
Pro Rege

Volume 2 | Number 4

Article 5

June 1974

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Recommended Citation

Bandstra, Bev (1974) "Professor Stoker on Campus (con't.)," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 2: No. 4, 23 - 24.

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INCIDENTALLY....

PROFESSOR STOKER ON CAMPUS (con't.)

The third lecture Dr. Stoker presented at Dordt was entitled, "Outlines of a Cosmocratic Philosophy with a Special Stress on the Dynamic Side (or Dimension) of the Cosmos." Referring to the title, Stoker maintained that the fundamental problem he presented is to justify the necessity of a Christian philosophy. He went on to show that Calvinists are convinced of the necessity of a Christian philosophy, but that they are divided on "how to construe a Christian philosophy."

Stoker stressed one important point of unity for Calvinists before presenting his answer to the problem. We must first accentuate what binds us together: our Christian, Reformed faith and our belief in the revelation of God and His Word. Because of these basic principles, Calvinistic philosophers should form one school, even though individuals may differ.

Referring to his two previous lectures, Stoker again emphasized that a Christian philosophy is not a "theologized philosophy," but is restricted to created reality, whereas theology investigates the revelation of God about himself and the creation.

There are four tasks of philosophy which are exclusive to its particular field, and a fifth task which finds itself in conjunction with all the other sciences, which Dr. Stoker mentioned at this point in his lecture. That fifth task revolves around such questions as what is knowing?, what is knowledge?, what is science? The first task, however, is to find out what the cosmos is in the primary sense. Since Calvinists view the cosmos as theo-centric, we must seek the "relation and distinction" between God and the cosmos. Even though there are many relations between God and the cosmos, the cosmos is "unique and fundamentally

distinct" from God. Stoker explained that the most comprehensive revelation for us to use in discovering the cosmic totality is the creation. God is the Creator; the cosmos is the creation. Christ has come to redeem man and recreate the cosmos, which is subject to the law of God and points to its Creator.

The second task of philosophy is to delve into the radical diversity (or distinctions) within the cosmos and try to understand it. Stoker combined this task with the third one he delineated--investigating the universal coherence of the radical diversity. In regard to these two tasks, Dr. Stoker first of all outlined six preliminary distinctions. They are, briefly: 1) there are idions (coined by Stoker to mean something on its own, with its own nature), 2) there are many idions, 3) there is a diversity among idions, 4) all these idions cohere, 5) structures are the way of coherence, and 6) if one looks at structure, one can see order. Law is the determination of this order. Secondly, Stoker described his position on the existence of four idiostances in the cosmos, each having many facets. (An idiostance is a rounded off whole with a status of its own). The primary idiostances are humans, animals, plants, and material things. Products of these primary idiostances are secondary idiostances.

Belonging idions, such as weight, purpose, the beautiful, i.e., those attributes which belong to idiostances, constituted the third point in this part of the lecture. Do belonging idions have a universal nature? Yes, Stoker maintained, and these universal facets of the cosmos he called cosmic dimensions. Disagreeing with Herman Dooyeweerd's three cosmic dimensions, Stoker held to four irreducible cosmic dimensions: 1) modalities, 2)

events or occurrences, 3) structures, and 4) values. "Everything in the cosmos partakes of these four things, but everything is more than the sum of these four dimensions." Stoker discussed certain problems and further explained modalities and the other dimensions.

Professor Stoker did not go into the fourth task of philosophy, which is to start with any radical distinction and explore its nature and role in creation (examples of this would be-- what is time?, what is history?, who is man?). Stoker concluded his lecture by pointing out that the task of philosophy is to "investigate

how all things are woven into a whole." After stating that the cosmos has no center within Itself (Christ is King of the cosmos, but He is not the concentration point of the cosmos), Stoker pointed out four kinds of unity within the cosmos. These are the absolute ground unity, namely God; the formal unity of the cosmos--where the cosmos is distinct from God; the diversity of material unities (e.g., mechanical unity, personal unity, wholistic unity); and the unity of repair or reformation of what has been distorted in the creation by sin and evil.

by Bev Bandstra

DEPARTMENT EMPHASIS WEEK LECTURES

At the beginning of our Spring semester the Special Events Committee sponsored a series of lectures dealing with the Christian in the Natural Sciences. The first guest lecturer, Dr. Garret Vanderkooi, Biochemist at the University of Wisconsin, emphasized that the facts of science are not neutral, but must always be seen in some perspective, and that this perspective is directed out of the basic, religious presuppositions of the scientist. He clearly demonstrated how earlier scientists, like Newton, started from a creationist position when they did their scientific work, and that, subsequently, scientists turned away from God. This marked not only the end of much real science, but also the beginning of naturalistic scientism. Dr. Vanderkooi pointed out that as Christians we can indeed do valid science on the basis of the created order which is there, and that we do not at all need the evolutionary hypothesis for meaningful scientific activity.

The second speaker of the series was Dr. John N. Moore, Professor of Natural Sciences at Michigan State University. Dr. Moore spoke to the question of the scientific method, indicating that all men, because they are image bearers of God, actually do use this method,

but that natural scientists use this tool more rigorously. All men respond to the order and the uniformity of nature, in recognition of the things that actually exist. Another emphasis in Dr. Moore's lectures was on the necessity of turning over every part of life to Christ, including all scientific activity. Regarding origins, the speaker stated that we must begin with accepting what the Old and New Testaments say about them. Basically the question of the origin of the world and of living things is not a question for the scientist as scientist, but must be answered on the basis of a man's religious commitment, and will always be of a philosophical nature. Dr. Moore also indicated the direction which Christian scientists should take, namely, that they should deal with each aspect of creation from the basic knowledge that God created all things, and that it is our challenge to uncover what the created order is all about. We must continue to make the kind of progress evident in pre-evolutionary days, when much meaningful science was done. His challenge to the Christian scientist of today is to go everywhere and "tell it like it is" regarding the true state of affairs, both as to origins and as to the meaning of the created order as it is today.

by Aaldert Mennega