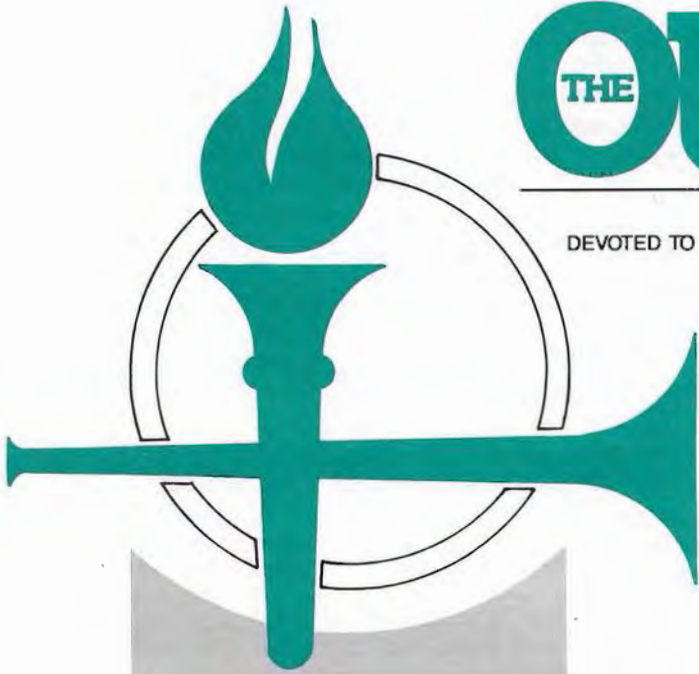


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH SEPTEMBER 1987



**Liberation
Theology**

**Voice of a
Nicargauan Indian**

The AIDS Epidemic

Drinking From the Struck Rock

John Blankespoor

“The Lord answered Moses, ‘Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock and water will come out of it for the people to drink.’ So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Merribah, because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not.’” (Exodus 17: 5-7)

“I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.” These words, we hear every time the law is read to us. Again and again we as a church are reminded of what we were, and what we now are by the grace of God. We are saved by grace. In that same faithful grace the Lord led the Israelites through the wilderness. By wonders every day, the manna fell from the sky and neither their clothes nor shoes (sandals) wore out. They were led by the cloud. In the immediate context here, He made bitter water sweet. All these essentially were God’s mercies in Christ, given according to His promises. God graciously and faithfully cared for them.

As a result, God wanted them to trust in His mercies and goodness. Also, when sometimes the way became “dark” for them and they saw no chance of survival.

That’s how the Lord wants us to live, trusting in Him and looking to Him for all our spiritual and physical needs . . . looking to Him who by grace has initially saved us and been faithful to us in all of the past years.

• • • • •

In our text Israel had reached another time of need in the desert. The desert was dry in most areas. For a nation of perhaps two million people with much livestock, a lot of water was needed every day. Not far from them there were some wells but they belonged to the Amalekites.

What did the Israelites do? Turn to the Lord who had helped them with miracles again and again? No, they again murmured. Again they tempted God. This means that they denied God’s interest and power. Apparently God could not help them, or didn’t want to. Had they only stayed in Egypt! And they were ready to stone Moses to death.

Weren’t these Israelites wicked people? That’s how we often look at them.

But, generally, church people are not different from others. Doctrinally, we confess to believe in salvation by grace alone, and the faithfulness of God — that everything in our lives comes to us from His gracious all-embracing providence, so that He has provided for us all that we have needed.

At present, and also looking at the future, we often get an entirely different impression of the church, including ourselves. We still hear a lot of grumbling and griping as was heard in the camp of the Israelites. Take a comprehensive look, an honest look, at people *as they are and live*. Look at people with physical and spiritual needs, people of all classes, children, young people, working people, parents and older people, people who are ill, who have uncountable burdens and problems. What do we usually hear? Complaints and murmurings — about the weather, about their own experiences, about how they feel, about the government, about the high costs of living, and ever so many other things.

At the same time we confess that we believe in a heavenly Father who carefully counts the hairs of our heads each day.

• • • • •

What a miracle the Lord performs through Moses!

Moses is first of all given several instructions. With his staff in his hand, he must take the elders of Israel with him. These men must be witnesses of what will happen so that they relate it to all of the people. After all, they couldn’t watch it on

T.V. Consider the rock, perhaps a massive boulder. One of the psalmists tells of a rock as hard as flint, and not "soft" limestone. The rock, in the history of the Bible, often represents God. Again and again He is called the Rock. One writer says that God is his rock and salvation. Another one prays, "lead me to the rock that is higher than I." We all know the song, "Rock of Ages." Rocks are relatively durable and big rocks cannot be moved. The rock therefore symbolizes something that is unchangeable, solid and immovable. This can be said of no one but God, the covenant God of Israel, the God of promises. He is "solid," dependable and everlasting.

Moses must strike the rock. We may perhaps think of the striking of the Son of God later in history for the sins of His people. Israel should have been struck, but Christ will suffer in their stead. God loves His people so much that He gives Himself in His Son.

Out of the rock comes water. Water stands for life. Jesus later often calls Himself the water of life.

But who ever heard of water coming out of a rock as hard as flint? One might be able to squeeze a little water out of a plant, some more than others. But not out of a rock. God is the God of miracles. We may think of this miracle as typifying the great miracle of Christ suffering on the cross to give us eternal life.

Waters gushed, we read. There evidently was a sizeable stream of water. *God never gives in small measures.* The Scriptures speak of His abounding grace.

Who could help but be amazed when seeing such a miracle!

The rock "followed them," says Paul in I Cor. 10:4. Always Jesus was with them, giving them Himself in abundance. This is true for us too.

Later we read of a similar situation when the Israelites again needed water (Numbers 20). This time Moses had to speak to the rock, not strike it. The Lord wanted His people to see Him again in His amazing patient love. But Moses was angry. And the people, no doubt, saw that. Moses did "bring" forth water. But the people saw him do it in anger — as an angry mediator of the Lord. In doing this he did not sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the people. The meekest man on earth was not able to "put up" with these people any more. But God was still patient. As a result the Lord already here told him that he would not be able to lead the people into the promised land.

No Moses, no Noah, no David or any other saint was equal to the task of saving God's people. There's only one who can do this, Jesus Christ the gift of God Himself.

That's the miracle of salvation for us sinners.

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What a God we have! He is the great, everlasting Rock with unbelievable patience and love. He is always faithful. If the type, the large flow of water coming out of this rock is

THE OUTLOOK

(USPS 633-980)



Published Monthly July-August Issue Combined

"And the three companies blew the trumpets... and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands... and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

JOURNAL OF REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.

Send all copy to Managing Editor, Rev. Peter De Jong, 4985 Sequoia Dr., S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508. Phone (616) 698-6267.

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This periodical is owned and published by Reformed Fellowship, Inc., a religious and strictly non-profit organization composed of a group of Christian believers who hold to the Reformed Faith. Its purpose is to give sharpened expression to this Faith, to stimulate the doctrinal sensitivities of those who profess this Faith, to promote the spiritual welfare and purity of the Christian Reformed Church particularly and also of other Reformed churches, and as far as possible to further the interests of all Christian action and institutions of Reformed character.

The publishers of this journal express their adherence to the Calvinistic creeds as formulated in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

All contributions represent the personal views of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the members of Reformed Fellowship, Inc.

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.50 per year, \$13.50 for 2 years (Canada rates \$11.50 per year, \$21.00 for 2 years). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Registered as Second Class mail under permit #9489 at Norwich, Ontario

EDITORIAL AND CIRCULATION OFFICES

THE OUTLOOK
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Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9-11 a.m.
After Office Hours - please call: 452-9519

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wonderful, how much more is the fulfillment wonderful, the immeasurable riches of the Holy Spirit in Christ.

All these wonders shown the Israelites are given us for warnings, says Paul (I Cor. 10).

"Beware," says Paul. With most of the Israelites God was not pleased. This simply means that most of these members of that Old Testament church were not saved. Why not? Because knowing this God and seeing the miracles of his incredible patience and love, they did not *trust in Him*. Instead, they were always murmuring.

We all encounter difficult circumstances, at one time more than at another. And for some people

these are more difficult than others. Who does not know what adversity is? What does the Lord want us to do? Trust Him as the everlasting Rock of promises and mercies in Christ. But we often grumble and worry. How this displeases Him!

This lesson of the Israelites speaks to us. The Heidelberg Catechism says that the most holy of God's people have only a beginning of the new obedience. But this does mean that there *has to be a beginning* also of this trust and that we complain less and are more contented.

Every Christian wants to live this way. "Lord I believe, help me overcome my unbelief."

Missionary Rooy and Liberation Theology

Dr. Sidney H. Rooy, since 1954 a minister in the CRC, did graduate study at the Free University at Amsterdam in the Netherlands and has since 1965 been a missionary in Argentina, teaching in an ecumenical protestant seminary. His writings for some time have shown a preoccupation with Liberation Theology. The degree to which he identifies himself with this social-political movement and the intensity with which he promotes it became clearly evident in an address at Calvin Theological Seminary on April 9, 1987 on "Liberation Theology and Social Justice." The April 11 *G.R. Press* account of that meeting repeatedly highlights his central theme that "there are two Gods in Central America," the God of the oppressor and the God of the oppressed.

"Running through all of the churches is the question of which God they follow," he added. "I believe we in this country and in Latin America are living in a state of mortal sin for permitting and imposing sub-human conditions on the people in such countries as Honduras," he said. "Those who believe in the true God, the God of life," he said, "will side with those who want to create decent living conditions for all people." The way to do this as he sees it, is "to help the people in Central America with economic aid, but to stop shipping them weapons."

The tape of the missionary's address fully substantiates the news report of its political message. In the December 1984 *OUTLOOK* we called attention to a report, highly publicized among the Liberal Reformed Churches in the

Netherlands, in which Rooy charged us with "murdering brothers and sisters in the Lord" because our government was helping Central American countries to resist Communist takeover. That report and his recent speech both vividly recalled a sermon we heard in Peking, China, 40 years ago by a Liberal Presbyterian missionary in which he praised the Communists for their efforts to help the people and condemned the Christian churches for failing to support their revolution. Then as now, one saw and heard supposedly Christian missionaries promoting the Communists' anti-Christian movement (and we saw and see the argument, "But this one is different.")

Missionary Rooy's message is significant for both our churches' missions in which he has been taking a prominent place for 20 years and for the direction of our churches' educational program, as he is, as the *Press* says, "one of nine scholars and students studying the situation in Central America this year at the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship." They have recently spent 2 months in Central America to prepare to write a book on their findings. In the Nov. 1985 *OUTLOOK* we called attention to Calvin College English professor, Dr. Edward Ericson's critical *Reformed Journal* article (August, 1985) about the consistently left-ward bias of most of Calvin's faculty, which he expected to highly prejudice this year's Central American study. In view of its (missionary and educational) importance, two knowledgeable correspondents evaluate Dr. Rooy's address.

A Critical Evaluation

Johan D. Tangelder

A man with a heart overflowing with compassion: longing to see justice done, the hungry fed and the poor properly housed, clothed and treated with dignity. This was my initial reaction as I listened to Dr. Sidney Rooy's lecture on "Crisis and Challenge in Central America." The terrible grinding poverty in Third World countries is shocking, and a disgrace. When we lived in Negros Occidental, one of the poorest provinces in the Philippines, we were daily confronted by appalling poverty, terrible suffering, gross injustice and the immense disparity between the rich and the poor. So I share Dr. Rooy's passion for justice. The below-subsistence level of the poor multitudes in the Third World is an abomination to the Lord. But as I pondered Dr. Rooy's analysis of Central America's economic and social crisis and his proposal for change, I was left with an uneasy feeling.

1. America the Guilty

Dr. Rooy claims that Central America's spiritual crisis is caused by hunger, the unjust income distribution, class inequalities, racial tension and religious quarrels. Who is to blame for those conditions? The U.S.! It has imposed sub-human conditions south of its borders. It is living in a state of mortal sin. But not all Central America's problems of corruption and general injustice can be attributed to the U.S. Why put U.S. Christians on a constant guilt trip? Luis Burstin, a Costa Rican doctor and journalist, calls claims that the northern nations are responsible for the poverty of Latin America "political mythology." Burstin points out that "hunger, political turmoil, instability, terror, and corruption are the oldest stories in Latin America and did not begin with American investment in the region." On the one hand, nobody will deny that rich and powerful nations have at times taken advantage of their privileged position. And the rich nations do have a responsibility towards the poor and the suffering. On the other hand, today's greatest colonial power, Russia, is guilty of unprecedented

oppression, plunder and enslavement of many nations. Afghanistan's invasion is a gruesome example. Its foreign aid consists mainly of military hardware.

2. Need for Change.

The wrongs must be righted. But the solutions offered by Dr. Rooy appear to be mainly on the horizontal level. As a church, we must send reconstruction and development aid, take care of the refugees in Central America, U.S. and Canada. A democracy from the bottom up, people's participation, is called for. The logic of the majority must dominate. We need to take positive action. Is this not socializing and politicizing the Gospel? In offering solutions, Dr. Rooy appears to be influenced by Latin American liberation theology, which is a form of political theology. This theology is not dependent on Scripture for its social analysis but on the social sciences, the study of man. Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the most influential of the Latin American liberation theologians, asserts that theology should start with "real questions" derived from the world, not Scriptures.

3. An Appraisal.

What is the message of the church? To change social structures? Scriptures teach that hearts must be changed before society can be reformed. Suffering, injustice and poverty are spiritual problems. Their root cause is man's alienation from God. Rebellious man must be reconciled to God. His spiritual hunger for a personal relationship with God must be met. There is still heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned. People must change, both poor and rich. The church must reject attempts to politicize the Gospel, to try to bring the unregenerate world into the Kingdom. Man is not perfectible. The Biblical doctrine of sin gives a sober and even pessimistic view of the world, society and mankind. Christians should have no illusions about

themselves, society or the world. Heaven on earth, we will not get through human efforts. Only divine intervention will usher in the Kingdom. Am I saying that Christians should not participate in politics? No. Christians must be involved in political action based on their faith conviction. In the name of the Lord the hungry must be fed and justice must be sought. But our actions cannot make a new creation.

Dr. Rooy confronted his audience with the intense suffering he had witnessed in Central

America. We need to be reminded of the plight of the suffering. We can become so complacent in the midst of all of our material wealth. But I question his proposed solutions. The Word may not become divorced from the deed. And Dr. Rooy tends to emphasize the deed at the expense of the Word.

Rev. Johan D. Tangelder, the pastor of the East C.R. church of Strathroy, Ontario, Canada, has served as missionary in the Philippines.

Legitimizing Liberation Theology

Robert Grossmann

“Liberation Theology,” What is it?

During the last twenty years an important phenomenon has overtaken the foreign mission work of the “mainline” denominations in the United States, particularly in their work in Latin America. This phenomenon is the rise of a “liberation theology” which has affected not only protestant missions and churches but has also divided Roman Catholics into two opposite camps.

Liberation theology grew up as a result of a sociological rather than a theological approach to missions. During the 1960's the missionary sending churches became less tied to the God-centered world-view of the Bible and accepted a liberal theology which emphasizes a far more man-centered or humanistic approach. Behind this, of course, lies the age-old depreciation of the Bible as God's infallible written Word and the acceptance of the idea that our culture is so different from that of biblical times that the message of the Bible must be generalized into a message of love which unconditionally accepts all sinners as God's children whether they believe in Him or not.

When all men are viewed in terms of their common humanity, rather than in terms of their covenant-keeping or covenant-breaking actions toward God, it is the human situation that becomes most important. This sociological approach to man by churches and missions during the last 20 years occurred at the same time that

the Marxist nations of the world have been most active in seeking to impress their ideas upon the peoples and governments of the poorer nations. Marxism, of course, also approaches man from a humanistic point of view.

Both the Marxists and the liberal missionaries from their somewhat different, but nevertheless commonly humanistic, points of view have come to the same conclusions about man's problems. Man's two basic problems are seen by both of these groups as being lack of wealth and lack of freedom. Not surprisingly, they have also come to similar conclusions about how to solve man's problems in the third world; 1) redistribute wealth, and 2) get rid of outside influences. If the problems are hunger and oppression, the answers are food and freedom.

The marriage of the liberal Christian desire to do something about the problems of hunger and oppression in Latin America with the Marxist ideals of redistribution and freedom have led to the development of “liberation theology.” Liberation theology is a way of reading the Bible and doing the work of the church which focuses on the problems of hunger and oppression. Jesus Christ is seen as focusing his ministry on the materially poor and liberating them from the oppression of their Jewish and Roman masters.

Established Christianity in Latin America is seen by liberation theologians as either supporting the oppressor in maintaining the present situation, or as helping with the revolution to feed the

hungry and free the oppressed. The questions of personal sin and of where persons will spend eternity can, on this accounting, only be addressed after the primary problems of hunger and oppression have been solved. Actually, liberation theologians ignore the matter of personal sin and its consequences and locate sin in the "oppressive" structures and leaders of society. In typically Marxist-fashion, these structures and leaders are looked upon as being by nature oppressive, simply because they do handle wealth and power.

Liberation theology has found fertile ground in the mainline protestant denominations in the United States because those denominations have long since adopted the man-centered theologies of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. The acceptance of liberation theology and the sending of missionaries who teach it has gone so far that some national churches in Latin America have been telling the Americans to keep their missionaries at home. This theology has also caused a deep rift in the Roman Catholic Church where a number of monastic orders have been given over to the teaching and practice of liberation theology.

On the other side of the ledger, those denominations which have emphasized the infallibility of Scripture and the importance of salvation from sin, have strongly rejected liberation theology as being foreign to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some "evangelicals" have indeed made greater or lesser accommodations to this new movement, but a line of distinction has grown up between traditional Christians of whatever denomination and those from the same denominations who follow the "theology of liberation." This is so much the case that "liberation" Catholics and protestants find themselves working together in opposition to Catholics and protestants who hold views more traditional in their own communions.

Liberation Theology and the CRC

The issue of the reaction of the Christian Reformed Churches in North America to liberation theology is one that is real, but which has remained mostly out of sight until recently. Several of the missionaries of the CRC in Latin America have been working side by side with the followers of liberation theology and have expressed appreciation for its ideas during visits to the churches of the denomination. The Rev. Carl Bosma, who teaches theology students in Brazil, and Dr. Sidney Rooy, who teaches at an ecumenical protestant seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, have both expressed agreement with the assessments of the Latin American scene made by the liberation theologians. Some relationship to liberation theology is necessary to anyone seeking to do Christian work in Central and South America; these representatives of the CRC have given it a relation, one however that many in the church might wish to question.

During the past year, the issue of a relation of the CRC to liberation theology has come closer to home as Dr. Rooy has been on the Calvin College and Seminary campus as part of a team studying the question of social justice in Latin America. On April 9, 1987, Dr. Rooy addressed the Calvin Seminary student body on the subject, "The Crisis and Challenge of Central America for the Christian Church." In this address, Dr. Rooy made very clear his appreciation for and dependence upon the liberation theologians for their analysis of the problems in Latin America. Indeed, in his speech, Dr. Rooy quoted extensively from liberation theologians to bolster many of his points, clearly accepting their positions as his own. In several hearings of the tape of his lecture, this writer has not been able to detect anything approaching a criticism of any of their ideas.

While the above may not demonstrate conclusively that Dr. Rooy himself accepts the whole of liberation theology, the implication, particularly for his audience of seminary students, is clear. The only acceptable basis on which to face the "crisis in Central America" is that of the analysis and conclusion of liberation theology. Furthermore, the introduction of Dr. Rooy as one whose experience in South America and whose personal acquaintance with liberation theologians make him an authority on the subject of his address would lead all but the most critical of students to think that liberation theology is just a part of standard Christian thinking and that its analyses are the most biblical and useful ones we might use in our approach to Latin America.

Now, while we certainly have no personal problem with Dr. Rooy (he sounds like an intelligent and friendly man), we must point out that the roots and fruits of liberation theology, even as he discussed them at Calvin Seminary, are diametrically opposed to the historic Christian faith and to the teaching of the Bible. If a majority of the students at Calvin are accepting the ideas Dr. Rooy was expounding, the Christian Reformed Churches are in for a revolution which will Marxize their theology. Such a revolution will proceed not with gunsmoke and bombs, but will change the church very basically by exchanging its spiritual heritage for a materialistic world and life view. To help understand these implications it will be worthwhile to look critically at a few of the points Dr. Rooy made in his lecture.

Liberation Theology Applied

As he began his lecture to the Calvin Seminary students, Dr. Rooy explained that we must follow Dooyeweerd in rejecting the body-soul, nature-grace dualism which characterizes fundamentalism and the more scholastic Reformed position. While that sounds good at first, it becomes immediately apparent that this means for Dr. Rooy the acceptance of a unified (monistic) materialism as our worldview. He tells us that we need to look at reality through the eyes of liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez who

analyzes man's relationships into three kinds, 1) Religious and Spiritual, 2) Psychological and Historical, and 3) Political and Social.

Interestingly, even the "religious and spiritual" relationships of man are seen in this analysis as being man-centered and horizontal. The question here is not that of a person's relationship to his Creator-God, but of his relationship locally and personally to the community as "God's children."

The fundamental identity made here between all men and "God's children," while ignoring what the Bible makes fundamental, namely, their relationship to God as covenant-keepers or covenant-breakers, leads to fundamentally anti-Christian conclusions, as we have pointed out above. One of the conclusions Dr. Rooy teaches, this time referring to the another liberation theologian, Pablo Richards, is that we must choose between "being our brother's keeper," and "being saved out of the present misery for a future state." Dr. Rooy concludes that the future state is to be ignored. Evidently for him, hunger is far worse than hell, and heaven can wait while oppression is solved. How, we would ask, is this different from Esau, who sold his part in the covenant of grace for a mess of pottage? A slave laborer in a Russian prison camp can hear, believe and be saved from hell by the gospel of Jesus Christ without adding one calorie to his daily food intake. This does not mean that we should ignore oppression, but it does say something about the nature and priority of the gospel.

Dr. Rooy goes to some length to assure his listeners that the great spiritual problem in Latin America is *hunger*. Ask the people themselves, he urges us, and they will tell you. The problem is not communism or war, but hunger. Again we must note that neither Jesus nor his disciples *asked* their hearers to put their finger on the problem; they told them the problem, and they *always* told them that the problem is *sin*. The biblical gospel is *always* a call for sinners to repent and trust in Christ; it promises God's forgiveness to all who do repent and believe. The gospel does not put material welfare on a par with our relationship to God. Indeed, it does quite the opposite. Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Did Jesus feed the five thousand? Of course he did. But he later found it necessary to rebuke some of them for following him for the wrong reason, that is, in order to fill their stomachs (John 6:26-27). In fact, he tells them in the second of these two verses *not* to labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures to eternal life. "The Kingdom of God is *not* food and drink, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:6). This does not mean that helping the poor has nothing to do with Christianity. Not at all! But it does mean that Christianity cannot be defined as, or equated with, helping the poor.

Jesus did not demonstrate to the disciples of John the Baptist that he was the Christ by the fact that they could see the poor eating, but by the fact that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." Furthermore, there is no indication in Scripture that Jesus or his disciples ever used the method of feeding the poor as a means of bringing the gospel to them. Healing the sick, yes, but feeding the poor, no.

The New Testament's emphasis on helping the poor rests on two pillars; 1) that all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ, and 2) that having received mercy from God, we ought to be merciful toward one another. Thus, it is not surprising that the New Testament emphasis is upon helping other Christians. Again, this does not mean that we ought not to be concerned about alleviating material needs in all of society, but we cannot say that this is the central requirement of the Bible.

Among Dr. Rooy's more fundamental mistakes is that of agreeing with the liberation theologians that one of man's basic problems is the lack of freedom. Therefore he claims that we should follow the "logic of the majority" as it is expounded by the liberation theologians rather than attempting to get Latin Americans to follow the principles that have been successful in the western world. He calls this latter method one of "imposing our religious and political ideas" on them. They need, he tells us, to be free to determine their own destiny. Without getting into the ramifications of Calvinism for *anyone* determining his own destiny, we need to see that man's problems arise from *sin*, not from a *lack of freedom*.

We live in a world cursed by God because of *our* sins. Man is not an innocent victim who simply needs freedom to choose his own destiny. Man needs the radical, transforming power of the gospel and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Without that power in his life, he remains under the curse of God; rightfully so, and we should not be surprised if that curse causes him problems. It does for all men, in whatever situation they live materially. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," (Rom. 1:18). Our greatest danger as human beings, whether rich or poor, bond or free, is not nuclear annihilation or poisoning, not poverty and hunger, but that we will go to our graves with the wrath of God abiding on us.

This is not to ignore or to underestimate the material problems of our world, and particularly of Latin America. It is, it seems to this writer, only to put them into a biblical perspective. Marxism has a track record, not one that I would wish upon any individual or nation. May God spare us the "liberation" of liberation theology.

Rev. Robert Grossmann is a professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary at Orange City, Iowa and a minister in the Reformed Church in the U.S.

Voice of a Nicaraguan Indian

Fudy Wilson

I am an Indian from Nicaragua who was born and lived in that country for many years. I am a citizen of it, but not a Somosista. I am a Christian who received Christ as my personal Savior. Because of the poverty of my country, I only finished high school in a Moravian Christian school.

I have many things I want to share with you, for I notice that many people in the U.S.A. have a distorted image of my beloved, suffering country. Some highly educated people who have Marxist sympathies are making propaganda against our people. How can anyone who visits Nicaragua for a couple of weeks or less make a big and accurate report on the country? For your information, friends, these people have never been where the suffering Christians are!

In Nicaragua there are two groups of believers. The Marxists have "their own church" which is called "official." All those who follow the Marxist doctrine are trying their best to conquer all Nicaraguans by force and hunger. None of the Christian pastors has the freedom to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Nicaragua one person cannot have confidence in another, because the "official" members and their "commanders" are working very hard against those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Ruler and Owner of His church.

Anyone who wants to know about the real Christian struggle in Nicaragua must go where the Indians, the Tuskru tara, Bihmuna, Raiti, Uhri, Kisalaya, Waspam, Kamla, Yulu, Karawala, etc., live.

Why do these men say: Liberation Theology is best, because it teaches freedom and dignity? The Communists, unfortunately, use many "pastors" to speak for them. I know that the Latin American seminary in Costa Rica was the instruction center for Nicaragua Atheistic government people when they were fighting against the Somoza regime. These communist-supporting pastors have never known the history of the church in Cuba,

Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, etc. These so-called "pastors" are against the true Bible teaching. These men may have strong support from many churches in the U.S. and Canada, because many in those churches do not know Nicaragua and many in those churches are not aware of what real gospel preaching means.

One must go where the Christians are, not in Managua City, or San Jose, or San Salvador, or Guatamala City, but in the small villages to see real persecution. I am a Nicaraguan and know my country very well. I am not just relating what others told me, but I lived 5 years under Communist discrimination against the church.

Friends, please do not believe Communist-supporting "pastors." If they were from Nicaragua or any other Communist countries, they would not be trying to convince you, because they would not have big bank accounts and their children would never have a chance to attend a Christian school or college.

I could mention many people who support the Atheistic Communist Sandonistas in Nicaragua. These people should be challenged in open discussion with questions like these:

1. Were any people killed? Why? How many?
2. Is there any freedom of speech and expression? Are pastors (non- "official") free to preach the real Gospel without being in danger?
3. If the Communist party practices "democracy," why do thousands of private properties no longer exist in Nicaragua today?
4. Why did the soldiers kill many new-born babies during the forceful "relocation" in 1981-82?

During that exodus, the Communist army surrounded all Miskitu and Sumu Indian villages, some 8,000 to 12,000 people, and drove them a long distance away for resettlement. The army began to destroy all Indian goods, houses, churches, schools, cattle, farms, pets, and lands, as well as their moral, spiritual and social life and fellowship. Much of what they owned was stolen or burned. During the 10 to 15 day forced journey, babies who were born on the way were bayoneted by the red army, and after the birth, the mothers, treated like animals, were forced to continue walking. The treatment of many crying older people, blind and handicapped, children and sick was inhuman.

My friends, I could tell much more to prove to you what this "democratic" government of the enemy of Christians is doing against the people of God. Anyone who speaks in favor of this Atheistic movement must think what he is doing. When you start your speech, remember that you are not talking in favor of Jesus Christ, but are the instrument of those who hate your brethren and sisters. Regardless of your degrees, real Christian witness is not based on Liberation Theology, but on the true Christian faith. You will be responsible before Jesus when He appears. Remember, although you may gain publicity or respect, you are an instrument of evil and God will judge us in the last day.

Continued Support for Communist Cepad

The CRC Synod was overtured by Classis B.C. North-West to instruct its "World Ministries — CRWRC to discontinue giving aid to CEPAD in Nicaragua.

Grounds:

1. CEPAD appears to be a tool of the communist Sandinista government.
2. CRWRC has inadequate control over how the money given to CEPAD is spent.
3. CEPAD has not given accurate account of how money received from CRWRC has been of aid to farmers.
4. CEPAD already receives aid from at least twenty organizations including the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches (\$4.5 million for 1987) (1987 Agenda, p. 458, Overture 44).

(These grounds were carefully and extensively documented).

When the Director of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee defended CEPAD (The Evangelical Committee for Relief and Development), the Synod, rejecting the overture, continued the funding of CEPAD, allotting, (according to *The Banner*) "\$75,000 to Nicaragua this year."

What are the facts about CEPAD, criticized by the overture as a Communist tool, defended by the director of World Relief, and continuing to be supported by decision of our church synod?

A U.S. *Department of State Publication 9467, issued December, 1986 on HUMAN RIGHTS in NICARAGUA under the SANDINISTAS*, (246 pp.), under Annex 9 (pp. 145-151), "The Situation in the Protestant Church," sheds a considerable amount of light on this controversial agency. Kate Rafferty is a journalist and specialist in Latin American religious affairs, who has frequently travelled to Nicaragua since 1979 for the Open Door News Service. In the report of an extended interview by the Institute of Religion and Democracy, she explained that "CEPAD was set up as a relief and development group to receive

overseas financial support for the work already begun by a group of pastors at the time of the earthquake in 1972. It was never intended to be an ecumenical council which would speak for the churches." "Indeed, three years ago CEPAD sought to establish an organization of pastors, the National Council of Evangelical Pastors of Nicaragua (CNPEN), which would be more representative. However, one year later this group severed its connection with CEPAD because of the latter's increasing involvement with the present government."

"Although it is true that under Somoza CEPAD worked with the government, they didn't feel compelled to make statements and publish educational materials lauding the regime, as they are now doing. CEPAD goes way beyond the relationship with the government necessary to carry out relief and development work. CEPAD diverts funds, which American Christians probably assume are used for humanitarian purposes, to political work for the regime. Several pastors I spoke with in Matagalpa province reported that CEPAD donated eleven four-wheel drive vehicles for use by the Sandinista police." "CEPAD's international affairs director, Sixto Ulloa, ran for election on the Sandinista ticket. What you can't understand until you talk with evangelicals outside the CEPAD staff is how much CEPAD's relationship with the Sandinistas has alienated most evangelicals." "I heard of many cases in which CEPAD would not help pastors who were viewed as insufficiently supportive of the Sandinistas. During the election campaign CEPAD was particularly blatant in threatening to withhold benefits from those who might boycott the elections." This and a subsequent article from *The United Methodist Reporter* on the arrest and harassment of church officials make clearly evident how CEPAD has become the willing ally and tool to promote the aims of the Communist government and suppress dissent.

Humberto Belli in his book *BREAKING FAITH*, published by the Puebla Institute in 1985, repeatedly shows how CEPAD promotes a liberation theology that supports the Communist revolution. It, "in conjunction with two other revolutionary Christian organizations, published a popularly written book illustrated with cartoons in which Marx is praised and portrayed as a friend of Christians" and the Cuban revolution is made "a model for Latin America" (p. 160). CEPAD is shown to be promoting revolution by its governmental literature, pastor training, influencing foreign visitors, and channeling "at least some of its relief supplies through the Sandinista Defense Committees" (p. 178).

The fact that the World Council (WCC) through CEPAD promotes Communist revolution should surprise no one. It has long been channeling vast sums of money to support anti-Christian Communist guerillas in Africa. But how can any Bible-believing Christian support such anti-Christian activity?

—PDJ

Reformed Christian Schools

Jelle Tuininga

There is a trend in our Christian schools of late that is disturbing and bodes no good for the future of such schools. It is the trend (more often than not a deliberate trend) in CSI schools to get away from any specific reference to the Reformed creeds in the constitution of these schools. It shows a desire to get away from anything too specifically Reformed in our schools. We want to be “generally Christian” or “generally evangelical” or “non-denominational” (whatever that means). But the last thing we want is to be distinctively and unashamedly Reformed. That’s something we feel we have to apologize for in order to attract students from other backgrounds.

Sometimes it’s a concern about numbers that lies behind this trend; we want to attract as many students as possible. In times of declining enrollment from our own circles, we want to fill the gaps with other students. More students mean more money and a smaller deficit.

Of course, I’m not opposed to admitting students from non-Reformed backgrounds into our schools. I believe we have something to offer them. The Reformed faith is for everyone. But then we must offer them the best we have — and that is the Reformed understanding of things. Yet that is precisely what we are trying to de-emphasize or get rid of all together. We have something so rich and beautiful to offer, but we think others might not appreciate it, so we try to tone it down. The end result is that we’re losing the very thing which attracted some of these other students in the first place.

I do not understand this mentality. I believe it is a very sad development and that we stand to lose far more than most people are aware of. The biblical understanding of the covenant, the world-embracing scope of God’s kingdom, the radical fall into sin and a similar radical redemption in Christ — these are all matters of vital importance for Christian education. The school is not a church, to be sure, but “doctrine” undergirds every school worth its salt. Without biblical underpinnings no Christian school can survive, let alone flourish.

The disease affecting our schools is the same one evident in our churches: a failure to see the biblical depth and beauty of the Reformed faith; a serious lack of well-developed, sensitive “Reformed feelers” among the great majority of our people, including many leaders. You find this lack among teachers, board members, and parents,

and the result is that we are losing the Reformed character of our schools default. Where we fail, by other evangelicals come in to fill up the gap.

Better a broadly “evangelical” Christian school than no Christian school at all — at least if the educational standard is up to par. But I am not satisfied with something that is second best. I want the very best — I want my children taught in school what I teach them at home and in the church — and that is the unalloyed Biblical faith which we know as the Reformed faith. Why so many among us are willing to trade this in for something inferior I cannot understand. Our school boards must do a better job, and our Christian colleges too. For the future welfare of our children and also the future of the Reformed churches we must become knowledgeable about what the Reformed faith really is, and stop compromising with respect to it. It’s also time that more concerned parents speak up and insist on a solid, Reformed education. It’s worth fighting for.

Good Training for Ministers

J. Tuininga

Some time ago someone wrote a letter in the “Voices” column of *The Banner*, calling attention to the fact that it costs a lot more per student to get one’s theological training at Mid-America Reformed Seminary than it does at Calvin Seminary. And, concluded the writer (predictably), the training one gets at Calvin is thoroughly Calvinistic.

The author is entitled to his opinion. But I would just like to say this: It could easily be that (as is often the case with merchandise) one gets what he pays for. Judging by the products, I would say the rule holds here also. At a recent Classis meeting we examined two Calvin grads and one each from Westminster and Mid-America. The difference was striking, to say the least. And it didn’t take any extra talking to convince the elders as to who had the better training. The evidence was too clear. The products themselves are the most accurate criteria. One of the candidates was the first graduate of Mid-America Seminary. Judging by his examination, students receive thorough Reformed training there. It augurs well for the future of this institution. I would like to strongly urge prospective students for the ministry to consider Mid-America for their training. It may cost a bit more (not for the student himself), but money is secondary. It’s the product that counts, and God knows the CRC needs good ministerial products.

The A.I.D.S. Epidemic

Dr. Aaldert Mennega

It is becoming well known that the disease A.I.D.S. is beginning to spread like wildfire in our country, as well as in other parts of the world, and it is, therefore, necessary to take a closer look at it.

The Disease

The initials of AIDS stand for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, and as the name indicates, this disease constitutes a deficiency of the immune system. Because of this deficiency, the patient is not able to fight off the various diseases which come around from time to time, and therefore the person succumbs and dies. And if the virus does not kill the person, it attacks the central nervous system and eventually causes dementia. The AIDS virus is only transmitted by intercourse with a person who has the disease, or by transmission of body fluids such as blood. There is extensive evidence that AIDS is not spread by casual contact.

The disease is spreading at such an alarming rate that we can speak of having a crisis. While it first appeared in the United States only as recently as 1981, figures of those having the disease in 1987 have climbed to 40,000, and already 20,000 have died of it. It is also estimated that between 1 and 4 million people have been exposed to the virus. Of these, 20-30% are expected to develop the disease in the next five years. And the projections for 1991, just four years from now, are that the number of AIDS cases will rise to nearly 300,000. Some predict, furthermore, that the incidence of AIDS in the next ten years will reach the incredible number of 100 million. It is no wonder that some consider AIDS the most devastating epidemic of modern times.

Consequences

It is obvious that there are serious consequences

of such developments, and we will have to come to grips with the problems associated with this disease. We have to come to a full realization of what these numbers of sick and dying people imply. What is our responsibility as a society or as a Christian community in face of this crisis?

In another ten to fifteen years a staggering number of AIDS patients and victims will need medical care and hospitalization. But each hospitalization is very costly. The average hospital stay for these patients is reported to be 167 days, and the cost for each is about \$140,000. We can look forward to a severe shortage of hospital beds, as well as a shortage of people who can and will give medical care. Unfounded fear of contamination may prevent many from entering the health professions.

And who is going to pay for the cost of the whole affair? The health insurance companies, if they cover this disease, are going to have so many claims that their funds might be depleted in a very short time. That also means that health insurance premiums are going to have to go up considerably, so that those who are healthy will pay for the AIDS patients' hospital stays. Gary North predicts that the AIDS problem will destroy the U.S. medical welfare system (*Christian Renewal*, May 25, 1987, p. 11). And employees cannot be fired because of having AIDS, since the disease is politically protected (*C.R.*, p. 13). Since in five or ten years our hospitals will probably be filled with AIDS patients, will they still be safe places for people to receive medical treatment?

There will be other problems as well. Will our schools and colleges be safe places for our children to receive instruction? Where will the innocent AIDS child victims go to school? Will there be so many of them that separate schools should be available for them? Should there be special curricula for these children, so they can learn to cope with their prognosis, and with the

trauma of seeing many of their fellow students die at an early age? Who will guide them and help them to face their many problems? And how much schooling, and of what type, should they get, if their life span is known to be so short?

Facing the Issues

Knowing that a very large number of people is going to die, and that the problem is rapidly getting worse, what are we going to do for those who do not yet know about forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus Christ? Must these people not be evangelized? Can the blood of Christ not cleanse these people before the throne of God as well as those who do not have the disease? And who will take care of the spiritual needs of these masses of people? There will, of course, also be Christians who have gotten the disease, either promiscuously or innocently, but they, too, will have to be ministered to spiritually.

What can and should be done about the situation at the present time? And how should we prepare for the next ten or more years? We have to look ahead if we want to be able to face the situation responsibly as it aggravates over the next several years. We cannot be idle bystanders. Should we look to the government to take charge, or should the Christian Church do it? Should Christians form a new organization, or could we charge the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and Mission Boards to develop ways to deal with it? Maybe we should follow mother Teresa's example and set up AIDS hospices?

We should also be concerned with the prevention of the further spread of this disease. There is no cure for it, and neither is there a vaccine to protect a person against future exposure. This indicates that there is only one way to prevent the spreading of the disease, and that is by changing the outlook and values of the entire population. Strict monogamy is the only true answer. Living a morally upright life, and being true to your life partner is the way the Bible prescribes for us. But a large segment of our population does not live by biblical standards. This is obvious from the epidemic spread of the venereal diseases, syphilis and gonorrhea, which have continued to skyrocket, in spite of the fact that there has been a medical cure for these diseases for a number of years. Obviously our American population is very promiscuous and has not been persuaded in the past to change its ways.

For some of those who are not living by biblical precepts, the fear of the disease may drive them to change their ways sufficiently to reduce the chance of getting the disease. And those who use injections may be persuaded not to share needles or syringes with anyone.

Health workers are exposed to the blood and body fluids of AIDS patients more than any other occupational group. Their risk would seem to be high, yet the actual infection through work-related activities is practically unheard of.

Church pulpits, radio programs, TV preachers, school programs and other means must be used to warn against promiscuity, and to urge people to live according to guide lines that will insure that they can not contract AIDS. Clean living must be emphasized, if not out of obedience to the commands of God, then at least out of fear for consequences.

President Reagan, in his first major speech dealing with AIDS (as reported in the *Sioux City Journal* of June 1) calls for urgency, compassion, understanding and care, instead of panic, blame, ignorance and rejection.

The president is seeking expanded testing for AIDS to include immigrants; federal, state and local prisoners; marriage license applicants; and patients at V.D. and drug abuse clinics.

Reagan is quoted as saying that "the only thing that can halt the spread of AIDS right now is a change in the behavior of those Americans who are at risk." How true! And he rightly insists that sex education must not be "value neutral."

That many are concerned about the AIDS epidemic is indicated by the fact that during the first week of June the third International Conference on AIDS held in Washington had more than 6000 scientists in attendance.

Comparisons

The AIDS epidemic has been compared to, and could even be worse than, the Black Death (or Bubonic Plague) of the 1340's which wiped out large segments of the European population. While the Black Death caught people unawares and unable to do much about it, we have the advantage of knowing about AIDS and its spread, so that we have at least the opportunity to do something.

This epidemic reminds us of the fiery serpents in the wilderness, as recorded in Numbers 21:4-9, where the Israelites became impatient, and complained about their food. In response, God sent a number of venomous snakes which bit the people so that many died. When the people repented, Moses prayed for them, and God ordered a bronze snake to be made and to be put on top of a pole. All those who looked at the bronze snake were healed. God could heal the fatally snake-bitten Israelites in the wilderness. Can He not also today help those who repent of their ways? Remember what Jesus said in response to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." (John 3:14-15, NIV) There is a message of hope, also for the AIDS patient.

This is no time to panic. Instead we must be ready to meet the situation with the best of our resources. Let us obey God's commands, and be strong and courageous.

Dr. Aaldert Mennega is Professor of Biology at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.

A Cure Worse Than the Disease

Jelle Tuininga

“Vision 21” was the result of a study which was initiated with the good intention of reducing the administrative hureaucracy of the CRC as that now exists (largely) in the Pentagon in Grand Rapids. It wanted to make our ecclesiastical machinery more manageable. And that was a very legitimate and proper goal. Too bad that the cure ended up being worse than the disease — more hierarchy than ever.

Some other way will have to be found to do that which “Vision 21” desired but failed to do. And it seems to me the solution is not all that difficult. If the church wants less administrative bureaucracy and boardism, and fewer agencies, then she will simply have to take the bull by the horns and implement such action. Synod itself (the representative of the churches) is to blame for our present setup, no one else. Synod allowed things to get out of hand, and synod will have to get it back under control. But that means a will to act and to make some tough decisions. A few heads may have to roll, to put it bluntly. We cannot maintain all the agencies on their staff in Grand Rapids if we want to do what “Vision 21” intended to do. It seems to me we could easily do with half the present number of people occupying the denominational building without in the least hurting the church’s programs. In fact, the financial savings alone would be a great asset — funds that could be used for much better purposes. We don’t need all the World and Home Missions executives sitting in the Pentagon. Cut down on the number of reports (also those sent in by home missionaries out on the field), red tape, etc. Half of those now occupying the denominational building should be out on the field themselves, doing the work which they are now telling others to do. We don’t need all these executives sitting in Grand Rapids reading reports, traveling around and making good salaries. It doesn’t do the church one bit of good. The same goes for the office of Stated Clerk. If I have been correctly informed, he started out doing

all the work by himself (first besides a full-time pastorate), while now there are 14 secretaries! Talk of Parkinson’s Law at work! Reduce that staff by seven, and we still have a full number. I even doubt whether we need a *Banner* editor and the staff that goes along with that. The Geref. Kerken never had an official church paper, and, given the present state of affairs, I don’t think the CRC should either. It surely isn’t helping the church to go in a Reformed direction.

No, I’m not being facetious. I’m dead serious about what I’m saying. There is no reason in the world that we need all these executives and their secretaries in the denominational building. We have made ourselves believe over the years that this was necessary, but now we suddenly realize we have a tiger by the tail, and we no longer know how to handle him. Either we get him under control quickly, or the harm will be irreversible.

A few concluding comments:

1. If we want to reduce agencies and administration, then of course we must stop creating new ones. As late as last year we added a new one (Ministry with Retarded Persons), even though some on the floor of synod warned against yet another agency — to no avail. We don’t need agencies and standing committees for every problem that happens to come along.
2. We don’t need all the agencies in Grand Rapids. I think the Back to God Hour has been well served in more than one way by being located away from Grand Rapids. More agencies should move elsewhere. Get rid of centralization.
3. We ought to give serious consideration to introducing regional synods. That would bring much of the work closer to the man in the pew, and we could run the matter from close range, and dismantle the Grand Rapids office. It’s too bad that most conservatives don’t even want to give regional synods a fair hearing. Are they afraid to change the *status quo*?

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Ignorance is Bliss — But is it Biblically Responsible?

At a recent conference some pastor friends and I were discussing the state of the church over lunch. One of them remarked: “We have a serious problem of ignorance in the CRC. Our rank and file membership doesn’t know what’s really going on in various areas and institutions of the church.” We all agreed. But another pastor added this comment: “The real problem is that *people don’t want to know* what is going on regarding certain issues, policies, and practices in the Christian Reformed Church. Because if they did, they would either feel conscience-bound to do something about it, or they would feel guilty about doing nothing. So, if they don’t know, they won’t have to do anything either.”

Such thinking is contrary to Scripture. In his

letters to the churches Paul often declares “I would not have you ignorant, brethren. . .” Paul felt part of his responsibility as a pastor-servant of Christ was to keep God’s people informed. I thought, that’s my responsibility as a CRC pastor too. In fact, it is the responsibility of every office-bearer and leader in the church to be truthfully informed, and to also inform their fellow Christians on matters of faith and practice at issue in the CRC. Deliberate ignorance in these matters can make for superficial happiness and peace among brethren, but it is not Biblically responsible. **TO BE REFORMED IS TO BE INFORMED.**

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