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## Christians Lectures on Christian Communications

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that Christianity and Communism are in some way equals between which a person has to make a choice. Both Capitalism and Communism are materialistic and atheistic. The leftists in Latin America are not Marxist or Communist, although the leftist wing has sensed something of the greater relevance for the poor of certain neo-Marxist themes. The dissidents in Latin America reject the religious nature of Marxism—95-98% of Latin Americans are, at least nominally, Christian—, but they are intrigued by the structural socio-economic concepts of this enemy of Capitalism. Dissatisfied with mere orthodoxy, these people are looking for orthopraxis. Right doctrine is not enough. Right action is needed. The "Liberation Theologians" of Latin America are stressing the notions that one part of humanity may not live at the expense of another part of society, and that the conflicts between the rich and the poor must, somehow, be resolved through the Liberating Jesus. Rejecting the neo-Marxistic notion of the liberation of theology, these theologians, mainly Roman Catholic, emphasize the importance of a Theology of Liberation, —e.g. the Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, who has written A Theology of Liberation (New York, Mark Knoll, 1973), Jose Miguez Bonino, who has published Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia,

Fortress Press, 1975), Juan Luis Segundo, who is known for his Liberacion de la Theologia, and also Samuel Escobar, of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, who rejects Communism and Capitalism and is moving in the direction of the idea of a Christian leavening of all social and economic areas of life.

Dr. Rooy warned against settling for introducing mere surface-corrections. The basic issues must be attacked, he emphasized. We must listen to the claims and concerns of the (guerilla-inclined) dissidents, who often reject membership in the rich Communist Party, and who regard the U.S.A. Foreign Aid program as not much more than a Self-Aid program (e.g. 40% of U.S.A. Foreign Aid to Latin America comes in the form of military goods, 30% in the form of priority—what is meant is surplus—items in the U.S.A.; and the rest comes in the form of exploitation of natural resources and cheap labor).

Any keen listener could hear the loud and clear "Macedonian cry" from the South to the North, "Come down and help us." Dr. Rooy's call to us to extend our helping hand at the same time implied, however, a pleading for us to make sure that our own hands are not leprous but Christianly clean.

by John C. Vander Stelt

## Christians Lectures on Christian Communications

In an attempt to develop a Christian perspective on communications and communications research, Dr. Clifford Christians presented three lectures to the Dordt College faculty for their critique.

Assistant research professor of communications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Dr. Christians has been touring various colleges in a Reformed College Consortium. At Dordt he also spoke to several classes.

Dr. Christians contended that too much communications research relies solely

on statistics. In a study of the effects of television violence on crimes, too many researchers simply ask how many crimes the following day are related to a certain number of killings or sluggings on a specific television crime drama.

While recognizing the importance of statistics, Dr. Christians stated that researchers must also consider the historical, philosophical and cultural framework of such a survey. Empirical data must not be elevated above all else, according to Dr. Christians.

Man should be viewed as more than a biological being, one that simply responds to stimuli, he continued, and communications should be seen as more than the discriminatory response of an organism to a stimulus. Rather, communications is a "symbolic process of creating meaningfulness."

"Communications is the process of building and reaffirming symbols," postulated Christians. This definition recognized that man is made in the image of God, as a creative being.

So important are symbols, said Christians, that one can understand the history of civilizations by understanding the history of the media, the history of man's making symbols. In the first stage man communicated solely through speech. The human voice united society. He showed how the second stage, the print stage, brought about such things as individualism, regularity in thought and the ability to control huge empires. The third, electronic age started about 1957-1960, when the whole world communally observed Sputnik

and President Kennedy's funeral. Communications and much else is now electronically oriented.

But in this electronic age, the media should recognize the "transcendent," what does not appear to be observable, rational or empirical, said Christians. If man can understand that life is more than what one observes—contrary to what television programs like "Maude" would have one think—then for example, he might be able to communicate with most Christians without asking such elementary questions as "Who is God?" or "Can we possibly be responsible to anyone else but ourselves?"

Dr. Christians graduated from Dordt in 1959, from Calvin College in 1961 and Calvin Theological Seminary in 1964. Fuller Theological Seminary granted him a Th.M., and he earned a masters in social linguistics from the University of Southern California. Finally, he received a Ph.D. in mass communications from the University of Illinois.

by Randall Palmer

## **Kroese Lectures on the Christian and Modern Film**

As part of the 1975-76 Fine Arts program at Dordt, Dr. Irvin Kroese of Calvin College lectured on the Christian community and contemporary film. In his lecture, Kroese commented that paradox mostly characterizes the Christian community's attitude toward the film.

Kroese went on to list several of these paradoxes. Most of us feel, he said, that the movies are singularly worldly, yet there is no other art form "which has so consistently and affirmatively dealt with religious and moral issues," no art form in which "the search for God and for a basis for moral values has been quite so prominent and direct."

A second paradox is that the film, in trying to affirm human values, may use the shocking to communicate this moral imperative, and all too often the Christian community, according to Kroese, fails to see beyond the shocking. "We don't recognize the difference between sin-in-the-cinema and sinful-cinema," said Kroese.

"The irony in all this is that we cannot seem to recognize when the movies are on our side, and we often reject exactly those movies whose attitudes are most humane, rejecting them for the very reason that they should be accepted."

Kroese then asked how the Christian community might develop a more balanced