
Pro Rege

Volume 6 | Number 1

Article 10

September 1977

Bread for the World (Book Review)

E. L. Hebden Taylor

Dordt College

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

Recommended Citation

Taylor, E. L. Hebden (1977) "Bread for the World (Book Review)," *Pro Rege*:

Vol. 6: No. 1, 30.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol6/iss1/10

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.

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.