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Farmer from Tekoa: On the Book of Amos (Book Review)

John Zinkand
Dordt College

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A quarterly faculty publication of
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countries and America), puts it all together in this production. Despite its Gibbon-like subtitle, this work, like other Schaeffer volumes, is an apologetic tract, an apologetic for Christianity as the only reasonable alternative to the chaos of modern "civilization."

A careful reader will note similarities in *How Should We Then Live?* to earlier Schaeffer books. Compare, for example, the use of Han's Arps poem "Für Theo Van Doesburg": "the head downwards/the legs upwards. . ." p. 188 in *How...*, with p. 34 in *The God Who Is There*. In both books this is followed by a discussion of Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase."

How... is certainly open to the criticism that Schaeffer has not entirely escaped the difficulties inherent in trying to demonstrate the "reasonableness" of Christianity while giving a passing nod to the fact that everyone starts with some kind of presuppositions.

The "Select Bibliography" (p. 281 ff.), despite the disclaimer that "It is impossible to remember, let alone do justice to, all the writings which have helped form my opinions," contains scant reference to contemporary Reformed or Evangelical philosophers or theologians. For one who studied under Cornelius Van Til in the thirties and has lived in Europe for the better part of two decades, such treatment is baffling, to say the least. The work whose title implies corporate ethical obligations, *How Should We Then Live?*, strangely exhibits the individualistic approach common to secular western living and American evangelicalism. What purpose is served by photos of the author and filming crew posing with objects of art or on the steps of the Supreme Court Building (see pages 73, 100, 186, 189, 221)? (We can excuse the blurb on the jacket denominating the author as the "foremost evangelical thinker of our day," for slick jackets are meant to enhance the sale of the books they encase.)

With its being offered as a bonus for readers extending their subscriptions to *Christianity Today*, as well as its tie-in with the Gospel Films production, the message of *How...* is bound to reach many evangelical Christians. Above criticisms aside, it is still our hope that the basic message will reach to those outside the church, for, indeed, unless one comes to grips with the Christian alternative to modern dilemmas of life, there is no hope. The warning flags are already flying: economic instability, environmental pollution, the depletion of natural resources, sophisticated weaponry capable of logarithmic overkill, "moral" and legal decisions based on the prevailing whims of 51% of those polled, etc. If Schaeffer's book is instrumental

in alerting people to the impending peril and pointing them to the Living Christ of the Scriptures, it will have served its purpose.

The Farmer from Tekoa: on the Book of Amos, by Herman Veldkamp, Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, 236 pages, \$6.95. Translated by Theodore Plantinga (first published in Dutch as *De boer uit Tekoa*, T. Wever, Franeker, n.d.). Reviewed by John M. Zinkand, Professor of Classical Languages.

Veldkamp has not given us a commentary on the book of Amos. Instead, we have a collection of meditations, possibly the core material of sermons that the late Dutch minister preached. Yet these are not like so many meditations, moralistic homilies having a remote connection to the texts from which they have been released. Veldkamp's meditations indicate his thorough acquaintance with the original language and the historical setting. But as a true pastor, his intent is the application of the message, not the dissemination of "interesting" facts.

Here are some samples to whet one's appetite. Chapter Eleven is on "The Creaking Wagon," the image Amos uses in 2:13: "Behold, I will press you down in your place as a cart full of sheaves presses down."

When God speaks, we hear creaking everywhere. Wise men are silent and government leaders are perplexed. This is basically what Amos has to say to the twentieth century man when he talks about the creaking wagon, the swift runner who will not escape, and the soldier whose bow and arrow will not protect him. This is how we must understand and apply these words from the distant past; otherwise they will leave us right where we are. (p. 88)

On Amos 3:8, "The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" the meditation "God's Voice and Our Response" contains this:

God had good reason to be angry with Israel. In political and social life the Israelites regarded self-interest, rather than the will of God, as the highest law. . . As far as the life of the church was concerned, the forms were maintained, but the people felt that religion was costing them too much and was at bottom harmful to society. That's what the grain dealers said as they waited impatiently for the end

of the Sabbath so they could again sell their provisions (8:5). During the singing in the temple their minds were on their business; the rattling of money, such as we still hear in church today, reminded them of the marketplace!

The Publisher's Note on an unnumbered page at the end of the book indicates that the quotations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted. What is not explained is the translator's preference, at times for the New English Bible, at others for the Jerusalem Bible. See, for example, the use of the NEB at the beginning of Chapter Fourteen (Amos 3:9), while the Jerusalem Bible is quoted for the same verse on the next page. In general, the English style is exceptionally readable, moving, even gripping. Yet one glaring failure to use English idiom occurs repeatedly: "the heathens" instead of the usual collective. The centering of the material on p. 140 (including the page number!) is undoubtedly a printer's error that will be caught in subsequent editions.

Bread for the World, by Arthur Simon, Paulist Press, New York, and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 179 pages, \$1.50. Reviewed by Rev'd E. L. Hebdon Taylor, Associate Professor of Sociology.

Take a tablespoonful of Keynesian economics (deficit financing), add another spoonful of modernist Roman Catholic theology, plus a tumblerful of socialist planning, and a teaspoonful of Christian charity and you have most of the ingredients of this book. The author is executive director of Bread for the World, an interdenominational citizens' movement concerned with alleviating world hunger and poverty. His basic thesis is that private charitable efforts are not enough, commendable though they may be, and that the problem of world hunger can be solved only by using the big stick of government to take income away from affluent Americans and give it to the Less Developed Countries (LDC's).

In Simon's view, world hunger is due more to problems of faulty distribution than of production, though, of course, production needs to be increased by making use of the new agricultural technology based upon the Green Revolution. He says, "If present world food production were evenly divided among all the world's people, with minimal waste, everyone would have enough" (p. 14).

In a chapter on "Population," Arthur Simon argues that birth control is not the answer to the population problem since the people of the LDC's look to large families to provide them with financial security in their old age. In a chapter on "Environment, Resources and Growth," Simon tells us that many poor countries are faced with the dilemma of having to choose between an immediate need to reduce poverty and a long-range need to preserve the environment. In most cases, he claims, they will "choose the former" (p. 48). The way to resolve this dilemma "is to work it out on the basis of a unified world view. The logic of the natural environment, as well as the logic of human justice, calls us to deal not with separated parts but with the whole world" (p. 50).

This calls for a "rationalization" of the world's system of production and distribution, beginning with centralized planning to cut down the rate of consumption of Americans. Simon advocates guaranteed jobs for everyone in the U.S. thrown out of work by the adoption of a policy of "fair and free trade," as well as a basic minimum wage for all American workers, so that they will not feel threatened by such competition from overseas and the resulting loss of jobs.

Simon suggests various reforms of our U.S. foreign aid program: 1) the separation of developmental assistance from military assistance; 2) the separation of development assistance from political considerations; 3) a fair count on development aid; 4) a new set of standards on the basis of which assistance can be determined; 5) the channeling of development assistance primarily through international agencies as well as through church and other voluntary agencies; 6) increased assistance for development among the rural poor; 7) increased food assistance, emphasizing grants rather than loans; and 8) adoption of 1 percent of the GNP as the target for development assistance (pp. 118-121).

Simon's book should be read carefully, but it must not be taken as the last word on the subject, for he ignores many dimensions of the world hunger and poverty issue, especially the theological and the political dimensions. Hunger is intimately bound up with false religions and political systems. It is impossible, for example, to separate India's shortages of food from the Hindu beliefs in the divinity of "sacred cows" nor to ignore Sri Lanka's (Ceylon) disastrous experiments with socialism. As a result of Bandaranaike's socialist policies of giving away rice to the people, while holding down prices paid to the farmers, production of rice fell drastically.