
Pro Rege

Volume 5 | Number 4

Article 13

June 1977

Donald Drew and NWTC, II

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Recommended Citation

Van Emst, Tammy (1977) "Donald Drew and NWTC, II," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 5:

No. 4, 31 - 33.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol5/iss4/13

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Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), Ms. Karen De Vos, focused on the plight of the peasant farmer in under-developed countries. Her speech, "The Church's Response to Hunger," emphasized stewardship, outlined what is presently being done by the denomination, and how the institutional church must be an example in how it spends money on keeping up its own property and decorating its sanctuaries.

Dr. Rockne McCarthy, association professor of history at Trinity Christian College, addressed the political dimensions of the hunger problem in his lecture, "Bread and Justice." McCarthy approached the problem of world hunger from the political point of view, pointing to rich nations trying to "re-create poor nations in their own consumption-oriented image," by creating a desire for immediate luxuries in poor countries with Coke and potato chip ads. Capitalism, the speaker pointed out, has distorted values with its "individualistic, competitive view of rational control."

Not least among the roster of speakers was potato farmer and president of the Christian Farmers' Federation (CFF) of Alberta, Mr. James Visser. In his presentation, "Restoring Agriculture to Bless the World," Visser explained that the CFF rejected both options, individualism and state control, for an option which "stresses the cultural mandate, steward-

ship, and the concept of sharing and being a blessing to creation as a whole." He stressed the importance of reevaluating the meaning of ownership in view of the Biblical injunction that the land is God's, not man's, and that the farmer is a steward of the land.

Dordt College professor, Dr. John Van Dyk concluded the conference with "The Response of the Academic Community to Hunger." Van Dyk defined the task of the academic community as "making available, advancing and deepening insight" into the nature of life. To show the complexity of the hunger problem, the speaker called attention to the fact that hunger is much more than an economical problem. This complexity was followed with an array of practical things that an academic community can do to fulfill its task, for example, develop a strong agri-business program, institute programs in foreign studies to create awareness of global responsibility, and distribute in public print and by radio results of discussions and research.

In response to the conference, the director, Rev. J. B. Hulst noted that the conference "struck a responsive chord." He added, "When we're told that there is enough food to feed the world's population, but that six per cent of the population is using 30 to 40 percent of the resources, that fact hurts . . . as Christians, we want to do something about it."

Donald Drew and NWTC, II

Dr. Donald Drew, noted author and lecturer, highlighted Dordt College's second New World Theatre Consortium with three presentations discussing the Christian's role in theatre and cinema.

A graduate of the University of Cambridge in history and English literature, Dr. Drew has lectured on literature and cinema in American and British universities, and is currently a visiting professor of

English at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Penn. He is also the author of "Images of Man: A Critique of the Contemporary Cinema," published in 1974 by Inter-Varsity Press.

In "The Christian and his Approach to Contemporary Culture," his first lecture to the consortium, Dr. Drew called for a Christian voice of healing in the "secular wastelands" of modern culture. In previous centuries, he noted, culture arose out of Christianity at least in a nominal sense. Poets, musicians, writers, and painters explored religious themes and dedicated their work "to the glory of God." However, this synthesis of traditional Christianity and culture broke down with the Enlightenment. And the culture that then substituted rational humanism for Christianity has now become a culture controlled by irrationalism and surrealism.

Dr. Drew then explored the question of a Christian attitude toward culture. One misreads the Bible if he concludes that culture is unnecessary, Drew stated. "Christ did not die to make me a Christian, but to make me fully human." That is, Christ calls believers to use culture lovingly to communicate that God exists, and that in him we can become more fully the persons he created us to be. "Without culture," Drew stated, "we as Christian cannot even sustain a conversation with our society, let alone...influence public opinion and fulfill our full role as salt and light."

The Christian home has often lagged behind culture, Dr. Drew observed, "being afraid of the world instead of being afraid for the world." On the contrary, "in every single man, woman, and child God has put creativity similar to His own;... culture is a reflection of our Creator's beauty."

Dr. Drew warned his listeners not to equate "culture" with the sophisticated pleasures we see around us. Culture goes down to the fundamental philosophies of life. Culture is, at its roots, "a God-given calling to dress and till, cultivate and

develop the earth God has given us.... It is an attempt to come to terms with the mystery, beauty, and power of God's earth." The presence of sin "cannot break the bond of creation which makes us and everything around us God's possession. ...Scripture does not deprecate the human body, but honors it with the hope of resurrection...It calls, not for escape, but for recapture."

Culture is powerful, Drew emphasized. It enables us to extend ourselves vicariously through books, film, theater, and music. Culture crystallizes our thoughts in a way that we ourselves cannot express. Thus, we must bring the Christian mind to bear upon culture, speaking truth into it. "We must present a lifestyle through culture," Drew urged, "not of ugly orthodoxy nor flabby sentimentality, but beauty—imitating life and reflecting God's creativity.... The division between 'spiritual' and 'secular' is a false one—Scripture nowhere makes it," he declared.

We as twentieth-century Christians find ourselves in the situation of the first Christians—where the entire prevailing lifestyle is opposed to us, Drew pointed out. However, our resources in Christ are not limited. They are infinite. We must realize again that "there is no neutral ground in this universe. Every second and every square inch of ground is claimed either for God or against Him."

Dr. Drew went on to explore the characteristics of a prominent expression of culture in his second lecture, "The Christian as Cinema Artist and Viewer." According to Drew, the film medium exerts more power over its audience than either the theater or the novel. From a purely technological standpoint, film is based on deception. It takes advantage of a visual weakness to create the illusion of continuous movement. Instead of seeing live people in a theater, we see images flowing from a screen, and instead of sitting at a distance and looking where we wish at a stage, we are psychologically "pulled" into a film as the camera controls

what—and how—we see. As our psychological distance vanishes, we become, in Drew's words, "participants in a dream."

The film maker as script writer is free to alter space and time as he attempts to create a visual representation of a work of literature, Drew continued. He must faithfully communicate the theme and tone of a novel, but in a way that expresses the message visually and emotionally—the unique realm of film. A successful film adaptation, according to Drew, utilizes camera angles, lighting, editing, and dialogue, and scene changes to compress time, to enrich characters, and to convey emotion spacially and the sense of immediate impact. The "past" and "future" of a novel is the "present" of film. Thus, "literature is representation of the original, while film is presentation."

Drew further noted that film transfers the mental image of literature to physical, emotionally-charged, images. In literature, he explained, we bring our own experience to bear on what we read; the book must pass through our "cognitive grid" which verifies our original perception. However, film, through camera selectivity, aims to extract an emotional response. Drew summarized his belief in the power of film when he declared, "The entire personality is swept along. It's difficult to arrest the emotional flow or question philosophical statements."

Drew's final lecture, "Inspiring the Young Artist to His Cultural Task," began by sketching some of the prevailing thought forms that have shaped our society.

Modern man, said Drew, has experienced a knowledge explosion which leaves him feeling insignificant and obsolete. This explosion is marked by a total disowning of the past. The past has become odd and even laughable to a progressivism which regards any change as change for the better. The concept of freedom has widened as progressive man searches for "freedom from" rather than "freedom for," and freedom becomes the ground for endless, irresponsible pleasure.

As a result, Drew continued, there has followed a loss of order and sense of values as quantity becomes quality and experience becomes virtue. "Our generation would rather embrace absurdity and despair than confront the truth."

Dr. Drew then discussed the tension in modern thought between "what man is told he is and what man knows he is." But an even greater problem is that "man does not know what to do with who he knows he is" because of a fundamental change in the concept of truth. Rejecting God's truth, man attempted to manufacture his own humanistic, rational truth. But he found this impossible. And existentialism, a non-rationalist solution to the problem of meaning, attests to the death of humanism and man's failure.

Thus, man finds himself in a three-fold predicament: 1) who he is, 2) where he is going, 3) what he is to do while he's alive. Man is anchorless, characterized by pragmatism in the area of action, and self-sufficiency in the area of faith. This, Drew explained, is the background of today's thought forms and resulting life-style.

In response, Christian educational communities—and artists—must not merely stand against the secular tide, but aggressively build bridges. A Christian college must communicate to the twentieth century that there is absolute truth, revealed in the God of history and revealed in the believer. A Christian world view does not scorn the past nor isolate and idolize the present. Knowledge and history are unified in Christ.

Dr. Drew concluded that man can choose to create because the universe is ordered by God. God created the universe for a purpose and it is moving toward an appointed end. "Contemporary thought forms speak of the death of hope and the birth of despair. The Christian artist fully sees the death of the world, and can offer real hope and real truth to culture."

Tammy Van Emst