

ecological concerns (152-53), as well as liberation theology, as mentioned above. Lengthier excerpts on these topics would have been appropriate. The omission of the original footnotes also makes navigating the excerpts challenging at times, since the thinkers and events Yoder makes reference to are not cited or explained. Interested readers must consult the original texts for this sort of information.

Overall, the book is a solid introduction to the major themes of Yoder's thought, and would be useful for adult education classes, small church groups, students, or individuals wanting a taste of this remarkable theological voice. My guess is that these excerpts will prove to readers why Yoder's interdisciplinary articulation of Mennonite peace theology has so profoundly influenced not only fellow Mennonites but also those beyond Mennonite circles, through his years of preaching the spirituality of peace in both church and academy.

Susanne Guenther Loewen, doctoral student, Toronto School of Theology, Toronto, Ontario

Bryant L. Myers. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. Revised and expanded. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.

Well written, well researched, well argued, easy to read and understand, Bryant Myers's *Walking with the Poor* is an excellent resource for anyone interested in deepening their understanding of development values and practice from an unabashedly Christian perspective. This book argues strongly and repeatedly that poverty is not a "material condition having to do with the absence of things like money, water, food, housing and the lack of just social systems . . . materially defined and understood" (5).

With this perspective, Myers takes issue with the currently dominant paradigm that assumes poverty is material and consequently often separates the spiritual world from the material. The result of this common—and in Myers's thinking, misguided—approach is a development focus primarily

on increasing access to the physical necessities of life. In contrast, Myers contends “that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational and that its cause is fundamentally spiritual. The poor are poor largely because they live in networks of relationships that do not work for their well-being. . . . Poverty is the whole family of our relationships that are not all they can be” (15).

Building on this premise, the author traces how Western and traditional cultures often differ on the role and appropriateness of religion as an integral part of development. Rather than the clear division advanced by most Western perspectives between the material and the spiritual, or between the seen and unseen, traditional cultures often blur these lines and recognize an intermediate world that blends the two. Myers then explains the harmful impact of development practice that separates the spiritual from the material, and articulates the importance of Christian development practitioners being able to deepen their theological skills “just as they develop their technical skills” (47) in order to work with this middle ground.

Myers posits that the key to transformational development is recognition of the role of “God’s redemptive and restorative work in the world” (176). The problem with traditional development that does not take the spiritual into consideration is that it reinforces the poverty trap in which the poor find themselves. When development interveners from their position of power emphasize the material at the expense of the spiritual, they foist their “god complexes” on the poor, thereby reinforcing the exclusion of the poor as actors in their own development story, and they intensify the lack of value that the poor often feel. When this happens, the poor “no longer know who they are (being) nor do they believe that they have vocation or gifts of any value (doing). . . . [T]heir poverty is complete” (128, 130).

After making a compelling case that eradicating poverty requires a spiritual diagnosis and response, Myers discusses program design and evaluation that will better enable Christian development workers carrying out holistic development to be truly effective in eradicating poverty. His discussion is full of helpful examples illustrating transformative practice. The stories he tells are inspiring and illuminating. Although acknowledging the witness of an imperfect church, he finds great hope in the church’s Christian witness and reminds readers that the church will be present “long

after the development intervention is over” (191), thereby ensuring that interventions done in partnership with indigenous Christian communities will have staying power and lasting impact.

While an excellent overview of Christian development practice, this book raises several troubling questions. First, other than to suggest to the poor and non-poor that they need to accept Myers’s Christian perspective to free themselves from the clutches of poverty, it seems to offer limited hope to people who remain committed to a contrary faith system. The book would be strengthened by a fuller explanation of how those not sharing the author’s religious beliefs fit within his paradigm. Are they always condemned to a life of poverty? How would the author engage in theological discussions with persons from non-Christian traditions?

Second, this volume gives short shrift to a rights-based approach to development, which is more fully infused into contemporary practice than the author acknowledges, and which could complement aspects of his own approach. Lastly, I was most surprised by Appendix 3: Standards and Indicators for Christian Witness (359), in which technical competence is never mentioned. Christian development workers could be substantially technically incompetent, yet fully meet virtually every indicator as long as they possess the requisite religious attributes. It seems to me that competence ought to be emphasized as an important foundational element of Christian witness.

Lowell Ewert, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario

Amos Yong. *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011.

In this book Amos Yong offers a biblical rationale for fully including and deeply valuing people with disabilities within faith communities. In a book he describes as intended for lay readers (6), he examines biblical support