

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND PUBLIC POLICY: NO GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE  
by ARTHUR SIMON.

This little book (just 120 pages) deals well with a problem that either does or should bother many people. What, if anything, are the implications of religion for personal and political behavior when faced with social problems such as extensive human hunger?

Arthur Simon, brother of politician Paul Simon, found his answer when, as a Christian minister, he established with others a new active organization entitled BREAD FOR THE WORLD to raise private & public money to feed the world's poorest hungry people. Once he was fully aware of the suffering from prolonged hunger for anybody, he felt a need to involve the church in doing what they could about it. But it became obvious that only with the help of appropriate governmental policies could the seriousness of the problem be dealt with. So the Bread for the World organization was established as a non-partisan organization to enable all who agree that government has a necessary role to play in combating human hunger to work for proper public policies to supplement their own private donations.

Arthur Simon does not think that this is the only issue that should involve religious people in advocating moral rather than immoral governmental policies, but it is the one stressed in this book. His argument is that avoiding political participation on such issues is not really possible--inaction on political issues actually succeeds in supporting whatever those politically active favor, either the status quo or policies that favor some special interest groups instead of promoting the general public well-being.

Simon is a strong supporter of separation of church and state, but not of religion from life. He says that if anyone told him to preach the gospel but not concern himself with family life, he would have to respond that he could not ignore anything so important to human life. And for the same reason, if told to ignore political issues which profoundly affect the lives of the needy, he could not do it.

So he wrestles with the question of how, if at all, church bodies can take official positions on public policy issues, & how the "mistakes" being made by the "religious right" can be avoided. Simon is as Biblically oriented as they are, but avoids trying to impose his answers on anyone. He wants church people to be engaged in truly open discussion on issues, educating each other hopefully toward an informed consensus.

Simon is not a utopian. He is both a pessimist and an optimist. He knows we will not always do the right thing, and that our best may not be good enough, yet good may finally triumph. But our trying can make a difference in the right direction. We certainly should try!

Reading the book would give you Simon's pungent wording & more.