
Pro Rege

Volume 7 | Number 4

Article 8

June 1979

Christian Labour's Wasteland (Book Review)

James W. Skillen
Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

Recommended Citation

Skillen, James W. (1979) "Christian Labour's Wasteland (Book Review)," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 7: No. 4, 30.
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol7/iss4/8

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Christian perspective. A great many philosophical problems are uncovered, but it is not always clear how the idea of justice is related to ideas of law, freedom, authority, and many more. Dengerink moves toward a Christian assessment and perspective in the final pages of the book, but he is even more general at that point with little elaboration of a normative Christian view of justice.

The conclusion to which this reviewer comes is that Dengerink's essay will be appreciated most fully if used as a supplement in a college course or if read in conjunction with Herman Dooyeweerd's *The Christian Idea of the State* (Craig) and L. Kalsbeek's *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Wedge).



A Christian Labour's Wasteland, edited by Edward Vanderkloet. Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1978. \$4.95 pb. Reviewed by James W. Skillen, Associate Professor of Political Science.

For those who are acquainted with the Christian Labour Association of Canada, this book will be an encouraging reminder that after twenty-five years the CLAC is refusing to sit down quietly in the middle of a troubled Canadian economy to count up its wage increases or to meditate gleefully on a powerful strike record. To those who know nothing of an organized Christian labor union in North America, this is just the introduction they need.

Ed Vanderkloet, the Executive Secretary of the CLAC, has brought together several of the best articles and speeches of recent years that have appeared in the organization's monthly magazine, *THE GUIDE*, or that were presented at its annual conventions. The essays confess and explain the faith of the CLAC — a Christian faith that is "labor intensive" and which is strikingly unusual in the secularized world of big unions.

Bernard Zylstra's essay explains the meaning of each word in the CLAC's name. Harry Antonides argues that a Christian labor organization is a real alternative for today, not an outdated mistake left over from an earlier age. Al Wolters discusses the importance of ideas in the history of modern, hard-nosed, down-to-earth economics, and urges Christians not to collapse beneath pragmatic criticisms but to get to work developing a Christian view of labor. H. Evan Runner explains why the little CLAC is a giant threat to our modern "tolerant" societies because it exposes the religiously deep intolerance of secularized labor unions and labor laws which do not have room for a Christian union. Calvin Seerveld takes the Biblical image of the rainbow to point out to the CLAC that God's blessing will lead it into the

future if it is willing to keep on repenting and reforming and not give up its true calling.

The two essays that deal most concretely with labor and economic life are Vanderkloet's and Bob Goudzwaard's. Vanderkloet argues that Christians must oppose the common faith held by liberals, conservatives, and Marxists alike, namely, that the proper goal of human life is material prosperity through ever increasing economic growth. Christians should be working instead for a creationally responsible, God-honoring, neighbor-loving pattern of stewardship that leads to true peace and health. Among other things this will mean the restructuring of economic enterprises so that laborers can assume genuine human responsibility as partners in the workplace. It will mean less production of wasteful products, more care for the environment, and greater utilization of all human skills.

Goudzwaard explains in some detail the meaning of the biblical idea of stewardship which throws a whole new light on ownership, work, and leisure time. The reason why a Christian labor union is so important in all of this is that only in community can Christians bear testimony to the unique style of work to which God calls His creatures. Work, according to Goudzwaard, should manifest creativity, not mechanical repetitiveness, cooperation, not lonely isolation, and true well-being and satisfaction, not meaningless monotony that brings only a pay check.

Whatever the nature of your work, you will be strengthened and encouraged as a Christian by reading these essays.