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CONVOCATION ADDRESS

by B. J. Haan
President



Rev. Haan received his Th.B. degree from Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Prior to coming to Dordt in 1959 as its first College President, he served as pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center for many years.

UNITEDLY ENHANCING DORDT'S GOOD NAME

The Holy Scriptures tell us that "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." This statement applies to institutions as well as to persons. In the case of institutions it would be in agreement with the basic meaning of the term "great riches" to say that a good name is rather to be chosen than, for example, mere outward splendor, or fabulous facilities, or superficial sophistication.

Selecting an official name for an institution is relatively simple. But earning a good name, establishing and maintaining a sound reputation, is quite another matter. An institution can have a wonderful official name and yet, among the people, carry a bad name. What an institution is, what it reveals concerning its philosophy and life activity, this is its true name. "Dordt College" is the official name chosen for our Christian academic institution. We like to believe it is an appropriate name. However, in the course of our seventeen year history, many people with varied interests have watched us in action. They have on that basis given us a name. Or, if you wish, Dordt has established a name. Is it a good name? If so, how can we unitedly enhance that good name of Dordt? That is, how can we advance, make greater in value

and desirability that good name?

At this convocation exercise we want to focus for a few minutes on these questions. For in unitedly seeking to enhance the good name of Dordt College we stand to profit greatly and to achieve the noble, God-glorifying goals which we have set for ourselves and which we intended when we called our institution "Dordt College."

In what sense, and among whom, does Dordt seek to build a good name? Dordt desires to be known as a Christian, a Reformed academic institution for higher learning. This means that Dordt seeks to excel in an academic program which is biblically directed. We want to be recognized by the academic community as pursuing sound, respectable God-centered scholarship. In this respect there is ample evidence that Dordt College owns an honorable, yes even enviable, reputation. No one need apologize for being identified anywhere in academic circles with the name "Dordt." Rather he can experience grateful pride as one associated with this Christian college. Not that we have fully attained the high purpose which we have set for ourselves. Perhaps one reason why Dordt is academically recognized is that our very

concept of the educational task never allows us to be content with the status quo.

But it should be clearly understood that Dordt is not content with enjoying merely a good academic name. Far more important is the desire to be known for its distinctively biblical, Christian academic character. In this respect, Dordt cherishes the favor and esteem of the people of God who are committed to the biblical, Calvinistic world-and-life philosophy. We are particularly pleased to hear from the lips of countless numbers of concerned Reformed Christians throughout Canada and the States that Dordt College represents to them a college genuinely dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the best in our Reformed tradition. We can thank God everyday for the confidence which these Christians place in us. And we must vow daily before God never to engage in study or life on this campus which will undermine that confidence.

How then shall we unitedly enhance that good name and thus maintain and deepen the trust and confidence of those whom we serve and those who continue to evaluate and appraise us?

If we are truly serious about Dordt's good name we will agree that Dordt's name can only be enhanced by growing together in the understanding, proclamation and fellowship of the name of our God. Dordt must continue to exist only unto the praise and glory of God's name.

What do we mean by the name of God? The name of God is His revelation of Himself. We know Him only through what He has revealed concerning Himself, only through His name. All that is spoken of as revealing Him can be subsumed under His name, i.e., His word, law, will, revelation. The central, highest and most perfect name of God is His Son, the Word of God, even Jesus Christ. The Bible makes this abundantly clear. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," John 14:9. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John 1:14. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2:9. Only in the name of God's Son,

Jesus Christ, His living, eternal Word, can we know the Father. Furthermore it is only in and through His Son that the Father reveals Himself, makes His name known.

That name of God is made known to us, in and through His Son, both in the Holy Scriptures and in His great creation. In the Scriptures God unfolds for us His gracious, redemptive name. There we behold Jesus Christ, the redeemer Word, the saving name of God. "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12(b). Furthermore, in and through Jesus Christ, it is by means of the Scriptures that (1) we learn concerning, (2) are made to behold, and (3) are directed in the study of God's glorious name, His revelation, His law in the great creation. The Psalmist exclaims, "How excellent is Thy name in all the earth," Psalm 8:1. And again, "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare," Psalm 75:1.

Now at Dordt College our purpose is to glorify God's name specifically as a Christian academic institution. This means that our principle task is that of gaining a fuller understanding of God's name, His revelation, in all His creation. Unitedly, communally, we must apply ourselves to this task. This calls for the highest, most dedicated form of Christian scholarship. Recognizing our solemn, God-given mandate to search out His name, His word, His law, in every aspect of life, it behooves us to carry on the most rigorous program of research and learning. For only when we truly struggle to understand more fully God's name, only then can we magnify Him, only then do we render worthy service to those who live by His name, and only then do we fulfill our academic calling. Adhering strictly to this lofty purpose, Dordt will, indeed, enhance its good name.

But what an awesome yet glorious and exciting responsibility is ours as a Christian academic institution! Ours is the calling, in fellowship with our Lord, to uncover, search out, His name in all His creation. Surely we ought to take this solemn obligation more seriously to heart. Although our academic activity merits commendation, we ought to be

much more keenly aware of the demand for improvement in all areas of study on our campus. I am particularly thinking of what transpires in our classrooms. Sometimes I wonder whether we have not been too deeply engrossed in current theological and ecclesiastical issues to the neglect of the various academic disciplines which are our special responsibility. Not that we should minimize the value of reasonable discussions concerning basic philosophical and theological problems. To be sure, each one of us must have a good grasp of and commitment to our basic biblical world-and-life view so that our teaching and learning will positively reflect this. Nonetheless, we owe it to our Lord and to each other as academicians, to give priority to the specific task which has been assigned to us as Christian teachers and students.

Let us not respond to this prodding with a defensive, negative attitude. Rather, with the self-respect which we can legitimately enjoy, let us accept the challenge with enthusiasm, and happily join together in making our academic enterprise a better one. To assure this let us cultivate greater respect and appreciation for each other in our professional responsibilities. Obviously, there are bound to be differences on a college campus in approach, in ability, and in one's bent of mind. These differences should elicit the spirit of charity, understanding and helpfulness; God forbid that such differences should be the occasion for envy, bitterness and strife.

Furthermore, if we are to be faithful in extolling God's name in His grand book of creation, we must give greater attention to the study of the Holy Scriptures as they relate to our task. We know that fellowship with God can be found and strengthened only through a vital knowledge of and relationship with Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. And fellowship with God is fundamental in our calling as Christian academicians. Furthermore, as stated before, only in and through Jesus Christ, by means of His written word, we learn concerning, are made to behold, and are directed in the study of God's name in creation. Therefore, it is imperative that we draw daily from this fount of wisdom, knowledge, and life in the pursuit

of our task. Let us never, in our discussions on the proper use of the Scriptures in our scientific endeavors, be led to neglect nor pervert the central importance of that infallible word in our studies and conduct.

At this point allow me to make a special plea. I am convinced that weekly chapel and convocation services should be recognized and honored as powerful instruments to unite all of us as we endeavor to enhance Dordt's good name. Many of us are fully aware of the discussions which have occurred on campus concerning the place and propriety of chapel services at a truly Christian college. I have listened patiently to these debates and I have reflected long and carefully upon them. I have given particular attention to the argument that chapel services tend to create and foster the idea that here in chapel we take care of our "religious" concerns but in the classrooms we are busy with academic matters. In other words, we promote the false dichotomy, so prevalent in our day, between the sacred and the secular. Some have said that, if we really understand what our task as Christians is in the classroom, then every classroom will be in the best sense of the term a chapel service, a deeply religious experience. I am, of course, wholeheartedly in agreement with this latter statement. But, regardless of what false ideas other Christian colleges may have promulgated by their chapel exercises, this certainly need not be true at Dordt College. In fact, I am convinced that chapel services, rightly understood and conducted, can be a mighty means to cultivate and insure the proper exercise of our academic task, that is, make our classrooms deeply religious experiences.

Therefore, I am urging all faculty members and students to rally together around God's Word in our chapel and convocation services. I can think of no better way to find our unity and to foster a meaningful, purposeful, vigorous campus spirit. Certainly it is worth our best efforts. For that reason I have appointed a special chapel committee. We intend to focus our attention at each service on the theme of this convocation address: Unitedly Enhancing Dordt's Good Name. A schedule of speakers and topics has already

been prepared for the month of September.

So we begin another year at Dordt College. God has been gracious to us in past years. We witness on every side the evidence of His blessings—the fine buildings, the pleasant surroundings, impressive enrollments, financial stability, a faithful constituency, a truly competent Board of Trustees, and a well qualified faculty. Are we ready and willing

to take advantage of our opportunities unto the greater praise and honor of God's name? Oh! that Dordt College might stand in this world as a glowing tribute to that most excellent name. Let Dordt College inspire men everywhere to sing "Lord, our Lord, in all the earth, How great Thy Name. Thine the Name of matchless worth, excellent in all the earth. How great Thy Name."

REVELATION: HARMONY VERSUS CONFLICT

by John C. Vander Stelt

Assistant Professor of Theology and Philosophy



Mr. John C. Vander Stelt received an A.B. degree from Calvin College and Div.M. and Th.Drs. from the Free University in Amsterdam. He has also attended Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich. He has served as a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church of Newmarket, Ont., Canada and has served as a Director of Development and Student Affairs for the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship. For the past five years he has taught Theology and Philosophy at Dordt College. He is a member of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy. Presently, he is working (in his spare time) on his Th.D. dissertation which deals with the Princeton-Westminster Theology of the Word of God.

The nature of a relationship between two things is determined by the nature of the things to be related. This is true especially with regard to the character of the relationship between "general" and "special" revelation.

The meaning of "general" and "special" in this connection cannot be determined abstractly. It is inextricably intertwined with the whole question of the very essence and scope of the Christian life style. The fundamental issue is whether the nature of the Christian walk of life is half-heartedly dualistic or whole-heartedly integral.

The Problem

Western Christianity has generally opted for a way of life which can be characterized by the somewhat psychologistic expression of religious schizophrenia. Its commonly accepted assumption has been that there are two sources of revelation, two a priori realms, two ways of living. With one part of his heart and life, the reborn person lives directly and immediately in the presence of God, whereas with the other part of his existence he lives more like someone who is in hiding and who