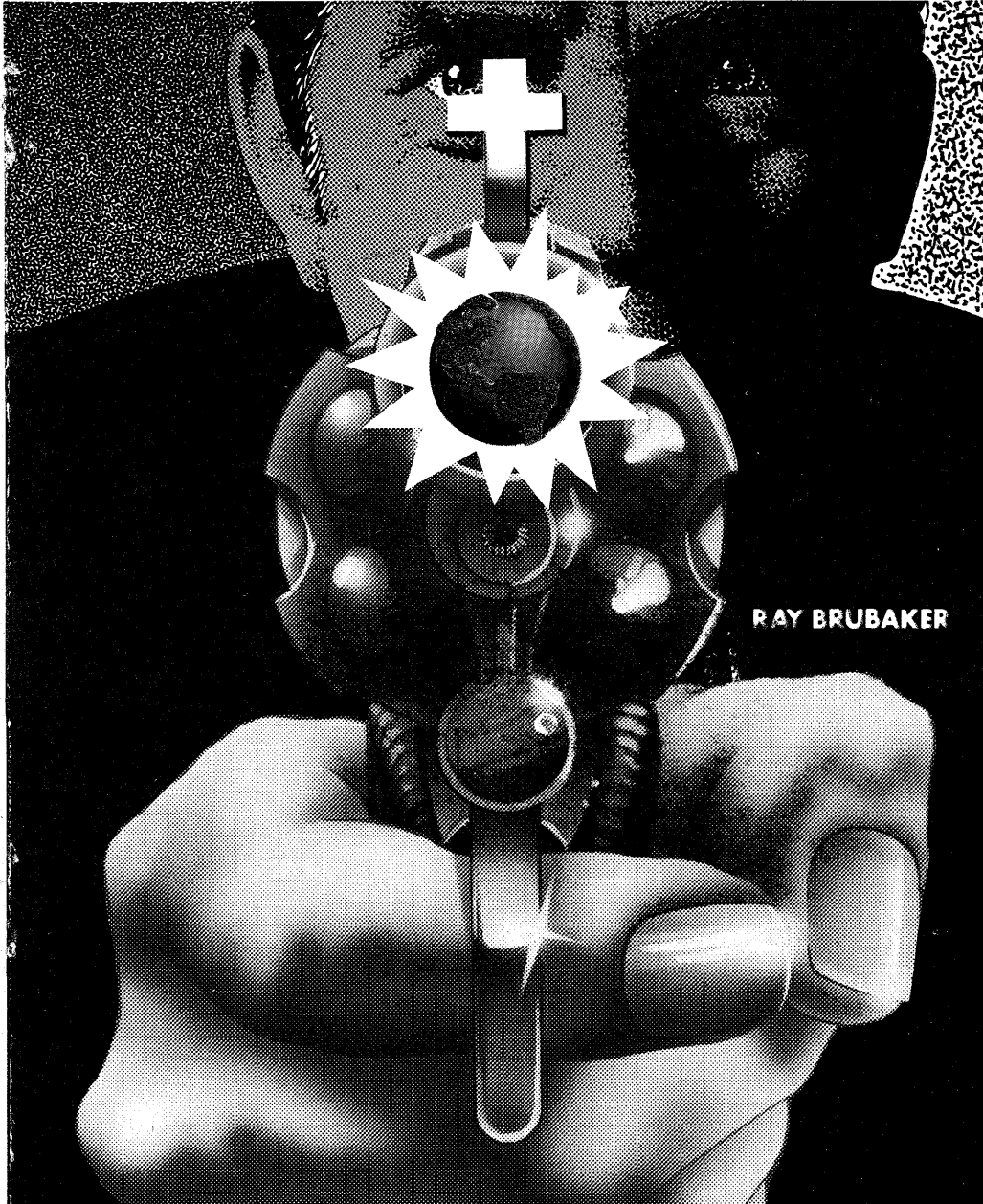


LIBERATION THEOLOGY: **Doctrine of the Antichrist?**



RAY BRUBAKER

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Ray Brubaker

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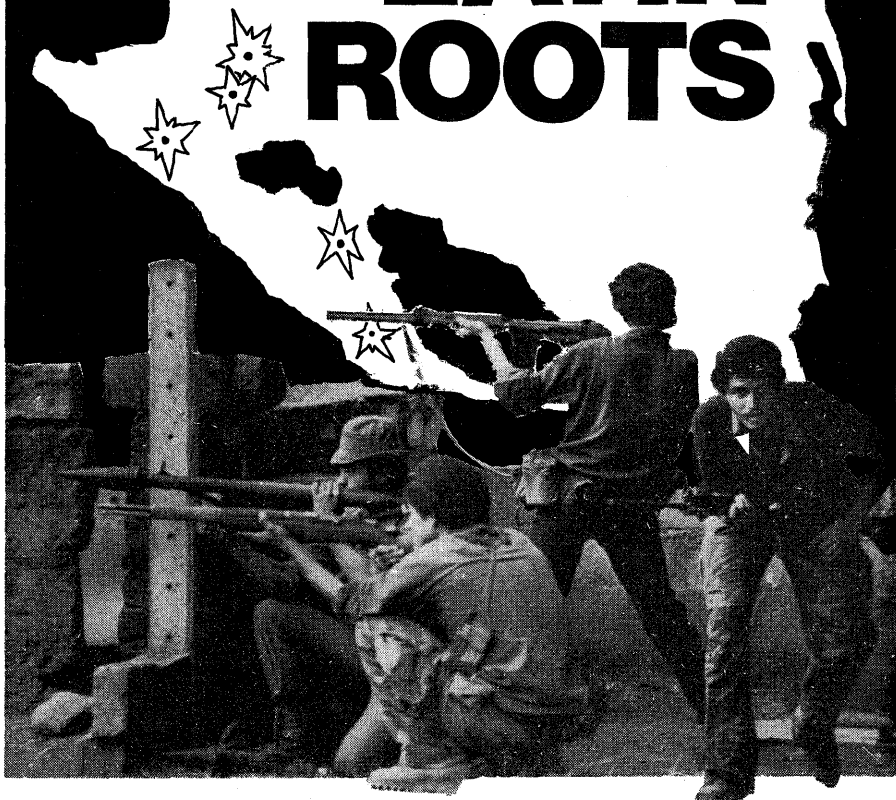
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LIBERATION THEOLOGY:

NICARAGUA

LATIN ROOTS



Secretary of State George P. Shultz said recently that if the United States did not renew its aid to Nicaraguan rebels, it might ultimately have to use its own troops to overthrow the leftist government in Managua.

Stated Shultz, "If we do not take the appropriate steps now to pressure the Sandinistas to live up to their past promises, then we may find later, when we can no longer avoid acting, that the stakes will be higher and the cost greater."

He further noted, "The Sandinistas are committed Marxist-Leninists." And he added, "Those who would cut off these freedom fighters from the rest of the democratic world are, in effect, consigning

Nicaragua to the endless darkness of communist tyranny, and they are leading the United States down a path of greater danger." (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 2/21/85)

The Shultz speech was in harmony with the Reagan administration's view but is counter to that of liberal theologians who support the Sandinista regime under what is called "Liberation Theology."

TIME magazine (2/4/85) notes: "Originally minted in Latin America in the 1960s, Liberation Theology is a controversial current of religious thought that has, in less than two decades, gained widespread acceptance."

In Nicaragua, for example, there are four Roman Catholic priests in the Marxist-led Sandinista government which is contrary to canon law which forbids priests from holding public office.

Today we would ask—What about Liberation Theology? What harm is it doing in the countries where it is getting a foothold? What does the Bible say will ultimately happen? Will Russian Communism and Roman Catholicism maintain their differences, or will they eventually merge with common goals?

President Reagan, in a news conference, said the United States has a right to try to rid Nicaragua of its "communist totalitarian" government and give those who oppose dictatorship "a chance to have that democracy that they fought for."

However, as NEWSWEEK magazine (9/3/84) has pointed out, as concerns the Jesuit priests serving in Nicaragua, "Almost to a man, they supported the Sandinista revolution."

In the Vatican this is causing no small stir. The normal calm has become unsettled lately. The argument is over Liberation Theology, which the Roman Church sees perilously close to Marxism.

At the center of the controversy is Leonardo Boff. He attacks what he calls the "monarchic and pyramidal" structure of the Catholic Church, which, he says, inevitably aligns the church with the rich. He wants the pyramid of power turned upside down, so that "the church would be, not for the poor, but by the poor."

While admitting we need to look out for the poor, we are also mindful of our Lord's words, "For the poor always ye have with you . . ." (John 12:8)

There are some who choose to be poor. They throw their money away in pleasures that do not satisfy and in lusts which starve both soul and body.

A UPI report the other day says buying cigarettes not only keeps many families poor but is responsible for many diseases and even fires and accounts for 500,000 deaths each year. Likewise, drugs, alcohol, illicit sex, gambling—all are known to rob families of health and wealth.

There are those who declare, "An authentic theology of liberation will be one which is rooted in the Word of God, correctly interpreted." It is further stated, "The first liberation, to which all others make reference, is that from sin."

However, it is noted: "Faced with the urgency of certain problems, some are tempted to emphasize, unilaterally, the liberation from servitude of an earthly and temporal kind. They do so in such a way that they seem to put liberation from sin in second place, and so fail to give it

the primary importance it is due."

Liberation Theology first took root in Latin America more than 15 years ago. In 1968, at Medellin in Colombia the Latin American Church made a radical commitment to align itself more with the interests of the poor.

Thus, the confusion prevails today that we call "Liberation Theology."

Nicaragua is the most extreme focus of the Liberation Theology debate today.

While we in America oppose the Sandinista revolution, there are those committed to its success, even within the church, as evidenced by revolutionary paintings which decorate some of the churches.

Nicaraguan priests who supported the revolution subsequently joined the government. Four priests who became involved in the Marxist administration brought on a clash head-on with the Vatican. Miguel E'Escoto, the Foreign Minister, and Ernesto Cardenal, the Minister of Culture, overstepped their priestly duties.

Recently, another priest took up a post in defiance of Pope John Paul II and his directive that priests MUST stay out of politics.

Nowhere was the Pope's message more clearly illustrated than on his visit to Nicaragua on a hot day in March, 1983. He left no doubt of his feeling towards a Roman Catholic priest who serves as Minister of Culture in the Marxist government. Kneeling to receive the Pope's blessing, John Paul waved his finger in Cardenal's face, saying: "You must straighten out your position with the church."

The Pope then delivered an attack on what he called the "popular church." Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans wanted a different message. They called out for a sign of peace and heckled the Pope when he held back. The incident soured relations between the Vatican and the Sandinistas.

A Nicaraguan Bishop, Monsignor Federico Arguello, said he sees no sign of rapprochement between government and the church in Nicaragua.

When you realize that 40% of the world's 784 million Catholics live in Latin America, you know the threat of those who equate the Crucifixion of Christ as a political event rather than the ultimate sacrifice to redeem humanity. To show forth the love of Christ means to participate in the class struggle on behalf of oppressed peoples if the liberal theologians are to be believed.

The ideas of Liberation Theology have spread beyond Latin America. In particular, it has reached the Philippines, where 85% of the country's fifty million are Catholic.

Relations between church and state have often been strained especially in the seventies during the years of martial law.

Liberation theology has added another dimension, causing more friction and a split within the Philippine church itself.

Marxism holds out a false hope, but mixed with Christianity it offers a change in the struggle against social and economic oppression.

The hierarchy has kept its distance from the priests working in the country's most deprived areas. Cardinal Sin, the Archbishop of Manila, though not a Liberationist, has encouraged Filipinos to air their grievances in non-violent protests and marches, much to the annoy-

ance of the government which fears the strength of the church. Naturally, this encourages the more extreme priests working in the poorest parts of the Philippines.

Fifty percent of all Filipinos live below the poverty line. In a crowded slum in the center of Manila there has been an attempt to alleviate the sufferings experienced by these people. Even the Pope, visiting the Philippines called on the government to divert money to the area to help its redevelopment. Schools were set up to cater to the huge number of children in the slums to assure at least one nutritional meal a day.

Christians, in particular, should realize opportunities that we have to help those around us in need. As we read in Psalms 41:12, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies."

In all honesty we have to recognize our lack of concern, for the world's needy has been a problem and James writes concerning it.

In chapter 5 he warns, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days."

Does that seem applicable to us today?

Now listen!

We read, "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your field which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth."

Did you hear it?

In how many countries has big business come in and failed to pay the people a proper wage? Hundley says that in Colombia the minimum daily wage is \$2.50, yet prices for most goods are the same as they are in the United States."

Sometimes we might wonder about our farmers and the dilemma they're in with the price of some foods remaining somewhat the same through the years while everything has spiraled.

Now notice, one writer says, "I shudder when I read the next verse."

We read these incriminating words, "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter."

What an indictment! And it is largely true. We have lived for pleasure, not caring about the world around us. Surely there could be enough food to feed the hungry of this earth. But we pay farmers not to grow food! What an abominable practice, resulting in the death and starvation of even those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ! They tell us there are many more Christians in Africa than in America. Yet there are multitudes going through famine conditions because of drought. Their suffering we could help alleviate.

If we cry out against abortion, why not cry out against the waste of food and the lack of sacrifices made so that we can send more food abroad? Could it be that the next verse points an accusing finger to all of us, for we read, "Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth

not resist you"?

Again we ask, Are we not responsible for meeting the needs of others when it is in our power to help?

Perhaps Liberation Theology would never have gotten a foothold in some of these depressed areas were Christians to have a double witness to the Gospel by providing for both soul and body.

Especially where those of like precious faith are involved, we read in 1 John 3:17, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Again writes John, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (v. 18)

Or, we might say, actions speak louder than words. Let us show forth our love by obligating ourselves with the needs of others.

Going back to the account in the book of James where mention is made of defrauding the laborer and withholding from those in need, it behooves us to ask ourselves some questions. Is God speaking to us today? Are these lessons applicable to you and me?

Surely the Lord has a message applicable to all, for we read in verse 7, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Do you believe our Lord's coming is at hand?

For those suffering, for those oppressed and deprived of ordinary things such as daily bread, our Lord says, "Be patient." For those who are lonely and heartbroken because of the loss of a loved one or a broken marriage, our Lord says, "Be patient."

Actually, to "be patient" means to endure under trial. Trials come to all of us in one form or another.

Peter writes, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Beloved, it will be worth it all when Jesus comes. No trial will be too great if you will hold on. Have faith. Believe God to sustain and strengthen you.

Remember, "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us."

So, keep looking up. Keep looking to Jesus "author and finisher of your faith, who having begun a good work in you will continue to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

If not a child of God, why not accept him now? Pray this prayer: "Lord Jesus come into my heart. Save me now. Forgive me of all my sins. I believe you died on the cross for me and shed your precious blood that I might be forgiven. Now help me to live for you and be ready for your coming, I pray."

Pray that prayer and mean it.

And, "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

LIBERATION THEOLOGY:

Doctrine of the Antichrist?



The normal calm of the Vatican, the center of Roman Catholicism, has become unsettled lately, by a new debate, which is indeed prophetic. The discussion centers around a movement called Liberation Theology.

Father Leonardo Boff is one of the men behind the controversy that has been brewing for more than a decade.

In developing countries where Catholic influence is strong is where you will find this latest trend. Many of the clergy are embracing Liberation Theology, using its ideas to bring about economic and political change.

There are some in the church who see the movement close to Marxism. In traditional Christianity there are those who would like to believe that the sharing of goods might be labeled a form of Christian communism.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, German prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, attacked the adoption of such

Marxist concepts as class struggle by politically active priests and nuns.

Ratzinger said: "The opinions of Leonardo Boff analyzed here are such as to endanger the sound doctrine of the faith, which this congregation has the task of promoting and protecting."

He added that Boff shows "a profound misunderstanding of the Catholic faith regarding the church of God in the world."

The man at the center of the Liberation Theology controversy is Leonardo Boff, a Franciscan, working in Brazil.

Boff is the advocate of People's Church that is re-structured from the grass-roots upward. He wants the church to lead a social transformation that will replace what he sees as oppressive regimes in Latin America.

Brazil is the world's most populous Catholic country and the one in which much Liberation Theology is most widely taught and practiced. Its massive urban slums provide the conditions for the new theology to take root.

The aim of the new approach was for the church to become an active focal point for the problems of the poor. Under the guidance of local priests, communities could learn to organize themselves.

Using the teachings of the Bible, they would seek to develop their own political and economic needs. More than 80,000 of these Basic Christian Communities, as they are called, have sprung up in Brazil alone. In the cities they work for better housing conditions; in the rural sectors, for a better deal from landowners.

Such grass-roots organization is new. It has alarmed many in the government and within the church itself. In fact, it has led to widespread accusations that the priests are Communists, spreading Marxist ideas under the umbrella of religion.

Leonardo Boff was summoned to Rome to answer for his views. His talks with the Vatican's top theologian, Cardinal Ratzinger, were kept secret. But they coincided with the publication of the Vatican's fullest comment on Liberation Theology so far. Cardinal Ratzinger criticized the use of Marxist ideas within the new theology. He stressed the church's commitment to fighting poverty and injustice, but warned against building Christian teachings around such Marxist concepts as "class struggle."

The Cardinal has maintained such things were a distortion of the Bible and ultimately a path to violence. Church leaders face a dilemma. While opposing the radical nature and methods of Liberation Theology, they find themselves in sympathy with the movement's battle against the social ills in Latin America and other parts of the world.

And what about the Pope's own open support of the Labor Movement against the Communist Government in his native Poland? In the end, who will win out? And where will the road marked "Liberation Theology" lead to? Only time will tell.

It must be remembered that world communism works on the premise of a forced sharing of goods largely based on the premise—what you have, if you have more than I have, share it with me.

Violence often accompanies those who believe it is right to fight,

steal or go on strike for what they consider lands or goods rightfully theirs.

In his 12-day tour of Latin America, Pope John Paul II continually warned his audiences against the seductive appeal of Liberation Theology. Said the pontiff, "The church seeks authentic liberation through moral teaching that will set in motion forces to bring about change." But he went on to declare, "The men who put their faith in armed struggle . . . have allowed themselves to be tricked by false ideologies. Evil is never a road to good! . . . Violence inexorably engenders new forms of oppression and slavery, ordinarily more grave than those which it pretends to liberate . . . I ask you, then, in the name of God: Change your course."

Some in the movement seem to draw their concept from seeing it to be the fulfillment of the book of Acts where, following Pentecost, we read, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common." (Acts 2:44)

While at Pentecost there was a sharing of goods that was indeed unprecedented, it should be noted that the motivation was that because the love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts, they wanted all in their group to have the same material benefits.

We must remember there was no coercion or violence involved here. The individuals within the group, because of their love for each other, sought to meet the needs of the destitute or persecuted.

This is not the same as the reasoning behind Liberation Theology. Liberation Theology took root in Latin America more than 15 years ago.

It was in Medellin, Colombia, that the Latin American Church made a radical commitment to align itself more with the interests of the poor.

Under the liberal views of Pope Paul VI, the Christian concept of salvation was translated into terms of "liberation." The Bishops believed that the evil from which their continent had to be freed was not just individual sin, but "social sins"—injustice, oppression, hunger and misery.

Now, more than ten years later, times have changed, with many military regimes firmly in control of several South and Central American countries.

Nicaragua is possibly at the most extreme focus of the Liberation Theology debate today.

In Nicaragua, there are those who are committed to its success, even within the church, as evidenced by revolutionary paintings in some of the churches.

Nicaraguan priests who supported the revolution subsequently joined the Government. Four priests who became involved in the Marxist administration brought on a head-on clash with the Vatican. Miguel D'Escoto, the Foreign Minister, and Ernesto Cardenal, the Minister of Culture, overstepped their priestly duties.

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his feelings toward Father Cardenal. Kneeling to receive the Pope's blessing, John Paul waved his finger in Cardenal's face, saying: "You must straighten out your position with the church."

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Nicaraguan Bishop, Monsignor Fredrico Arguello, said he sees no sign of rapprochement between the Government and the Church in Nicaragua.

While poverty and injustice are not the will of God for humanity, neither is the revolutionary philosophy of Karl Marx and Lenin.

As we have stated before, Liberation Theology equates freedom from "social sins" with freedom from individual sin. Their methods employ radical, violent means to bring about an equality of social needs.

Gustavo Gutierrez of the Catholic University in Lima, Peru, is said to be one of the founders of Liberation Theology. He claims to have papal support for his beliefs.

The debate over Liberation Theology is not limited to Latin America or the ranks of the Roman Catholic church. In many parts of the world Protestant, as well as Catholic missionaries, have taught a declaration of "freedom from oppression, hunger, disease, injustice and misery" instead of the gospel of liberation from sin.

While we believe we need to concern ourselves with the social problems of humanity, we cannot forget the main purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to liberate man from the bondage of sin and Satan. Based on 2 Cor. 5:17, lives will be changed, and they in turn will work to alter the conditions of their homes and countries. We read, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

This has the effect of changing lives that transcends religion with mere form and ritual. This is to experience the saving power of Jesus Christ when He is invited to take over a heart and life.

In Rev. 3:20 we hear our Saviour saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me."

Some years ago, Presbyterian missionary Dr. Charles Woodbridge related how in Africa an attempt was made to reach as many tribes as possible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Actually, natives pleaded for missionaries to stop in their villages, but there was not enough time to visit all the places in need of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Later he recalls he came through those same villages, and, like this village of Bushmen in southern Africa, there was the introduction of the liquor store. And, he relates that among the names of wine and whiskeys introduced to the natives was one called "The Tears of Jesus Christ."

Sadly, Woodbridge related how the only Jesus some of these Africans came to know was in a liquor bottle.

We praise God that the redeeming love and grace of God has infiltrated much of Africa today. Revival continues in many areas, and many are being liberated from their lusts and sins. A balanced theology will not place the cart of change in society ahead of people."

Luke wrote that when Jesus was on earth, He was anointed "with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." (Acts 10:38)

What we need is men in our pulpits who are similarly anointed to minister to the souls of men who are dying in their sins.

Many missionaries use the text of Matt. 9:37-38 as their motivation for laboring for the Lord. We read, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

In the preceding verses we find that Jesus was "preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." It is then He calls for laborers in the great harvest for mankind.

Harvesting is also pictured in the vision of the Battle of Armageddon, where we read, "Thrust in the sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Surely this must speak of revival and the rapture of the saints.

Then another voice is heard saying, "Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe."

Then we read, "And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." (176 miles)

It is sobering to think I may be talking to someone who is either going to accept Christ and be caught up in the rapture harvest, or you may be one who will be left behind when the nations of the earth gather for the last battle, Armageddon, when the wrath of God is outpoured upon the world.

In Rev. 16 we find mention made of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet "which go forth unto the kings of the earth and the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." For we read, "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Rev. 16:16)

We have come to believe that in the doctrine of Liberation Theology, Satan is using this mixture of distorted Christianity and Communism to prepare the world for the coming Antichrist.

The late H.V. Kaltenborn, news commentator, once remarked that Europe was divided into two camps, Roman Catholicism and Russian Communism. What is Europe's future?

To understand how it fits into Bible prophecy, you have to turn to the second chapter of Daniel where there is described a great image which King Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream.

In verses 32-33 we read: "This image's head was of fine gold, his

breast and his thigh of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay."

God then gave Daniel the meaning of the image. To King Nebuchadnezzar Daniel said, "Thou art this head of gold."

The breast and arms of silver were representative of Media-Persia. The belly and thighs of brass represented the Grecian Empire, and the legs of iron became a symbol of the Roman Empire in its Eastern and Western branches.

Now we come to the toes which are representative of the ten nations or kingdoms seen arising within the sphere of the Old Roman Empire.

We read: "And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." (Dan. 2:42)

When we think of the "iron curtain," we think of Russia. "Clay" is a reminder of democracy which is more pliable.

Will the iron of Marxist despotism and the clay of the democratic process be merged in the doctrine of Liberation Theology—to become the philosophy of the Antichrist?

TIME magazine reports the Vatican has warned that building "Christian teaching around Marxist ideas like class struggle, distort the Bible, undercut morality and creates divisions within the church." (9/10/84)

However, seeing the fire spreading, as evidenced in the popular will of the people, little can be done to prevent such a merger as propagated by the Liberation Theology professors.

What will ultimately happen is envisaged in the book of Revelation, chapter 17. Here is pictured a woman riding a scarlet coloured beast having seven heads and ten horns.

There is no need to be in the dark as to the meaning of this.

Verse 18 says, "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," which is believed by many to be Rome.

Verse 9 says, "And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."

Who has not heard of the seven hills which Rome occupies?

And verse 12 says: "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast."

Daniel shows ten nations within the sphere of the Old Roman Empire that will be in existence when our Lord returns to reign gloriously upon the earth.

Writes Daniel, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed."

Now concerning these ten kings within Europe, or within the framework of the Old Roman Empire, we are reminded concerning them. . . "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." (v.13)

In other words, it is as though these ten nations vote to have one of

their number to rule over them. The one selected to rule over them, hence to rule over the world, we call the Antichrist.

The second thing that they do is recorded in verse 14: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, chosen and faithful."

So these ten kings which unite and surrender their sovereignty to one to rule over them are seen warring against the Lord coming from heaven which is in reality the Battle of Armageddon.

It was the late Dr. Donald Barnhouse who once said, "I am convinced that by not mentioning America, the Bible infers that great judgments will come upon our nation. For the United States is not included in the list of nations that will be most powerful at the end of the age and during the brief period of the great tribulation which will follow the removal of the Church."

Did you hear it?

It would appear that the focal point of prophecy moves to Europe and the Middle East during the tribulation. For that reason we have the ten kings within Europe forming the last Gentile world confederacy. United with the forces of the earth, they make war with the God of heaven at Armageddon.

Finally, we read verse 16: "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

Or, as the Scofield Bible notes suggest, "Ecclesiastical Babylon . . . is destroyed by political Babylon." (Rev. 17:15-18)

It is noted then, "The power of political Babylon is destroyed by the return of the Lord in glory."

This is the picture seen unfolding in the endtime.

Liberation Theology has been described as a "theological upheaval that may prove to be more significant than the Protestant Reformation."

We certainly see it as one of the major signs that we are approaching the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a day in which to live!

If you are not ready to meet the Lord, this is still the day of salvation. If a believer in the Lord, we are commanded to "watch . . . and be ready!"

In Luke 21:36 we are urged to "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Are you watching? Are you praying? Are you ready?

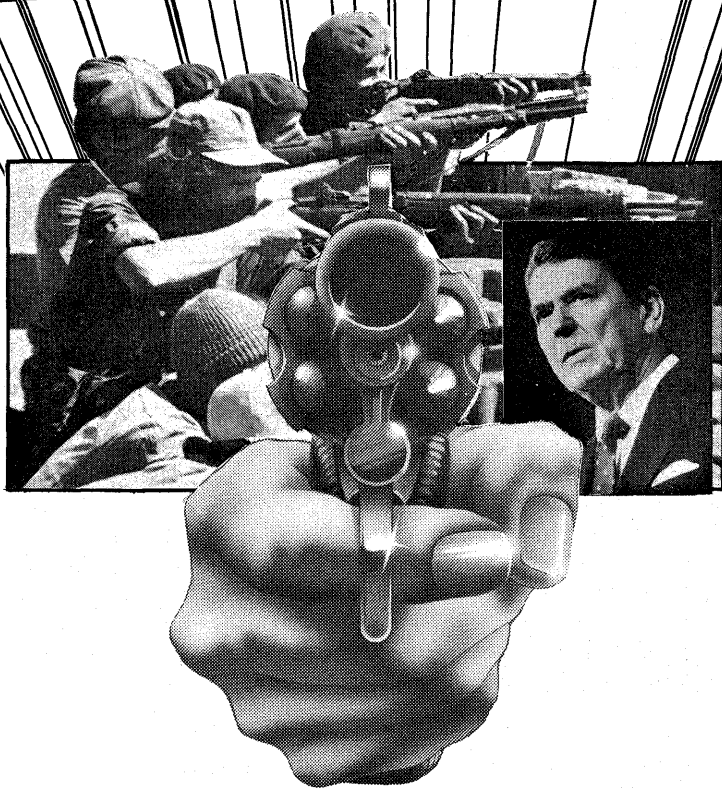
Pray this prayer: "Lord Jesus, I do believe you died on the cross for my sins, and shed your precious blood that I might be forgiven, and that you rose again. One day you are coming again for all who are ready!

Keep me ready for that day, I pray. Amen."

Pray that prayer and mean it.

And, "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh!"

NICARAGUA



THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM CONTINUES

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, in an editorial by David Gergen, discusses U.S. administration policy over Nicaragua.

It is noted that in a press conference, Pres. Reagan left the impression he would like the contras, or "freedom fighters," to topple the Sandinista Government.

Says Gergen, "The hard, unassailable fact is that the Sandinistas, armed to the teeth with a military force five times bigger than Somoza's remain a menace in Central America, and the U.S. must act to contain them with or without the contras."

What will happen?

It is pointed out, "Congress will not approve funds for the contras if overthrow is their purpose. Congressional support for the contras collapsed when various CIA activities – mining of the harbors, an assassination manual and the like – convinced skeptics the administration was secretly pursuing that objective." (Mar. 11, 1985)

We know the Soviets are behind efforts to get a greater foothold in Latin America, so shall we launch an invasion while condemning them for invading Afghanistan?

These are serious questions, for we know the Marxist-Leninist philosophy is totally anti-Christian. The end result of infiltration into this hemisphere could eventually prove catastrophic. So, there are those who see the necessity of stopping the brushfire of atheistic Communism before it becomes an uncontrollable blaze.

Columnist Don McAlvany comments: "It is often said that we have no right to attempt to bring down the Nicaraguan Government." He concludes, "Just as it was morally right and strategically prudent to combat Hitler from the start rather than wait for him to declare war on us, so it is morally and strategically sound to take our stand now rather than wait for the Soviet proxies to arrive at our borders."

What do you think?

Some point to the book of Revelation to declare that regardless of what action we take, the battle is on. Satan is due to take control of the world as he rules through his beast we call the Antichrist.

Rev 13:7 says, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." That includes North, South and Central America.

Naturally, we would say we should do all we can to stop the Communist infiltration, using legitimate means at our disposal. On the other hand, we see this godless philosophy combining with religious concepts called 'Liberation Theology' and together seen sweeping nations to the south of us.

The conclusion of the matter seems to be that war will not stop this invasion. For we read, "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (Rev. 13:10)

While we believe there will be a rapture of saints, we also see where there will be those left behind to go through the tribulation who will become the saints that are spoken of here.

And these are warned not to fall for the Antichrist and take his mark and identify with his system, but to die, if necessary, as a martyr for Jesus Christ.

Wilbur C. Landrey, news correspondent, notes: "A never ending war of words goes on over who violates the most human rights in Central America."

The AMERICAS WATCH report states, "Both sides in the conflict have committed serious violations of the laws of war."

Landrey adds, "War is inhuman; war is hell; many things happen in the heat of battle; this is the way you fight a guerrilla war; every guerrilla group contains some crazies who are out of control; such brutality has its roots in Central American history. . . ."

Says Landrey: "In Nicaragua, families are divided. So is the church."

This is a reminder of what our Lord says in Luke 12:51, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division."

Isaiah 9:6 speaks of the coming of one, Israel's Messiah and the

redeemer of mankind, saying, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Indeed, our Lord is "The Prince of Peace." Yet, He Himself admitted that His coming would cause divisions.

How do you explain that?

The fact of the matter is that not everyone wants peace. They would rather fight and register their antagonism than accept peace.

That's difficult to understand. I recall as a youngster getting into a fight. That was the last fight in which I was engaged. If that's fighting, I decided I didn't want it. Why beat, pummel, and threaten to kill? After all, that is what fighting seems to be.

Why do men engage in petty quarreling which leads to wars?

The answer has to relate to the fall of man and the appearance of Satan. Perhaps you ask – Is Satan responsible for wars?

In Isaiah 14:12 we read concerning Lucifer that he did "weaken the nations." So we know the devil is active in affecting the behavior of men and nations.

Isaiah further sees Lucifer responsible for running the course of this world, saying: "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners."

All of this could be said of some maniac ruler such as Hitler or Stalin, which is also spoken of Lucifer here.

There's coming a day when the devil will be bound for a thousand years. Then we read, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." (Isa. 65:25)

Again Isaiah describes this era of peace seen descending upon the world, saying: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains . . ." (Isa. 2:2a) That's like saying the kingdom of God will be over all man-made kingdoms.

Then, to discover how wars will cease, we read verse 4, "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more . . ."

Isn't that great to anticipate?

But, you don't have to wait until then. You don't have to wait until the millennium to experience peace of heart and mind. You need not await the coming of the Messiah in His kingdom to have this peace of which Isaiah writes. You can have it now.

Why is it that man cannot find peace? Why is he not at peace with others? With his family? With himself?

James may have the answer. He writes, "From whence comes wars and fightings among you?"

Then he answers his own question, or, at least, he seems to try to give an answer in the form of a question. Writes James, "Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"

You see, it is lust and not love that generates wars and petty arguments that turn into hate.

Says James, "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not."

Does that describe someone who might be listening? Do you have a desire that has taken control of your life? It may be a desire to make money that is a compelling force in your life. It doesn't matter how you make it as long as you can make it. Someone may get hurt because of your actions, but you don't care as long as you fulfill the objective to make money.

That is what James is describing here.

Usually we think of lust in connection with sexual activity. Webster, in his first definition, explains lust to be "pleasure; liking." It also relates to inclination or desire. So you see, lust can be a proper desire.

Later on in this same chapter, we read, "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (James 4:5)

However, Webster also relates lust to "Sensuous desire; bodily appetite; commonly sexual desire as a degrading passion." And, most scriptural use of the word "lust" is in a bad or evil sense.

James writes, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren." (James 1:14-16)

An example of why I believe many marriages fail today is seen in the life of Amnon, the son of David.

In 2 Samuel we have the story of this young man who became vexed with Tamar. The more he thought about her, the more he became infatuated with her.

As the account goes, without going into detail, Amnon wanted Tamar, but she said, "Nay . . . do not force me." But he proceeded anyway, and, as soon as he had his fling with her, we read, "Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, and be gone." (2 Sam. 13:15)

That's what's wrong with today's marriages, or at least some of them. If marriage is based on lustful desire which is what is propagated in the movies and on television, you'll find they're lovers in one another's arms one minute and the next minute that same desire becomes hate, and they despise one another, saying, "Be gone."

What is needed is the love of Jesus shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

The Greeks had four words for love. The word for human passion was Eros. Whereas, the word for brotherly love is Phileo, and the word for divine love is Agapao.

If only there would come a hunger and intense desire for the love of God, how it would change the lives and homes and marriages and change our world. It seems we need marriage seminars where husband and wives can learn the secret of this divine love implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Look at 1 Cor. 13 where we read, "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love flaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not

thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things . . ."

Is this what you want? Do you want this love? Do you want your home to be a warring camp with bickering and fighting? It is because of carnal desires that are propagated by lust often generated by television shows and even pornographic pictures that finds an insatiable appetite that is never satisfied. This may be true of a desire for alcohol or drugs. Whatever your desires, you need to find Jesus Christ as your Saviour and all-sufficiency. Then you need to allow the Word of God to dwell in you richly and fully. And, finally, you need to pray that the Holy Spirit will come and fill you with His love and power.

This is what God is doing. These are the last days, and God is pouring out of His Spirit.

You say, how can I be a recipient of this love? How can I receive of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

In Prov 1:23 we read, "Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."

If you want to hear from God, it will mean turning from sin to trust the Saviour. It is the little foxes that spoil the vines. And it is the little sins of lust and illicit desire that generate heartache and headache.

In Eph. 5:18 we read, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."

Do you see the contrast?

Many with unsatisfied thirsts are hitting the bottle to find satisfaction. They'll not find it there. Neither will they find it in drugs, sex, or any physical stimulation. Only Christ can satisfy the longing of the heart.

As Augustine once said, man's soul was made by God, and it cannot rest until it rests in God.

Do you want peace of mind and heart? Do you want rest from your lustful ways and the sin that troubles you? Then, turn to Christ.

Hear our Lord as He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Is this what you want?

Do you want rest? Do you want peace? Would you like to be forgiven of all your sins?

Then pray this prayer with me: "Lord Jesus, I accept your offer of peace and forgiveness. I accept cleansing from my sin. I receive your love and your pardon. In fact, I receive you as my Saviour and Lord. I invite you into my heart and life and receive of your Holy Spirit to occupy the throne of my life."

Now I'm not saying that prayer will save you; but, if you truly want Jesus in your life, He will come in.

Pray that prayer and mean it. Follow up your prayer with actions. Get into a Bible-believing church. Pray every morning when you arise, asking the Lord to guide you throughout the day, and at night thank Him and ask forgiveness where you may have failed Him. Live close to Him.

And, "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

— by John Barela, organizer for the Prophecy Conference.



I have here a magazine which is an official publication of a conservative Roman Catholic organization. Here it has the Black Madonna from Poland. It has the legend of "Our Lady of Guadalupe." And it has a lot of the other pagan rituals that are part of this religious system. But in this magazine, the National Conference of Bishops, in Canada, that was organized in 1968, has this picture in it—a new world church.

Remember the words of Jude, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace (the redemption provided by our Lord Jesus Christ) into lasciviousness (or lewdness)."

Here you have the titles, "The New World Church," "New Myths," "New Heroes," "New Symbols," "Rites," "Words and Concepts." Liberation Theology advocates that this crucifix was recently printed in a bulletin linked with a national conference of Brazilian Bishops as well. It has a peasant farm worker on a cross with a spade and a pitchfork as the cross.

In the same magazine, you have again an organization known as The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, founded by the Bishops of Canada in 1967. So we're not saying anything to degrade them. This is public knowledge. It's in their magazine. They're proud of it, evidently.

Look at the symbol that they have. This is their magazine. That's a hammer and sickle. You can write to this organization and receive a copy yourself. This is their logo. This is "turning the grace of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ into lasciviousness."

Liberation Theology is the blending of religious, Christian, so-called traditions with Communism. This is the stated purpose that's here. And it's coming for what purpose? I'm not going to read all of this, because I don't have that much time. I've got some newspaper clippings from the Catholic Literature. I am on the mailing lists of Catholic publications. You find the same thing in their publications. You'll find more of this in their publications than you do in evangelical publications. Listen to what happens.

The caption is, Terrorist Priests. "A 35-year-old Jesuit priest, abducted by six armed men in Guatemala City, June 9, has told how priests become Marxist-Leninist terrorists in Latin American Libera-

tion movement . . ." This is not only in Latin America. It's throughout the world.

Do you remember the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 21:8 that many shall come in my name? Do you know what the official title of the Jesuits is? The Society of Jesus. And they're doing all of this in the name of Jesus Christ. Look at what they're doing. "The kidnapping was arranged by the victim so that he could defect safely from the Guerrilla army. A native Guatemalan, he has degrees in Civil Engineering, Theology, Communications, Philosophy and the Humanities. He and others like him are seduced into subversion." That is, the Word of God says that these people will come, subverting the souls of them, to pervert the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

"He and others like him are seduced into subversion and guerrilla warfare," he explained. By Liberation Theology he was portraying Jesus as the God exclusively of the poor and by promoting Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Father P--- said, "Using our faith, taking advantage of the most sacred and profound feelings of our people. It's the people who are suffering. I never pass judgment on the people but the leaders, the teachers, the hierarchy of this system using our faith, taking advantage of our people, we planted the first seeds . . ." listen to this Jesuit priest." We planted the first seeds of distortion, introducing a new gospel, a new previously unknown Jesus . . ."

And so when people come to you waving their Jesus banner, you try the spirits, because there are going to be many Jesus's. "Many are going to come in my name." And you make sure that their Jesus is the Jesus of the Bible. And here we have clear, concise documentation from various sources (there are numerous sources), ". . . the first seeds of distortion, introducing a new gospel, a previously unknown Jesus . . ." listen to this. I'm quoting verbatim, . . . a blood-thirsty Jesus."

"The Jesuits of my generation were fully capable of indoctrinating, of saturating them with the whole theology of Liberation and science of Marxism, knowing how to bring it all down to the level of the masses with very little general education and political sophistication."

Listen to this, "The Jesuits of both left and right are the most important single force of the Central American conflicts. Since the 1970's the Jesuits' order has controlled the Sandinista revolutionary forces and now seeks to reproduce the phenomenon in El Salvadore. The Jesuits also controlled the so-called opposition of the Sandinistas through the U.S.-based institution, Georgetown University."

Now in the news the last year it has been evident that "Commander Zero," when he came to the United States, went to Georgetown and then to the United Nations. When the conflict uprising first started, he was a Sandinista. Now you've got to keep in mind that the purpose is the reduction of the population of upwards to two billion people. Once you get the theme behind it, all these other things just blend in. The purpose is to reduce the population by two billion people.

Are there homosexuals in the Supreme Court? I don't believe so. Why do they legalize homosexuality? When a man and a man get together, they're not going to reproduce any offspring . . . simple as that . . . population reduction. It's part of the "Global 2,000 Report," that's why.

You see all these things blend in so clearly when you see the grand

design and the intent that's there. "Commander Zero" came in with the other Jesuit forces.

So "Commander Zero" creates a counter-revolution. Let's get a few more down the death tubes. But we can't use the incinerators. We can't use the gas chambers. So he himself . . . listen to this: "The Jesuits, pulling along certain currents in the Catholic orders—the Mariales, the Orders of the Holy Cross and Liberal Protestants associated with the World Council of Churches, helped forge the Theology of Liberation." It's all right here in this article. So the documentation is everywhere you look.

There is so much here, but I want to share this one part: "U.S. Jesuit Networks leading left Jesuit Institutions' Center for Concern . . ." This is an institution founded in Washington in 1971 by the invitation of the United States Catholic Bishops to the International Jesuit Order ". . . headed through 1982 by the Society of Jesus, a member of the Club of Rome. The center of concern was the moving force in the theology of America's Liberationist project, together with the Woodstock Theological Seminary. It directed preparations for the Detroit and II summits of the Western Hemisphere, Theology of Liberation figures with emphasis on Nicaragua and Central America."

Now most people think of the Catholic Church and they think of pro-life people. The Center for Concern, founded by the United States Catholic Bishops, the International Jesuit Order. The Center for Concern co-sponsored a ground-breaking in the 1974 conference on how to use religious covers for a Club of Rome program on world population reduction. The center is funded by the Society of Jesus and others through which it has direct connection to leaders of the Social International Control.

You talk about the New Age Movement, I believe that's the guys that's taken the spotlight off the principal character and focused all the attention on the satellite organizations like the Holistic group and all these other secondary and just remote tie-ins to it. But here's where the real spotlight is. It's the Roman system, permeated into all these other political and economic organizations. That's where we ought to focus our attention. I Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing (that's a term the Jesuits use) spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy."

Here again Paul Greenburg, a Jew and editorial writer, put an article in the editorial page, "Making Suckers Out of U.S. Church Goers." He shows a picture of a leader of the World Council of Churches coming down Mt. Sinai with a hammer and sickle, with the tablets there.

However inconsistent the World Council of Churches may be, in its political twists and turns there is at least one constant in its various pronouncements . . . a moral myopia that never seems to change." Myopia simply means the inability to see that which is right next to you. Christians can't see the very thing that's right next to them! What's affecting their lives, what's Affecting their lives, what's Affecting their relations, what's Affecting the heritage they came from. And they're looking at the distant lands saying, "There's that organization over there—that's the real evil," when the real evil is right in amongst them. The world can see it. Why can't the church see it?



When Alexander Haig was serving as Secretary of State, he spoke of the greatest problem in the human rights area as "rampant international terrorism . . ."

President Reagan similarly declared, "We're opposed to terrorism of the right or left . . ."

In Western Europe there is a new concern for a fresh wave of what appears to be "organized terrorism."

Chancellor Helmut Kohl is the first European leader to have spoken out strongly during the new upsurge of terror. He said, "This 'scourge of civilization' has to be stamped out."

Part of a new front-line in Western Europe, home of the "Common Market" nations, is an attempt to beat back this new wave of urban terrorism.

Men are in training in an attempt to prevent the avalanche of terrorist activities rising up all over Europe.

It would appear that terror groups are mainly forming international alliances to attack a common enemy, NATO, its bases and personnel.

You'll hear words such as "tight security" or "urban terrorism" used to describe these assaults. They became counter-balancing cliches for the West in the 1960's and '70's because of violent extremism.

For almost a decade, it seemed that "tight security"—and the policing methods that went with it—had won the war on the streets of Europe. The urban terrorist movement went into retreat.

Most notable was the demoralization of Italy's Red Brigade and the subduing of West Germany's Baader-Meinhoff gang, after the deaths of its leaders in prison in the late 1970's.

But now, throughout Europe, the ominous cliches are back, because terrorism is back. The 21-nation Council of Europe has unanimously concluded that their countries are ill-equipped to deal with terrorism.

Our Lord describes the day of His return, saying, "Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring." (Luke 21:25)

Could this unsettled state of affairs represent the terrorism and violence we're seeing today?

Now it is significant to note that mention of the sea in Scripture denotes what we might call the "sea of humanity."

That the antichrist is going to come from Europe amidst ten nations in existence at the time when our Lord returns to reign, is clearly taught in the Word of God.

At times there may be more than ten nations in the organization we call the Common Market, but when antichrist arises, there will ultimately be ten nations aligned under him.

Look at Revelation 13 where we read, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns . . ." (Rev. 13:1)

Later, in verse 11 we read, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth . . ."

So you see the contrast between the "sea" and the "earth" and two separate personages seen arising.

Now we would ask, What did John see coming forth from the sea?

In the footnote of the Scofield Bible, the explanation is given that the "ten horns" are to be "ten kings." We read, "And the whole vision is of the last form of Gentile world-power, a confederated ten-kingdom empire covering the sphere of authority of ancient Rome."

Did you hear it?

It is in Western Europe, in the sphere of the Old Roman Empire, that we have a wave of terrorism seen threatening that is going to demand the attention of one seen arising who will clamp down on insurrection and violence. He will become powerful as in the days of ancient Rome when all were subservient to the state, and will become so popular as

to receive the world's worship.

In the shadow of Munich's vast Olympic stadium, a private police force—formed originally to guard athletes against terrorism—now protects German businessmen.

They provide armed bodyguards, chauffeurs and in-house security . . . by traditional methods.

But, as in Belgium, the latest technology's also been thrown into the new front-line terrorism.

In Revelation 13:8 we read, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb . . ."

There will be some believers who will not bow down to his authority, for they know Jesus Christ is the world's only Saviour, King of kings and Lord of lords.

But the majority of earth's people will accept his doctrine "hook, line and sinker," believing he is the Christ returned to earth, that he is God's chosen potentate to be revered by all mankind.

Notice verse 7 says, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues and nations."

Antichrist's rule will largely be over these European nations, but, because of the religious involvement, it will take in the people of the whole world, the sea of humanity.

In chapter 17 we find this religious aspect mentioned. Following the rapture of the true church, there is left behind an amalgamation of religious groups referred to in verse 1 as "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."

This shows the worldwide scope of this false church which prostitutes the place of Christ on earth who is head of the true church.

When Christ and His church are gone, there is left this false church of all the major religions that promote one God by whatever name he is called. Watch attempts being made to merge all religions around the theme of peace, and you'll understand the current in the sea of humanity that is struggling to bring this about.

Also, in chapter 17 we read, "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast." (Rev. 17:12)

For a limited time you'll find ten nations within the sphere of the Old Roman Empire, or Common Market nations, which will rule with this one we call "the Beast."

Verse 13 says, "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." In other words, they do not make the major decisions but leave that to this world ruler who reigns over them.

Now we've been discussing the terrorism in European countries which we see uncontrolled until the appearance of ten kings seen arising and one reigning over them called "the Beast" or the antichrist world ruler.

Two things are spoken of these ten kings. First, we read, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are

called, and chosen, and faithful." (Rev. 17:14)

At the battle of Armageddon the attempt will be made to rally the forces of earth together to fight armies seen coming from Heaven. These armies will be a puzzle to the people of earth.

John describes the event as follows: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth judge and make war." (Rev. 19:11)

This is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 14 of chapter 19 says, "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

In an instant the armies of the ten kings, led by the antichrist, are overcome by the Word of God. For we read, "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations . . ." (Rev. 19:15)

This is the army of saints that was previously raptured of whom we read are "called, and chosen, and faithful."

We would ask, Does this describe us? Would we consider ourselves "called, chosen and faithful?" Are we ready were Jesus to come today?

So we need to make certain of our salvation. Believing in God is right, but it's not enough. Being baptized is wonderful as a testimony of our faith in Jesus Christ, but it will not save us unless we have truly repented of sin to trust the Saviour.

We need to make sure we are born again, born into God's family by receiving Christ as our Saviour and Lord. It is those who are saved who make up the company of believers who are the "called, chosen, and faithful."

Remember, Jesus said, "Many are called, but few chosen."

When it comes to the rapture, pictured as a marriage feast, many are found making excuses. They can be found staying at home on Sunday night to watch worldly television shows rather than in church praising the Lord. On prayer meeting night they can't be found either, for they don't think it is important to be in church more than once a week.

Do you want God's will for your life? If you don't, then you are a sinner. A sinner is one who wants his own will rather than God's will for his life.

Decide now that you are going to make God's will your will and be among the "called, chosen and faithful" when Jesus comes.

We read, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20)

Will you let Christ come in?

Pray this prayer with me: "Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose again and that you're coming again for all who are ready to meet you.

"I invite you to save me, to forgive me of all my sins, and come into my heart and life. Help me live for you, and keep me ready for your coming, I pray, Amen."

Pray that prayer and mean it. And "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH?

Pope Pius XII, addressing some 250,000 followers in St. Peter's Square, made a declaration for Catholics that is true of all Bible-believing Christians.

"That the church should confine its activities within the four walls of the temple would be indecorous servility," he declared.

The Pope then challenged his hearers to heed the words of Jesus, who said, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be full." (Lu. 14:23)

Today we would ask, What kind of church is ours? It is our hope that we examine ourselves to see if we are making our church all it could and should be.

1. Is ours an evangelistic church?

Have we accepted the challenge to reach out—to jails, missions, hospitals, and from house to house?

It was Dr. James M. Gray who asks, "Why should the church be so insistent that men come to her? Was not the command for her to go to them?"

Says Dr. Gray, "Open-air preaching is the secret of reaching men in many communities. When they get a taste of the Gospel in the street, they like to listen to it again within church walls."

2. Is ours a missionary church?

Jesus' last command to His disciples in Mark 16:14 was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The church doctrinal statement of one denomination declared: "The supreme duty and mission of the Church during this dispensation is worldwide evangelization in obedience to Jesus' Great Commission."

Does our church outreach include the world?

3. Is ours a fundamental church?

TIME magazine says: "Fundamentalism as a movement emerged shortly after 1900 and put renewed stress on miraculous aspects of the life of Christ . . . fundamentalists tend to be more conservative, both theologically and politically." (6/21/76)

Ours must be a Bible-believing church. In contrast to those who deny cardinal truths such as the blood atonement and the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, we believe the Bible is the Word of God and its truths are to be believed.

4. Is ours a spiritual church?

In contrast to cold, dead churches, we need churches that are alive and worshipful.

Do we have a "form of godliness, without power"? From "such turn away!" we read.

Do we have a sense of freedom to say "Amen" and give our assent to the truth that is preached? Again, the Bible says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Do we take a stand on moral issues? Again we read, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

Dr. Jess Moody, addressing a Baptist convention, said, "The church is like a toothless old prize fighter . . . The churches in this country have no backbone."

The Rev. Jaroy Weber of Lubbock, Texas, serving as President of the Southern Baptist Convention, said, "We are suffering from the corrosive breath of materialism, secularism, commercialism and godlessness," which leads to "hunger, inflation, credibility gaps, loose morals, bad government, divorce, drunkenness."

The late Hugh Thompson Kerr described the secret to having a spiritual church, saying: "We are not sent to preach sociology but salvation; not economics but evangelism; not reform but redemption, not culture but conversion; not progress but pardon, not social order but the new birth; not an organization but a new creature; not democracy but the Gospel; not civilization but Christ." Said Kerr, "We are ambassadors, not diplomats."

5. Is ours a friendly church?

In the early church we read how they went from "house to house" to prove their warmth and friendliness. Somehow we have gotten away from that practice. We read, "And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42) That's a good formula to follow.

And we read in verse 44, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common."

6. Is ours a giving church?

At Pentecost we read how they "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Today we sell our possessions and reinvest in stocks and bonds.

A pastor kept asking his people for money and was told, "You'll kill this church." He replied, "Never saw a church die from 'giving.' If so, I would cry, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'"

7. Is ours an accommodating church? Do we have adequate facilities to accommodate a Sunday School and Youth program? Are our services amplified so all can hear? Do we have a nursery? Are greeters there to welcome the people, and ushers to assist them to their seats?

8. Is ours an advertised church? Do we have proper signs to let the community know we exist? Do we take advantage of newspaper advertising, some of which is free? What about radio and television? We need to make our community aware that we exist. And, if we have a special program, usually guests coming in will help pay for any advertising that may be done, so we have gained in attendance and not lost.

9. Is ours a busy church?

The business of church is souls. It is proper for churches to plan revivals, Bible conferences, prophetic meetings, youth programs, choir rehearsals and whatever can be accomplished to keep our people busy. The Bible says, "Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, and much the more as we see the day approaching." On the basis of that Scripture, we need more meetings,

not less.

10. Is ours a growing church? The location of the church building, along with the past history of the church, can help determine if our church will be a growing church. Where tradition and scandal have hurt the name of a church, it is sometimes good to change the name. Through much prayer and concerted effort, any church can eventually become a growing church.

The Greek word for church is "Ekklesia," which means a "called out" group. The church is, in reality, a "called-out people," called out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel, called out of sin to serve the Lord, called out of the world to live in the realm of spiritual life and power.

The foundation of the church is Jesus Christ.

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

Jesus saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?"

Remember Peter's answer. He said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

We read, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:13-18)

Some wrongfully suppose that Jesus was building His church upon Peter. If so, we would have Peterianity. But, instead, we have Christianity.

Today our Lord is building His church upon our confession, led by the Spirit of God, that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God. Having discovered this truth, we have turned from our sin to trust the Saviour. We renounce all worldliness to promote righteousness and true holiness. We give of ourselves to the Lord, knowing that when He has all of us, He has our time and our talents, as well as our money.

He claims, "You are not your own, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are His."

If we are a part of His Church, we will want to propagate this message and help promote this Gospel that if men will believe, they can be saved. For the Scripture says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Pray this prayer: "Lord Jesus, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing I have life through your name. I repent of my sins to live to serve you and to do your will as revealed in your Word. Forgive me of my sins and help me to be victorious over all of my temptations. You said if I walk in the light of your Word, I can have fellowship one with another, and your blood cleanseth me from all of my sin. I rejoice in my salvation and will ever praise and thank you for saving me. Amen."

Pray that prayer and mean it. And, "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh!"