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Dr. Hielema on Christian Counselling

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Incidentally

by James Koldenhoven

Dr. Hielema on Christian Counselling

Dr. J.S. Hielema, pastor of the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Calgary, Alberta, Canada was the guest lecturer for Dordt's Spring Lectureship Series, held on February 19, 20, and 21. Speaking in Chapel, he challenged the Dordt student body and faculty to offer "comfort in context." Hielema stressed that comfort can be offered to others only if we ourselves are firmly rooted in Christ. To the degree that we are "in" Christ, we will be enabled to offer genuine Christian comfort. Hielema also expressed his grave concern regarding the present state of Reformed churches by asking some soul-searching questions. Are we really equipping ourselves to live the Reformational life? Is the church really a place of spiritual excitement and encouragement? Hielema continued, stressing that unless we possess a great deal of spiritual maturity, we will

be engulfed by our present state of affluence.

In his first lecture, Dr. Hielema focused on problems resulting from a lack of authority in the home. Today's father, when he is home with his family, suffers from tiredness and nervous exhaustion. The modern home is a labyrinth—aimlessly afloat on the sea of life. We have to realize, he said, that self-knowledge can never be acquired by man alone, or through his relationship to material things. True Christian self-knowledge comes only through true knowledge of God, the reading of the Scriptures, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Only if we seriously re-evaluate where our hearts lie can we hope to improve authority in the home. Nurturing children in the way of the Lord presupposes responsible covenant leadership—not demands dreamed up by our sinful hearts.

In his second lecture, Dr. Hielema critiqued Jay E. Adams' method of "nouthetic counselling" and outlined several principles of Christian counselling. Dr. Hielema's doctoral thesis was entitled *Pastoral or Christian Counselling: A Confrontation with American Pastoral Theology, in Particular Seward Hiltner and Jay E. Adams*. Hielema summed up Adams' use of the Scripture in the following way:

Adams' use of the Scriptures is too narrow minded, too legalistic, and too methodistic. By making the Scriptures the textbook for counselling, Adams fails to see the interrelationship between the threefold revelation concept—Christ, the Scriptures, and creation. As a result he does not understand that God's revelation includes thinking and reflection (the confessional response) which God's people have come to in the construction of a truly Christian philosophy of life.

Hielema elaborated his own position, stressing the importance of

understanding events in their total context. We have to be prayerful, reflective, and stay with those we are counselling, regardless of how they act and react. The more we realize God's patience and forgiveness, the more we will be able to help others.

Dr. Hielema's final lecture dealt with "creative principles" of Christian counselling. Emphasizing our possession of the Holy Spirit and Christ's promise that we will be led into all truth, he challenged us not to run away from the problems of our times. We must strive for greater openness, for only the sensitive, perceptive person will capitalize on each opportunity.

Creative counselling must be guided by an awareness of biblical principles. It is imperative that the counsellor, the counsellee, and the method of counselling not be enslaved to either the *status quo* or peer pressure. The Christian counsellor should be flexible—his position can never be absolute for everyone else. Hielema concluded by re-emphasizing patience and genuine Christian love as the trademarks of Christian counselling.

Charles Claus

Lectureship Institute Sponsors World Hunger Conference

On January 29-31 a different kind of conference on world hunger was held at Dordt. The purpose was not to convince the participants that there is hunger in the world; most of them knew that. Nor was the plan to try to discover who is primarily at fault for this sad predicament. Rather, the conference was designed for the purpose of examining some of the more important structural reasons for world hunger today. "Structural reasons" are

economic, political, and social institutions and relationships.

The conclusion at which the conference aimed was to bring those of us at Dordt to the point where we could ask about the role of the College in helping to educate those who will play a leading role in the political, agricultural, economic, and social structures of our world.

Professor Calvin DeWitt from the Environmental Studies Institute at the