

In the March, 1975 issue Dr. Bob Goudzwaard of the Free University of Amsterdam reviewed Dr. Magnus Verbrugge's recent book **AFTER CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM; AN OVERHAUL OF DEMOCRACY**. In this column we are printing Verbrugge's response together with Goudzwaard's reply.

Readers who wish to obtain a copy of the book should write to Maydo Publications, P.O. Box 35413, Stn. E., Vancouver, B.C.

Editor

I am grateful to the editor of the Guide for the opportunity to respond to the review of my book by Prof. Goudzwaard. I hope that my reply will stimulate a continuing debate about what Christians can do in the area of social and political action. I do not intend to be polemic since that is neither scientific nor charitable as a form of communication. I intend to be factual and honest as Prof. Goudzwaard states he wants to be. At the same time I feel that we can no longer afford to speak in generalities about our task as Christians. We must get specific in our efforts to find some answers to the many questions of the day.

I chose the field of organization and the use of power because it has baffled Christians for too long. But let me turn to the review.

Dr. G.: "The book reminds me of a number of Social Credit publications which also place great expectations on a reorganization of the economic-financial sector of society. Such a manner of approach is . . . to me . . . somewhat unreal." So it is to me. I wrote: "I am well aware that an improvement in the structure of our democracy and organizations doesn't change the evil in the heart of man." p. 9. Still, that does not relieve us of the duty to call attention to evil, found in the structure of the State and the laws it creates. Christianity has warned against the sins of oppression and robbery for two millennia. This book concentrates on the communal sins of oppression and robbery as they are practised on a colossal scale with the sanction of the law. It urges everyone, including Christians to start to speak out against it and to propose an alternative. About this, Christianity has been and still is remarkably silent.

This book is not about reorganization of the economic-financial sector of the economy as Dr. G. seems to think. It is about the establishment of justice for all. This has many consequences; one is that the law must not encourage people to viciously exploit the majority as it does today. Rather, it must make it a criminal offence. Does Dr. G. not agree with that? If so, why did he not mention that most of the book is devoted to this? And if not, why does he not have an alternative for changing the laws of iniquity in a world ravaged by poverty, inflation and injustice?

I urge everyone—and that includes Christians—to insist that the state dispense justice to all. That is its God-given task. Some of the means it can employ are laws that prohibit despotism and compulsory membership against one's conscience. G. suggests that I see these two means as the totality of required social change. But he fails to point out that I devote 158 pages to a demonstration of rampant injustice, a search for its causes and an extensive series of proposals for drastic reform. Was all this overlooked by Dr. G.?

G. likes best the part of my book where I describe how organizations become corrupt because their leaders change the common goal. I did not write that at all. My thesis is that an organization is already corrupt when its leaders hold the power to make this change, without the permission of the rest. (17) The cause of corruption is the rise of absolute power, even before it is used.

Our present society is not sick because striking unionists beat up non-strikers or because a few rich rob the rest blind. Our Canadian society is corrupt because the State gives unionists the power to beat others without punishment and the rich to steal on a colossal scale with the backing of the law.

In order to correct some of these basic evils, I devoted over thirty pages to a search for changes, needed in the structure of the state and the way, our laws are made. In order to give the citizen the opportunity to exercise his STEWARDSHIP, he needs the freedom to choose against dirty laws and for just ones. None of these things G. has given the central place they occupy in the book. Why not?

After mentioning with approval some of the examples of corruption given, G. continues: "With such illustrations in mind, Verbrugge launches his practical proposals. He advocates a radical reorganization of our financial and economic system." This is incorrect. The practical proposals appear in Chapter 10: "Retooling Society." They are summarized at the end on p. 137 and in all fairness to the reader should be mentioned so as to set the record straight:

1. Only government may use coercive power and only for the purpose of dispensing equal justice for all.
2. No one else may use coercive power through a compulsory organization; that is a criminal assault.
3. The ideal form for all organizations is all-rule (democracy).
4. The voluntary organization gives the individual freedom of choice to join or leave without penalty. (That is what our Christian schools are all about.)
5. Government organizations must be democratic ones if they are to dispense justice.
6. Monopoly in an industry creates a compulsory organization with coercive power which is prohibited.
7. Any organization, vital for a citizen to judge government function, must be independent.
8. Any attempt of domination over government through a private organization is strictly prohibited since it destroys proper government function.

Does all this make all normativity for state life disappear, as G. claims? These norms mentioned form the backbone of the book, not some superficial proposals to restructure the corporations. Yet, they were not even mentioned in the review.

Dr. G. disagrees with my general approach which is to substantially differ from that of Dooyeweerd. He zeroes in on my emphasis of the common purpose which Dr. D. rejects.

Q.: "Dooyeweerd speaks of a divergent Qualifying function, i.e., the internal destination function (economic, social, public legal, etc.) of societal relationships." In "A New Critique of Theoretical Thought", Vol. III, p. 573 Dooyeweerd talks about voluntary associations: "a collective inter-individual act of consensus constituting a unified will of a whole, bound by a common purpose". (italics mine) I know that on page 574 he writes: "The purpose does not coalesce with the internal leading function" and I agree with it.

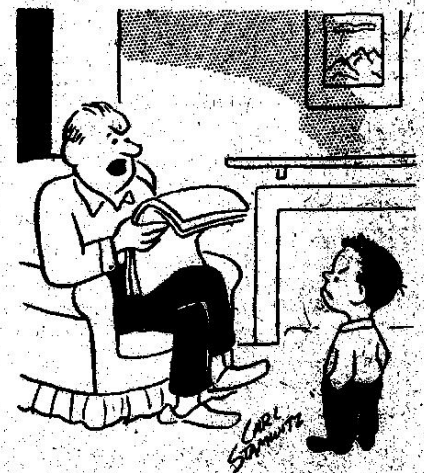
If I had intended to give a philosophical account of D.'s theory on organization, I would

have used his terminology, including "qualifying function". Dr. Dooyeweerd was the first to notice my substitution of the term "common purpose". After he had read the entire manuscript and understood the problem of translating "transcendental concepts" into language, meaningful to the reading public of North America, he conceded that we had little alternative. In fact, we both searched for a better term but failed to find one. I do hope that Dr. G. and I will not end up by admitting: "for want of a nail a kingdom was lost".

Dr. G. states that I feel that a corporation fulfils its purpose properly if it seeks to maximize profits, providing this is done in a democratic manner and providing it adheres to certain just means and rules. I did not say that. I wrote on p. 121: "What makes a mentool (ORGANIZATION) worth joining? It must have 1. a common purpose, 2. acceptable means to go after it, 3. a peaceful system to change the way it does things when something goes wrong, 4. the security of just rules that govern organizations as well as individuals."

In contrast, says Dr. G.: "Dooyeweerd points to the normative internal destination function of the enterprise, i.e. the economic function." Then comes a non-Dooyeweerdian interjection. "As a good steward, keeping in mind the economic norm, the enterprise must strive to achieve as it were a series of simultaneous purposes, including a proper service to society, internal labour peace, responsible working conditions, respect for the natural environment, etc. In V's book the enterprise is viewed as a more or less neutral purpose organization". Not surprisingly, we find in V. a different, much more closed view than in Dooyeweerd. "To some extent man's calling has been eliminated, only to be replaced by a common opinion of the organization's members." A serious accusation indeed. But is it justified?

The term "stewardship" is not a philosophical term. We are stewards, good or bad, in everything we do. It determines our religious commitment and it shows in all the aspects of our existence. Thus in our work in the enterprises we must be good stewards as elsewhere. But our enterprise is not stewardly qualified. That would be philosophical nonsense. It is economically qualified. It is not at all a neutral purpose organization. It must fulfil its internal leading function by the economic use of all its resources, including human activity. If it does that, all its members will benefit. If it fails, it goes bankrupt.



"No, we're not calling in a Federal mediator! A dollar a week is all the allowance you're going to get!"

What about the "simultaneous purposes" mentioned by Dr. G.? I would prefer to speak of simultaneous means that will lead the members to their common purpose. But that is a matter of preference. More important, I did not neglect these aspects of work. 1. Service to society. Chapter 5 is devoted to a discussion of the disservice government, big corporations and union render society. As a result: "workers are unwilling—even unable—to give their best effort to mind-numbing work on obsolete assembly lines. They get bored, lose interest and make mistakes." 2. Internal labour peace. Ch. 11-14 incl. are devoted to its achievement. 3. Responsible working conditions. Ch. 3, esp. Section E: "serfdom unlimited" and F: Why are they complaining? "The young are no longer satisfied with old slogans. They refuse to be treated as a commodity called labour" p. 38. 4. Respect for the natural environment. "The science of paleontology tells us that if we do not change our present ways, mankind will soon join the ninety percent (of extinct species) through poisoning of our planet. All men who believe that every fellow man is precious, that every man, woman and child is unique and equal before his Maker, can love them as human beings and protect man as endangered species and save him from extinction because they care" p. 189. Is this evidence of an act of "flattening out of economic life" on my part?

There is much more in the review that is not in my book but this suffices. To be misquoted is a disappointing experience. It is far worse to see the thrust of the whole work—the quest for justice—get lost altogether.

Contrary to G's conclusion, I am not optimistic about the future. I fully expect to see concentration camps in my life time in Britain, North America and Western Europe. We have all the organization and technology needed to establish full-fledged censorship of the media, state ownership of the means of production. My book was written in the hope that at least Christians would agree on the need for a structural overhaul of the state so that justice would at least be proclaimed as its "qualifying function." I didn't expect the world to accept that. Alas, neither does the rest, who share my faith but refuse to go beyond the futile exhortations to the individual for personal repentance while the world blows apart.

Marxism is rolling like a tidal wave across the world. It has engulfed many countries and is feverishly busy to drain the strength of any opposition in the rest of the world. Our Universities are their main source of future strength and children of Christians and humanists alike are being brainwashed, in Toronto as well as in Amsterdam or Vancouver. Capitalism has no defenses left. As soon as the present generation in the seats of power has gone, Marxism will destroy capitalism and the civilization we have known. It deserves no better fate. But we as Christians will have to answer to the question: "why have you not tried to witness to what God has revealed as his will for life in the state?"

Perhaps we can as yet find some common ground before it is too late. Perhaps we can find enough of value in each other's work to come to a basis for understanding. If we do, we may yet find an opportunity to co-operate and become witnesses to the Good News. Would that not be a worthy COMMON PURPOSE?

Reply by Dr. Goetzwaard

Dr. Verbrugge's comments indicate that I may have expressed myself a bit too forcefully and perhaps have caused a few misunderstandings here and there. On the

whole, however, his reactions have not persuaded me to alter my viewpoints. For this reason I would advise the readers to obtain Verbrugge's book and judge for themselves; as I stated in my review, the book is well-written and it stimulates one to think about the issues.

For this reason I would like to restrict my postscript to two points. First of all a correction: I would feel bad about it if I had left the readers with the impression that Verbrugge is one of those society reformers who believe in the saving power of their own proposals and who insist that an improvement in society's structures will also produce better people. Verbrugge decidedly does not belong to that category. His real goal is the establishment of justice, also in socio economic relationships, and it is always worthwhile to listen intently to such a person. I am emphasizing this point since Verbrugge has obviously drawn a different conclusion from my review.

My second point concerns the real issue, namely whether or not Verbrugge's book contains signs of a restrictive, more or less closed view of economic life. I continue to feel a real difference between Verbrugge's formulation of the essential task or destiny of the state and his description of the essential goals of the enterprise. In the latter I detect an element that eliminates Dooyeweerd's idea of "disclosure," whereas disclosure, or opening up, is definitely implied in the term "Stewardship." It is for this reason I used "stewardship," knowing full well that Dooyeweerd's own terminology—*waardenafwegende besparing*—(sparing or frugal mode of administering scarce goods implying an alternative choice of their destination) appears rather abstract and difficult to understand for the average reader. Yet, Dooyeweerd's wording clearly implies the need for a deepening of justice, love and faith, something I sorely miss in Verbrugge's "common purpose," ("The purpose, common to capitalist and communist corporations alike is: to make as much profit as the law allows: to maximize their profit." pp. 147, 148.) In my opinion the above quote describes one of Verbrugge's main thesis, in spite of the many good things with which he surrounds it. This is also evident from his summary on pages 152, and 153 where he states: "Our corporations are the tools in society to make money so we can all eat. . . . It means that we make as much money as we can while we work, subject to the law." In my opinion this shows a vision which does not sufficiently recognize that also in economic life we have a calling with respect to God and fellowmen. However, just like Verbrugge, I will gladly submit my opinion to the judgment of the readers.

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