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## Allan Boesak Speaks of God and gods at Dordt

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control the way we look at reality. Beliefs in scientific theories are analytically qualified, but it is possible to take these analytically qualified theories and declare them to be a full explanation of reality. Then they become an absolute and part of our world-view.

Thus culture or the state/nation can be absolutized and idolized. "One can make an idol out of everything—even religion, even God—by developing Him according to one's own image."

For South Africans this understanding has particular meaning. A person must be a patriot, but when is patriotism idolatrous? Civil religion is a belief system in which a group's ultimate allegiance is either to the state, or to a political or national community. Civil religion *is* a religion, allegiance not to God but to the state. The white people in South Africa are reckoned by themselves to be ultimate, and the problem lies in how that statement starts functioning. If it allows injustice and discrimination, it is not justified. Then it

functions as a secularized belief, and through it the South African sees reality. It even influences what he sees.

Botha stressed that Calvinists world-wide need to discern how religious beliefs come to expression in a qualified way. Christians need to recognize the religious commitment in scientific statement and in the culture of the state/nation. There is a legitimate and an illegitimate place for religion.

In a separate address to Dordt students and faculty, Botha described the "international mosaic of Calvinism" with appropriate illustrations and modest humor. She shared her impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of Calvinism as it expresses itself in Holland, Canada, the United States, and South Africa. Because Calvinists need each other, she said it is imperative for Calvinists in different countries to understand each other. The colleges could begin, she challenged, by initiating a student-exchange program.

Lillian V. Grissen

## **Allan Boesak Speaks of God and the gods at Dordt**

Dordt College has been privileged to receive a wide variety of South Africans on its campus over the past three years. Allan Boesak brought a powerful challenge when he came to visit March 9-10. A campus minister at the University of the Western Cape in Capetown, Boesak is well acquainted with the United States and Europe, as well as his own country. His major address to the college community was a "theological and political analysis of South Africa," but it was pointed at Americans and Canadians as well as at South Africans.

At bottom, said Boesak, all problems and tensions come back to whether human beings serve the true God or the gods of their own choosing. The tragedy is that while Christians talk repeatedly about the service that should be rendered to God in Jesus Christ, they frequently spend much of their time manufacturing explanations to justify their idolatrous practices. The contradictions of life among South African Christians might appear to be more serious, but Americans should not overlook their own civil religion and racist practices.

Perhaps the most striking thing about Boesak's presentation was his keen insight into the attitudes and outlooks of both blacks and whites in South Africa—an insight that is usually missing from representatives of those respective racial groups. Boesak's insight is undoubtedly due, in part, to what he called the "experience of schizophrenic inbetweenness" that stamps the so-called "colored" people of South Africa. The "coloreds" come from white/black intermarriages and illicit sexual unions dating back as much as 300 years. Culturally the "coloreds" are whites, but government and church laws treat them as a separate racial group. Until last century they shared many rights and privileges (including church membership) with whites. But beginning with racist theology in the Reformed Churches, and ending with public apartheid laws after 1949, the "coloreds" have been

demoted and segregated by whites. Not being tribal blacks, these South Africans find themselves caught between two cultures and races. The pain has been great, as Boesak (a "colored") explained, but the insight and wisdom achieved by God's grace among His people might yet become a source of genuine justice and reconciliation for the peoples of South Africa.

Boesak urged the Dordt community to realize that easy talk of reconciliation and forgiveness is hypocritical when it does not go hand in hand with real changes in habits and in institutional structures. God is at work through His Son, Jesus Christ, in South Africa, but much of that work is judging and condemning racism, forced oppression, and hypocrisy. Where do Christians stand in South Africa? In America? Is blessing or judgment coming?

James W. Skillen

## Dr. Hendrik Woldring Visits Campus

During the week of February 9, Dr. Hendrik Woldring, Associate Professor of Social Philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, visited Dordt's campus. Dr. Woldring is the co-author of an important, comprehensive study on Calvinistic social philosophy in the Netherlands during the past 150 years entitled *A Reformational Critique of Society* (1980). He has also been associated with several Christian Democratic political parties and research institutes.

Dr. Woldring gave two public lectures on "Key Problems in a Reformed Social Critique" dealing with societal differentiation and pluralism. These important problems were discussed in relation to the attempts by thinkers in the Kuyperian tradition to provide

theoretical answers to them. He began with a helpful historical overview of the social thought of G. Groen van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, Hendrik van Riessen, and Bob Goudzwaard. He pointed out how these thinkers developed a Reformational social philosophy that was in self-conscious opposition to the secularistic and unbelieving spirit of the modern age. These Christian thinkers saw the basic relationship between the ordinances of God found in the structures of creation and those found in scripture. On this foundation Dooyeweerd constructed a comprehensive and systematic social philosophy based upon presuppositionalism and a transcendental critique of all systems of social thought both Christian and