, ... [for] this expresses the uniqueness of man."

The second analogy of "image" lies in what man does. "Man masters and controls nature and himself," said Stoker, "as he creates, cultures, and cares for God's world, and serves God." This is man's "divine calling and task." This calling and task is man's alone, distinguishing him from "animals, angels, and all other things," for, as Stoker put it, man "rules in place of God."

Putting these two analogies into one thought, Stoker said, "Man is the royal creaturely king and child of God, who carries out his all-inclusive calling in God's creation." He said that it is this basic principle, the principle of the "all-inclusive image" which should hold good for all anthropologies of man for the future.

Stoker concluded his lecture by applying the general principle of the "image of God in man" to particular scientific Christian anthropologies. On the one hand, the "image" is "exclusively human, holding good for man as a whole, and forming his unity. It is regulative for all men's actions, and prevents isolation of man from God or creation." On the other hand, the Christian scientific anthropologist "has a pre-scientific view of man, which functions as a paradigm of his scientific endeavors." The Christian, through the Scriptures and the redemptive work of Christ, begins knowingly and in faith to work out the "universal paradigm of man as elaborated in the Christian philosophical anthropology as it applies to his field."

Among his final remarks, Stoker said, "Every particular scientific anthropology should look for the facet of the image of God in man that gives to that particular scientific anthropology fundamentally its unity and basis."