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James Koldenhoven

Dordt College

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PROFESSOR STOKER ON CAMPUS

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

While on a three-day visit, Dr. Hendrik G. Stoker presented a series of lectures at Dordt College, the first entitled, "The Dilemma of Unity in Present Day Science." Professor Stoker, from the Philosophy Department of Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, is on a research grant from South Africa.

The speaker invited the audience to imagine two paintings in which each showed a "patch of blue." "Analytically," he said, "they have the same quality," until you recognize that they have different "contextual meaning moments." With this example, Stoker went into a brief review of the history of philosophy to show that with special analytic

methods applied during and since the Renaissance, the contextual science was lost. As a result, there was fragmentation. The man of the Middle Ages held to an overarching context of unity as he constantly recognized God, man's need for redemption, and eternal glory. This context provided a unity for all scientific pursuit.

Secularization, which Stoker said was in itself not bad, viewed the particulars of life and slowly but certainly disregarded the context (which, then, produces an evil called secularism). This loss of contextual meaning reached its height in the nineteenth century with greater and greater specialization. Fragmentation was complete. Then, said Stoker, in

the twentieth century there arose a renewed interest in a "higher unity," but scientific analysis trusted itself to find that higher unity by its own techniques. It does not begin with a God revealed; rather, it ends with a god discovered. And because each specialization, each system of scientific enquiry is different, each discovery of "higher unity" is of necessity different from every other one. The result presently is disruption, said the speaker, and so the dilemma is complete. Which is better, asks the humanist, fragmentation through particularization and specialization, or disruption through discovery of many forms of "higher unity"?

Stoker insisted that analysis and specialization are not wrong, if these activities are carried on within what he continued to call a Scripturally based "contextual setting." The same positive attitude he expressed for secularization, so long as it does not become secularism, in which faith is limited to the particular themselves. The problem with analysis, specialization, and secularization lies in reducing aspects of reality to nature or creation itself as the source of faith and meaning.

Regarding faith, the speaker made several

pertinent remarks, saying for example, "You need faith in your senses, in logic, and in reason. Only where there is faith is there certainty." He also noted that "the faith of the mathematician is qualitatively different from the faith of the psychologist; the faith of the psychologist is qualitatively different from the faith of the" In this discussion Stoker recognized the creatureliness of scientific enquiry, the faithfulness of God's revelation in creation, and the need for a pre-scientific, Biblical commitment to the God of creation and redemption.

"Science today," said Stoker, "is looking for contextual meaning, but science does not go far enough, leaving fragmentation where it was. . . . The search for unity in context, which is currently evident, must resort to pre-scientific experience which--because of a variety of commitments--will also produce fragmentation in "different schools of thought." So the dilemma is, in Stoker's view, either fragmentation or disruption, which really arise from the same root: a lack of personal and historic faith in Jesus Christ, through Whom alone the fragmentations and alienations resulting from sin can be resolved.