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Dr. Alan Keith-Lucas Lectures on Social Work

Dr. Alan Keith-Lucas, an authority on social welfare and social work, delivered a lecture series in April on "Social Work, Religion and Academia." Born in England, educated at the Cambridge University, Keith-Lucas came to America and received the Ph.D. from Duke University. He has had wide experience in social work, child welfare organizations, and education.

In the first lecture, "Two Sorts of Social Work, Two Religions," he contrasted the religion of grace with the religion of morality. The religion of grace, he said, provides the proper approach to social work because it emphasizes God's love for undeserving sinners. Seeing God's love for such sinners in need, man must reach out to help them. A religion of morality, on the other hand, can hinder social work if it produces a sense of pride, a doctrine of salvation by works, and the repression of those who disobey God's law. This view degenerated into the capitalist-Puritan work ethic which saw financial success as a sign of election and poverty as a sign of sin.

Keith-Lucas then contrasted these Christian approaches to the contributions of Freud, Marx, and Dewey to social work theories. These secular thinkers helped to develop what can be termed a "religion of social work" which is antithetical to Christianity. "Given the real danger of social control as seen in *Brave New World* and *1984*," the lecturer asked, "should knowledge be used to manipulate people or help the neighbor?" This question is especially important because in the growing complexity of society all people might need the help of social workers at some time in their lives. He emphasized, "The direction we go in both social work and religion will

influence our quality of life."

In the second lecture, "Theology and the Helping Process," the speaker said that the most important ingredients in a Christian approach to social work are a Christian view of man and the ability to express kindness. God helps man with repentance, confession, submission, and faith. Man responds to love as a creature of God (I Cor. 13). The Christian faith gives the proper foundation for the values used in social work. The Christian social worker was then described as working either through the church or through public agencies, seeing that love comes first, respecting choice, not pushing one's own solution too much, emphasizing responsibility, recognizing that suffering is a part of growth, refraining from judgment, and avoiding a negative diagnosis that the client is beyond help.

In the final lecture, "The Ontic and the Ontological: Social Work and Academia," Keith-Lucas emphasized the practical side of undergraduate programs in social work. Undergraduate colleges will continue to prepare social workers for the basic tasks of helping individual people. The graduate schools of social work, by contrast, tend to produce administrators who do not always work directly with clients. For this reason undergraduate programs in social work should give students a wide exposure to the humanities, social sciences, theology, philosophy, and ethics. All such areas of study will help students to gain a clearer sense of the human predicament on a personal, family, community, national, and world level. Social change in every area of life has created great problems that the Christian social worker as helper must understand.

McKendree R. Langley