
Pro Rege

Volume 14 | Number 1

Article 6

September 1985

Until Justice and Peace Embrace (Book Review)

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Recommended Citation

Stair, Mike (1985) "Until Justice and Peace Embrace (Book Review)," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 14: No. 1, 39 - 40.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol14/iss1/6

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on writers who are within or close to the movement.

Berghoef and DeKoster point out what ought to be obvious to Christians: Capitalism, even when it is defined as the ownership of the means of production, is not necessarily wrong. Both Biblical and modern examples prove the point. The poor are not necessarily sinless. Christ does not teach class struggle and violence. Finally, human beings will not change before Christ returns; and they certainly will not change themselves. It is amazing that liberation theology is taken seriously by many Christians. No doubt its popularity rests on the existence of great injustice in the world. But the end—removing injustice—does not justify the means.

The last section of the book is a presentation of the authors' approach to the social problems which concern liberation theologians. The authors maintain that wherever orthodox Christianity has been accepted, it has been fruitful; that a good case can be made showing Western democracy arose because of the acceptance of the Christian position; and that a real care for the poor naturally flows from the teaching of this Christian gospel. In other words, teaching the Bible has led to action, and there is consequently much good in the world. The book ends with a short summary of ideas previous-

ly presented and lists of discussion questions for the chapters.

The book is helpful in explaining ideas often written and spoken about. Thus, the authors clearly explain "dialectical materialism" and its relation to Hegelian philosophy. Likewise, they show well how the foundations of Marxism form a unified whole and, by implication, why there can be so little variation in Marxist thinking. They also point out certain things which many people might not notice. First, they observe that liberation theologians are severely critical of oppression in certain parts of the world, but do not find oppression in Soviet-sphere countries. Second, even though some liberation theologians claim not to accept some of the extreme ideas given above, these theologians do not attempt to expose liberation theologians who do accept those ideas. One must conclude that those who call themselves liberation theologians do not in fact have very great differences among themselves.

Liberation Theology has a few typographical errors, a style that may be too polemical to change minds, and too many exclamation points. But it also has valuable material and I recommend it to all who wish to keep abreast of current theological trends.

Until Justice and Peace Embrace by Nicholas Wolterstorff; Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983; 197 pp. Reviewed by Mike Stair, Former Instructor in Theatre Arts.

The words *justice* and *peace* by definition pertain to Christianity. That doesn't mean they are practiced, and Nicholas Wolterstorff's estimation of their application in contemporary Reformed Christianity is anything but a list of accomplishments. This is, he admits at the outset, a contribution "...to the formation of a new consciousness and a firmer resolution." At issue is the struggle for the spirit of a culture enticed and buffeted by a system that puts representation before reality and interest before equity.

Wolterstorff, a Calvin College philosophy professor, sadly considers some aspects of applied Reformed Christianity, including the tarnished area of piety. The social thought of the early Calvinists stands to illustrate the

...tension between demand and reality....

One does not apprehend the contours of characteristic Calvinist social piety until one discerns the pervasive presence of (this form) of guilt. Some will say it is not guilt at all, but a peculiar form of hypocrisy: people saying that they ought to work at social reform but not believing it and happily filling their social roles in the ordinary way. Perhaps in some cases this acquiescence is the result of hypocrisy, but my own experience suggests that it is more often otherwise.

Although the tension is as old as society, Wolterstorff believes that its new growth results from a veiled adherence to traditional structural archetypes.

The six-plus-one alternation of labor and rest is not the alternation of work with recovery from work so as to be able to go back to work; it is the alternation of mastery of the natural and social world with thankful enjoyment of the world. The day of rest, the sabbath, (Wolterstorff quoting Johan van der Hoeven) is important precisely in connection with and in opposition to the rush and the lust for hurried expansion of power that so easily affects history and man's experience of it.

Thus, fanatical faith in progress and the power of technological improvements seduce to some extent every member of an affluent core society into believing that opulence is spreading and that it will eventually reach all human-kind.

Christian social action, as the reports from Ethiopia daily remind us, is no guarantor of justice and peace. Wolterstorff runs through the record of two approaches by Gustavo Gutierrez, a liberation theologian; and Herman Dooyeweerd and Bob Goudzwaard, neo-

Calvinists. Wolterstorff sees liberation theology assessing the justness of a society by placing emphasis on salvation, affirming the importance of self-determination, but never succeeding in incorporating into its vision, freedom by mastery. Neo-Calvinism emphasizes creation, affirms the importance of freedom by mastery, but fails in incorporating freedom by self-determination. He then suggests a vision of *shalom* that is more comprehensive. Using the criteria of *shalom* in assessing and building a world social order means looking for a society where the first order is enjoyment in one's relationships with God, in one's physical surroundings, in one's companions, and with oneself.

What makes Wolterstorff's argument convincing is not only critical analysis, but example—the personification of ideas in human expression. An aesthete, Wolterstorff perceives human ideas in physical illustrations. The *city* or the environment we allow to be structured for and around us, stands as the depiction of how we see our relationships to God, others, our surroundings, and ourselves.

His cynical criticism of our contemporary environments measures the degree of human emotion invested in public policy. With the frustration of a confused parent, Wolterstorff questions "The cries of the poor and the tyrannized touch the heart of God. Do the cries of those depressed by the ugliness of the shantytowns of Rio de Janeiro, the slums of Manhattan, or the squatters' quarters of Capetown also touch His heart?" We look at facade and ignore the intent. Cities impose "restrictions on the face of the earth in order to create an environment—a *shared* environment." We ac-

cept the confinements as part of the progress. In every way that space impinges on life; "a city, like a work of art, is value and rationality embedded in sensory material." With ample reason, he blames the rampant intellectualism of modern Calvinism for the promotion of duty over delight and the exclusion of aesthetic consideration in the public planning of environments.

In the end, the author drops his script and begins a stream of consciousness in the attempt to find a way out of the seemingly huge and impossible situation. Christian scholars know the applied secrets of the Good News, and on their consciences he rains down condemnation. Others have drafted an academic accusation against the behavior of Christians in social affairs, Wolterstorff offers a plea for a new view of things. In constructing new solutions from old affluent societal models, we Christians are suppressing justice and *shalom*. Woe unto the impoverished societies we are so good at helping, and he cautions, woe unto us.

Is there an answer to this pitiful pattern of conscience and cure? Wolterstorff's conclusion:

I have written this book out of the conviction that...our Western secularism is a passing thing.... I have seen...the renewal of the liturgy with a commitment of peace. I have heard the news of bands of Christians around the world saying No to injustice...I have found the inspirations for my words in these enfleshments of faith, of love, and of hope.

Blessed are the poor.