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History Lecture Series

Arnold Koekkoek
Dordt College

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by James Koldenhoven

History Lecture Series

"History isn't practical; you can't make any money with it. Henry Ford was right: it is 'more or less bunk.'" In response to the challenge contained in this too-common sentiment, the history department presented the year's first series of faculty lectures on September 21-23, 1982, under the rubric, "History as a Practical Art." Three lectures were presented after a brief introductory statement which served to underline the theme and gave unity to the seemingly diverse individual topics.

Professor McKendree Langley presented the first lecture, "The Legacy of French Christian Democracy," which focussed on the careers of Felicité de Lammenais, the 19th century publicist-essayist whom Langley termed "the first Christian Democrat," and Robert Schuman, Christian Democrat statesman whose activities under the Fourth Republic won him the nickname of "Father of Europe."

Though critical of certain weaknesses in Lammenais' thought, Langley praised him for his real attempt to harmonize the modern democratic state with his Roman Catholic faith, a particularly difficult task in the face of opposition from the papacy itself. Schuman was cited as a Christian political activist. Realizing the emptiness of the old nationalisms, he promoted European stability and co-operation (not merely a negative *anti-Communism*), a European solidarity and peace based on Christian values and forgiveness of past sins.

Langley called on his listeners to appreciate and emulate the Christian Democrats in their public stress on Christian values in a secular age, their attempt to put their Christian political principles into practice.

The second lecture, by Dr. Louis Van Dyke, was titled "A Vacant Place: Two Views Toward Indian Dispossession." Van Dyke described and contrasted the Puritan view—the land is empty and open for European disposition and settlement because the red men do not occupy it and live a settled agricultural existence—and the subsequent Humanitarian view—the Indians, noble savages though they be, are deficient, need to be raised to the superior level of European culture, and must be helped by being absorbed into white civilization. Both views disregard the Indian attitude to land as a gift of the Great Spirit to his children. It was to be used and cherished, but it was not a private possession and could not be sold. And both views, whether of disdain or pity, resulted in the destruction of Indian life and culture in the name of a Christian civilization.

Van Dyke noted that the matter of justice for the Indians is still a vital issue, especially in areas such as this, and that Christians are still at a loss to find an equitable solution to such problems as Indian land claims. All were called upon to discuss mutual responsibilities in the light of Scripture.

Dr. William Nawyn's lecture was titled

"Brotherhood, Evangelism, and Palestine: The Jew in the American Protestant Press, 1933-1941." Nawyn examined eleven Protestant journals, representing a cross-section of denominations and theological positions, on the three stated issues.

While both liberal and conservative papers called for improved relations with Jews, the former seemed much more interested in such things as interrelations and brotherhood, while the latter much more frequently evinced interest in the Jews as objects of evangelism, an issue on which liberal journals were nearly silent. All were interested in the Zionist movement. Fun-

damentalists looked on it as the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy; the liberal press was more likely to remind readers of Arab rights and frequently attacked Zionism as a "pathetic and futile" expression of British imperialism.

Nawyn challenged the Christian community to re-think its attitudes toward Jews on all fronts, especially in the light of the existence of the state of Israel and its crucial position in the Middle East. Here, too, he suggested, there is much for Christians to do to promote justice for all.

Arnold Koekkoek

Arts Seminar

The arts faculty of Dordt College—Art, Music, Theatre Arts, and English Departments—held a two-week seminar in May. The invited resource person was Dr. Lambert Zuidervaart of King's College, Edmonton, Alberta. The mandate of the seminar was to "discover and implement the implications of the Statement of Purpose for the arts at Dordt College." The document which served to focus the work of the seminar was Dordt's *The Educational Task of Dordt College*.

Zuidervaart opened the seminar with a lecture entitled, "Soundings: Toward a Sound Understanding of the Arts." This lecture asked what minimum common understandings are necessary to discuss the nature of art. A follow-up lecture entitled "Sightings: Art, Insight, and Human Interest" dealt with the study of art and the contribution such a study makes towards "serviceable insight." "Serviceable insight" is a key phrase in Dordt's purpose statement concerning its educational task.

Zuidervaart provided two additional lectures which continued the title format of the first two: "Grounding: Academic Discipline and Artistic Discipline," and "Regarding the Arts: What is the College's Responsibility to Its Support Constituency?" These lectures

dealt with relationships, respectively: the relationship of the arts to other academic disciplines, and the relationship of art production at Dordt to its public constituents.

Each of the lectures was followed by a panel response which prompted questions and a good deal of discussion. The lectures and panel discussions were recorded and will be available on cassette tapes.

During the second week the departments involved in the seminar met separately to develop answers to prepared questions. The central question was this: "Using the philosophies of art, as defined in Zuidervaart's third lecture, what kinds of insights do the study of Art, Music, English, and Theatre Arts provide?" Each department was to demonstrate how the insights pertinent to its department were to be implemented or were already implemented. After two days of separate meetings, the departments reconvened in seminar to report on their work.

Besides exercises in group dynamics, conducted by Dr. Ken Bussema of the Psychology Department, the seminar exercised exploratory inquiries into inter-departmental relationships. The latter was directed by Dr. John Van Dyk of the