

will. This is exactly the qualification that is needed to understand Jesus' own promise: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:14). To ask "in Jesus' name" means not simply to utter his name, but to take into account his will. Only those requests offered "in that will" are granted (244-245).

Any scholar, student, or pastor who wants to know and do God's will as revealed in James will profit from Moo's *The Letter of James*. It belongs in all seminary libraries. Given the quality of the exposition and the reasonable price of the work at a time when many books its size sell for twice as much, the volume is a bargain.

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ED CHRISTIAN

Myers, Bryant L. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999. 288 pp. Paper, \$22.00.

Bryant Myers's book *Walking with the Poor* addresses the core issues of understanding the concept of development and how to minister to the poor by describing "the principles and practice of transformational development from a Christian perspective" (1). He does that by bringing together three areas of thought and action that have shaped the development thinking today, such as the "best of principles and practices [from the secular] international development community," the thoughts and experiences from Christian development and relief agencies (NGOs), as well as a "biblical framework for transformational development" (*ibid.*).

Myers develops his holistic understanding of poverty by discussing a variety of factors which contribute to poverty, models used to conceptualize poverty, and traditional views of how to intervene in order to change poverty. Traditional development is about material and social change, which are often synonymous with westernization and modernization. Transformational development, he suggests, is about changes in the whole of human life, including the material, social, and spiritual spheres (3). Wrapped in these two concepts is the concept of Christian witness, which Myers sees as a declaration of the gospel through life, words, and deeds.

At the center of Myers's arguments is what he calls the "blind spot" in Western development thinking, where poverty is merely seen as a material condition, having to do with the absence of things, which can be solved by responding with material resources.

Myers sees in our world a "convergence of stories" (20) that are in competition with each other. The Enlightenment, communism, science, technology, and capitalism have all tried to contribute in their own way to our understanding of who we are and what our goal is, but "at the end of the twentieth century the authority of these stories is fraying in the face of broken promises" (21). The Bible is an important source for the understanding and discussion of development because it is the Bible that tells not only the origins but also the ending of humanity. In that sense, it is "the biblical story [which] provides the answer to how the stories of the community and the promoter may reorient themselves to that intended by their Creator" (12). Therefore, true meaning in development comes only from God's story

because it is the source of motivation, values, and mission. This story has a “way out.” The central figure (Christ) provides the solution to the world because “the Christ of God was very much the Christ of the powerless and despised” (33).

Transformational development brings back God’s plan for this earth. The economic and political systems, which God created and gifted to the entire human society, have been impacted by the fall of man. Wealth has been used by humans to protect their own self-interest, and they act as owners rather than as stewards. Political systems have come to serve the powerful rather than to provide justice and peace. Becoming agents of the political and economic powers has compromised even the religious systems: “The net result of the fall on the economic, political and religious systems is that they become the places where people learn to play god in the lives of the poor and the marginalized” (29).

The point of the biblical story is clear: “God’s goal is to restore us to our original identity, as children reflecting God’s image, and to our original vocation as productive stewards, living together in just and peaceful relationships” (42).

Three key principles of the biblical story are the incarnation of Christ, the concept of redemption, and the kingdom of God (46-50). The “incarnation is the best evidence we have for how seriously God takes the material world” (46). God came and lived among humanity in the person of Christ. He healed and raised real people. He took on the struggle against oppression, suffering, and man’s inhumanity to man. His mission was more than merely spiritual. As God’s agents in transformational development, we are his hands and feet (46), working for the redemption of people in his kingdom here on earth.

In the third chapter, Myers analyzes several popular Christian and sociological concepts of poverty, concluding that poverty “is a complicated social issue involving all areas of life—physical, personal, social, cultural and spiritual” (81). He sees many causes of poverty, which “perpetuate injustice and misery” (83). Poverty can also exist within the mind, which he calls “poverty of being” (84). All this shows that poverty is a complex issue, and warns that interventions poorly thought through might cause more harm than bring help. And finally, an often overlooked area of poverty is caused by the “spirit world of shamans, and witchcraft and their not insignificant contribution to making and keeping people poor” (85-86). Because of the complexity of poverty, it will take the integration of many disciplines in doing meaningful development (see chap. 4).

Finally, Myers returns to his concept of transformational development, because for him “the point of greatest transformational leverage is changed people. It is the transformed person who transforms his or her environment” (116). In this way, the world will not be transformed by money and programs, but “at the end of the day, any transformation, justice, and peace will be because God made it so” (121).

Chapters 6 and 7 provide “principles” and “tools” for Christian development “practitioners” (137-203). Practitioners are reminded that in every “community [people have] already a survival strategy” (141). They are reminded that as outsiders they have to acknowledge this fact, and have to understand and learn to respect their hosts (and not act with a godlike mentality), and help to facilitate the people’s survival strategies. In allowing people to share their story, it leads directly to a shift of participation and empowerment and reinforces in the mind of the community that

they have valuable skills to offer (they have their own story to tell). This strategy impacts not only the outsiders, but the hosts as well. They become the owners of the process of self-improvement rather than become dependent on the outsider. The "holistic" practitioners (153-57) will become good neighbors—patient, reflecting a Christian character, and exhibiting a commitment to learning. Myers shows here the importance of being transformed before becoming a transformer: "Ultimately, the effectiveness of transformational development comes down, not to theory, principles or tools, but to people. Transformation is about transforming relationships, and relationships are transformed by people" (150).

Without question, Myers provides the best analysis of a Christian's involvement in the work of the poor and needy in this world. He approaches the task of transforming people and communities according to biblical principles. Myers also sees our human limitations of personal biases against the poor, presuppositions, and distorted worldviews. He realizes that our human story will be meaningful only if it corresponds to the story of God as presented in his Word. What a challenge for Christian churches and community-developing organizations to focus their activities through a constant dialogue with biblical principles!

This is an incredible book and an important contribution to evangelical Christian thinking on wholistic ministries.

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RUDOLF MAIER

Myers, Bryant L. *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999. 288 pp. Paper, \$22.00.

One of the main purposes of the book is to bring together development practitioners who are concerned "to find an authentically holistic practice of transformational development" (xii). The book is a compilation of various essays and reports written by a number of World Vision development practitioners who had a desire to improve the definition of holistic development. Bryant Myers, one of the vice presidents at World Vision International, is the editor. *Working with the Poor* is a practical supplement to Myers's previous book *Walking with the Poor* (Orbis Books, 1999).

Although the writers are all concerned with the central theme of holistic and transformational development, their various backgrounds and expertise provide a variety of solutions to the current situation of poverty and the poor. The book starts with a definition of poverty from a holistic viewpoint (as already developed in *Walking with the Poor*), followed by three essays on how development works. The third part of the book (chaps. 5, 6) deals with practical development experiences. The next two chapters, under the section entitled "Frontiers," have to do with issues of "peace building" and the need to build "bridges to the world of economic corporations." The final chapter sums up the preceding eight.

Due to the format of this book, I will highlight some of the contributions from each of the authors. In the first chapter (forming part 1—"Framework"), Jayakumar Christian clearly describes poverty as caused not only by material needs, but also by a lack of spirituality. He sees poverty as disempowerment. The poor are surrounded by oppressive relationships that push them to the bottom of society. In order to keep