

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.

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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

for his conviction that people with disabilities must be central in the life of the church. In the process, he considers able-bodied biases in biblical interpretation that he believes have reinforced discrimination against people with disabilities. Bringing together the insights of biblical scholars who have written about disability, Yong adds fresh insights of his own about biblical passages one might not have thought about in a disability context. The outcome is a significant contribution to biblical interpretation on disability, disappointing only because it does not live up to the author's intention to be accessible to the average layperson.

Yong begins by deliberately setting aside the interpretive framework that he calls the "normate" worldview, the pre-understandings readers in Western society have typically brought to reading the Bible through able-bodied privilege. He examines texts that have traditionally cast stigma on people with disabilities, arguing that the stigma comes not from the texts themselves but from able-bodied bias that misconstrues their meaning.

The author advocates a fundamental shift in point of view that shapes the book and stands on three explicit assumptions: that people with disabilities are created in God's image, that they have lives of their own and must not be defined solely by their disabilities, and that "disabilities are not necessarily evil or blemishes to be eliminated" (13). Any interpretation of a biblical text that conflicts with these assumptions he rejects as coming from the normate worldview. He then reexamines the potentially stigmatizing text and offers an alternative, disability-affirming interpretation.

Following this pattern, he examines selected texts from the Hebrew Bible, Gospels, Pauline epistles, and eschatological writings through the disability lens. In considering the Hebrew Bible, Yong suggests narratives about characters with disabling conditions as counterbalance to more troublesome passages that associate disability with sin. He goes on to examine the disability implications of healing stories in Acts and the Gospels of Luke and John, Paul's theology of weakness, and eschatological images of disability throughout the New Testament.

Yong takes it for granted that our understandings of the Bible depend on the context from which we read, an approach some readers might find unsettling. Some might argue that he has skipped a necessary step of providing biblical justification for his foundational assumptions. He argues

instead that the normative worldview has been such a powerful shaper of the context in which we read the Bible that a strong suspicion of traditional understandings is both necessary and reasonable.

Biblical understandings of disability that are congruent with the experience of people who live with disabilities are crucial if churches are to fully include and value these people. Yong makes a significant contribution to this effort, drawing together in one place the work of many scholars and augmenting it with insightful original interpretation.

In my view, the book does not achieve the author's stated aim of writing for a lay readership. His specialized vocabulary and dense prose would be daunting to many educated lay Bible study groups or Sunday school classes. This is disappointing, because, as Yong rightly suggests, a book on this theme that is understandable to the average layperson is sorely needed. Still, the book deserves a place in academic curricula for persons preparing for church leadership, especially those who preach or provide pastoral care. In the hands of a skilled teacher who can translate the concepts into simpler language, it could provide an excellent foundation for a serious Bible study about disability. Thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter augment its usefulness for teaching.

It is time for churches to rethink what they have long assumed the Bible says about disability, interpretations that have inadvertently added to the burden of people with disabilities. *The Bible, Disability, and the Church* is a serious call to the church to give up biblical interpretations that soothe the theological sensibilities of the able-bodied at the expense of leaving people with disabilities stuck with images of God that do not serve them. I hope that church leaders and others will take up the challenge to render this book's important message into language accessible for the average churchgoer, not just those with graduate degrees.

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