

460  
MILLION  
MOUTHS  
to FEED

Arthur  
Simon

bread for  
the world

**BREAD FOR THE WORLD**  
by Arthur Simon

Many Christians are doing their utmost to alleviate world hunger, and their efforts are essential. But they will also be in vain, says Arthur Simon, unless they are coupled to one more ingredient: public policy.

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## Correspondence

### Bread for the World

To the Editors: There is nothing new under the sun, nor is there likely to be. There has always been poverty, illiteracy, child mortality, lack of health services, technical inadequacies, as well as political, social, economic, and military barriers protecting the "haves" from the "have-nots."

The Bread for the World Statement of Policy ("The Right to Food," *Worldview*, May) is an overly—presumptuously—idealistic approach to solving human problems which have been in existence since day one....

I am personally resentful of the fact that the author(s) thinks human nature is sinful. I doubt whether the author(s) can explain adequately the presumption of this realization. To say that killing, starvation, repression, etc.—all as basic to man as breathing—are sinful, that man's human nature reflects this and, therefore, man's human nature is sinful, is just ass-backwards.... Man is not sinful, he's just some poor son-of-a-bitch trying his damnest to survive the easiest way he knows how.

Idealistically, I can agree with all nine points of the statement; realistically, none....

I. An end to hunger in the United States.

Charity begins at home, right? The author at least realizes that unless hunger is wiped out on the home front, the argument for alleviation abroad is weak. In light of the prospect's never being realized in my lifetime, I doubt whether the aspect of international agri-aid can stand justifiably on solid ground. When there are hungry Americans, is it our duty to feed other nationalities?...

II. A U.S. food policy committee for world food scarcity and rural development as proposed by the World Food Conference.

...It is foolishness to think that the U.S. would participate in a world

food reserve. The question seems to be to what level. The only shortcoming from a political point of view is that while there are tons of grain siloed somewhere as the U.S.'s portion of the reserve, many of this country's citizens are in need of it....

To say that food assistance should be used in a humanitarian rather than political way is just reaching for pie-in-the-sky. Even if the U.S. assistance was humanitarian, what is to insure the recipient's use? When the major part of the world is ruled by the military or military-supported governments, how can one be so naive as to think the foods which go into these countries are not used politically? Who ever heard of a dictatorship giving food to people who oppose it?

Just as it is unwise for the U.S. to adopt a food policy as proposed by the World Food Conference, so too it is unwise for full U.S. participation in the International Fund for Agricultural Development.... The proposed programs must show that they are better than the presently supported ventures in this area....

III. The reform and expansion of U.S. development assistance.

I find it rather difficult to believe that agribusiness will be reformed prior to this nation's large industries. Business is business, and whoever has the buck to pay will definitely receive. So it goes all the way down to the consumer's level. Consequently, whatever development assistance is offered will always have some strings attached to it....

IV. The separation of development assistance from all forms of military assistance.

Military assistance is necessitated by the balance of power and a market eager for the purchase of such a commodity. Let's not forget that the Third World is ruled through and by various military and military-supported governments. If the U.S. were to disengage its military assistance, Russia or China would just step into the vacancy. So what would the U.S. gain from such a withdrawal? It would lose money, cut back on employment at home, and endanger the precarious balance of power. This point should be

(continued on p.58)

in such relaxed and self-indulgent moments that one looks for signs of the more reflective and introspective person. If he did not think deep thoughts aloud with Bradlee, one wonders with whom he did his more serious reflection. By all accounts it was not with the "Irish Mafia," which was the other main leisure-time circle. Surely he could not have done all his more serious ruminating in the company of Arthur Schlesinger. One is compelled to suspect that Kennedy was not a very serious man, at least not in the sense of being inclined to, or capable of, critical analysis on the nature and uses of power. Perhaps that is just as well, but it will come as a disappointment to many. Bradlee's book has about it the feel of honesty. The price of writing such a book is to be accused of aiding the enemies of one's friends. The satisfaction is that history may catch more fully the falling star that was the moment and is the memory of Camelot.

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totally omitted from any similar policy statement.

V. Trade preferences for the poorest countries.

Although I acknowledge the need for a general program for trade preferences for the poorer countries, I find it difficult to resolve such a gesture toward a military dictatorship such as Bolivia. The favorable trade status would just increase the gap between the rich and poor of that country, not lighten the poor's burden any....

If one were to lower trade barriers, the commodity imported to the U.S. would be competing with the domestic union-made articles. As a result, as happened with the importation of Japanese steel, big labor as well as big business lobby Congress for protective tariffs. Thus, the original intent is self-defeating....

VIII. Efforts to deal with the population growth rate.

The development of family planning for the Third World must precede health programs aimed at reducing infant mortality and increasing life expectancy. Populations must be reduced to manageable levels to insure a better world for the children just being born into it. Efforts should be directed toward supplementing children's lives and not wasted on those generations who are set in their ways and are soon to depart from existence altogether. All assistance to deal with the growth rate demands a reduction in population. Perhaps the cheapest way is already at their doorsteps: warfare.

Moralists may cry out, "You are advocating murder!" Yes, I am. But I ask those moralists who would let children and pregnant mothers die of starvation if they are not murdering millions. We cannot help the fact that people are born, but we can help the condition of the world that they are born into. A fighting chance is better—and more Christian—than none whatsoever....

Trey Foerster

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of Theology  
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Arthur Simon Responds:

As I read Mr. Foerster's long letter, the image of a cynical army colonel surfaced in my mind. What a jolt to discover on the final page that he is a graduate student in a department of theology! Let me cite just one serious example of the abundant misconceptions that permeate his letter.

Foerster argues: "The development of family planning for the Third World must precede health programs aimed at reducing infant mortality and increasing life expectancy." There is no way that family planning can effectively precede improved health services. The rule is: Where you have poor health services, poor nutrition, and high infant mortality, you also have large families. Poverty-stricken parents who depend on surviving sons for social security will not voluntarily plan to have fewer children under those circumstances. Such parents would violate their own self-interest to do so. Even Paul Ehrlich, who did so much to foster the illusion that family planning must come first, now ridicules it as a "condoms from helicopters delusion"—a psychological condition that is rampant among well-meaning upper-middle and upper-class Americans. Only where the benefits of such things as good nutrition and basic health services are spread to the masses of poor people do they choose to have smaller families and sharply reduce alarming growth rates. I am not aware of any exceptions to this rule.

As this point illustrates, Foerster's underlying disagreement with Bread for the World's statement of policy is theological. He says that to call human nature sinful "is just ass-backwards.... Man is not sinful, he's just some poor son-of-a-bitch trying his damnest [sic] to survive the easiest way he knows how." Using this Darwinian premise, he not surprisingly advocates murder-by-warfare as the easiest way to deal with population growth. Starting with a theology that is so fundamentally at odds with Christian faith, Foerster moves to conclusions that defy empirical evidence. No one should mistake this for realism, just because it sounds hard-nosed.

I can understand a retired colonel feeling this way—but what is he doing in theology?