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## To Out Think and Out Live an Age

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*Dordt College*

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# FOR THE RECORD, incidentally. . .

by James Koldenhoven

## TO OUT THINK AND OUT LIVE AN AGE

"If we do not believe that God has purpose for us in this world, there isn't much sense to being in it," said Dr. Myron S. Augsburger who gave the commencement address to 174 Dordt College graduates this spring. Dr. Augsburger is president of Eastern Mennonite College and Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Speaking to an audience of about 2,000 in the Dordt gymnasium-auditorium, and through live broadcast over KDCR, Augsburger used as his theme, "Faith Amidst Secularism." In introducing him, Rev. B. J. Haan, President of Dordt College, acknowledged the fact that the KDCR listening audience includes Mennonite brethren in South Dakota. "Having attended a Presbyterian school," responded Dr. Augsburger, "I consider myself a Mennitarian." The good humor of the speaker was immediately apparent as he commented on the stock association of predestination and Calvinism: "It's like the Presbyterian who fell down the stairs, and as he picked himself up, said, 'Well, I'm glad that's over!'"

The challenge and inspiration of the address lay in its call to total commitment for the true Christ-believer. "Secularism has been Christianized and domesticated," said Augsburger, "claiming wholeness for itself." Secular reductionism has concluded that human behavior can be determined and controlled by experimentation with rodents. Coining a term,

the speaker spoke of the new animalistic anthropology as "ratimorphism." He called on the graduates to study the basis of the modern movements in society and to become equipped to "make faith in Christ an option." "Ask," he said, "what illness in society called them forth." Three recent movements were mentioned: racial power, youth power, and feminism. Christians must begin courageously to articulate and apply Scriptural solutions, as obedient disciples of the Lord!

Christians should not allow the secularist thinkers to perpetuate the myth that their Godless ideology has the liberating answers for men in the problems and miseries of life resultant from sin. The secularist, in reality, is a slave to unbelief and is groping in darkness, pointed out Dr. Augsburger. He is like the famous but irascible psychiatrist at a dinner party who, after loudly insulting several other guests in conversation, jumped up from the table and rushed out the door, slamming it behind him. After a silence, one guest remarked, "Well, he's on his way!" . . . "I'm afraid not," said the hostess timidly. "That's a closet."

"America needs a new image," said Augsburger, one that involves a Biblically-oriented compassion and love, not a sense of bigness and power. The answer to America's problems lies in first choosing, either to be with Pilate



or with Jesus. The majority, of course, are still with the relativist Pilate, who said, "What is truth?", rather than with the Christ, who is Truth. "The choice is that radical," said the speaker. And once having made the choice, the believer sees that the Kingdom of Christ encompasses the entire world: "The world is my parish." Graduation for the Christian student, then, is only "the end of the beginning," concluded the speaker, "in making a life rich in Jesus Christ" - if he has learned

"to think globally."

The ninth annual commencement program at Dordt College will long be remembered for this inspiring address and for the significance of sharing with another Christian institution of higher learning the challenge of modern American society. Where the Word of God is central to the academic enterprise, it is possible, in the words of Dr. Augsburg, "to out-think our age, but also to out-live it."

## DR. DEN BESTEN ON LIFE AND DEATH

"Who Shall Live?" was the question of Dr. Lawrence Den Besten in a public address at Dordt College. The speaker limited himself to life and death at the end of a normal life span.

Den Besten, who is a professor in the Department of Surgery at the University Hospitals in Iowa City, was at Dordt as a guest lecturer.

In his opening remarks, Den Besten illustrated how historically man has always been terribly concerned about death. Societies have always applied themselves, whether mystically or scientifically, to the elimination of death, he said, acting "as if death can be done away with." Modern society is no exception. Today, said Den Besten, we are "obsessed with maintaining senescence," that

is, old age. In another context he characterized our civilization as one that is "skewed to terminal aspects of life."

What the speaker questioned about our society is its imbalance in priorities. He said:

We seem little or in no way concerned with the child in Asia, Africa, or South America who will die for lack of protein, milk, or a few pennies worth of penicillin. And yet the life of some senile, elderly citizen will often be maintained at costs approximately \$1,000 a day when death is imminent and certain and the quality of life is no longer acceptable or desirable.