

liturgical expression, and arguing for an improvisational “harmony in exile” (169) over against the classical idealism of RO (Pickstockian) liturgics. Harry Huebner helpfully brings Milbank and Yoder into dialogue on the complex relations between violence, peace, and forgiveness, showing what is at stake when one takes Pauline rather than medieval theological accounts of “participation” as primary—a revealing point as pertains to historicism. Finally, Chris Huebner’s capstone essay considers what RO and RR might learn from one another, and recommends an ongoing risky radicality that embodies critical and dialogical vulnerability, in keeping with the power of weakness that refuses to make the world safe—since that is not a human prerogative.

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Paul Martens and Jenny Howell, eds. *John Howard Yoder: Spiritual Writings*. Modern Spiritual Masters Series. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011.

Before it is a social strategy, nonviolence is a moral commitment; before it is a moral commitment, it is a distinctive spirituality. It presupposes and fosters a distinctive way of seeing oneself and one’s neighbor under God. That “way of seeing” is more like a prayer than it is like a shrewd social strategy, although it is both. It is more a faith than a theory, although it is both. (23)

Paul Martens and Jenny Howell use the above quotation from John Howard Yoder’s *Nonviolence: A Brief History* to frame their collection of excerpts from the renowned 20th-century Mennonite theologian’s writings. It defines the distinctly Yoderian spirituality and theological logic explored in their volume, an impressively concise distillation of Yoder’s corpus of writings. Beginning with a brief biography and an overview of Yoder’s contributions to academy and church, Martens and Howell organize their selections into four major sections, each of which is introduced by the editors.

The first section, “The Meaning of Jesus,” touches on Yoder’s biblical

hermeneutics, the centrality of Jesus Christ as a historical, Jewish, and political Messiah, and Yoder's articulation of the Anabaptist life of faith, with its basis in communal discipleship. "The Mandate of the Church" delves further into Yoder's understanding of the church as, to mix his metaphors, a "foretaste" of the kingdom of God, which the church makes "visible" in human history (66-67). This section also includes examples of his engagement with other Christian denominations and their divergent understandings of the church, as well as with the Jewish tradition. Section three, "A Cosmic Vision," looks at differences between the church and the world, as determined by the confession of Christ as Lord and the witness of the life of nonviolent action in the world. "Practices and Practical Considerations," the fourth and final section, contains Yoder's insights on the practice of nonviolence, addressing concerns of responsibility toward the nation, social justice, and effectiveness. Yoder argues that Christians are not primarily to be concerned with avoiding sin or the alteration of society, but by obedience to Jesus' way of peace (142-43). For Yoder, the church is the body that, through the Holy Spirit, provides the virtues and skills necessary to fulfill this calling (150-51).

By and large, the book is skillfully edited. The introductions to each major section are insightful and helpful. Also, though Yoder's life was controversial on several levels, Martens and Howell laud him for his accomplishments as a ground-breaking theologian, yet do not avoid mentioning the failures within his personal and family life. To their credit, they treat these events with both sensitivity and honesty, thus providing a balanced portrait of Yoder that is neither one-sidedly saintly nor flawed. Of the four sections of excerpts, the final two stand out in that they go beyond the more familiar arguments of *The Politics of Jesus* and into Yoder's later work, including his takes on the "preferential option for the poor" in Latin American liberation theology (167-69) and the nonviolence of Mahatma Gandhi (148-49).

That said, more attention could have been paid to the different contexts in which Yoder wrote his various books; excerpts from his earliest writings at times appear beside those from much later works. Granted, he is known for his almost rigid consistency; nevertheless, some developments and changes in emphasis occurred over the course of his career. Instances of such shifts are his addressing of questions of gender equality (147) and

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.

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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