

SEEDBED

2005, Second Trimester

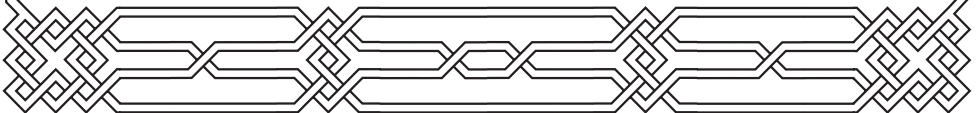
Vol. XIX No. 2

Contents

Editorial	1
Coincidence or God's Guidance? <i>by L.L.</i>	2
Transformational Development <i>by S.M.</i>	8
The Why, When, Where, How and What of Evangelism (Part 2) <i>by Um Ithnayn</i>	15
'What IF' ... A Reflection on Prayer <i>by Gary Corwin</i>	22
Let's Make Disciples <i>by Khalil Abd el Nour</i>	24
Book Reviews:	
<i>Searching for the Indigenous Church</i> <i>Reviewed by John A.</i>	27
<i>Walking with the Poor</i> <i>Reviewed by Donna Smith</i>	29

Editor: Donna Smith; Contributing Editors: Gary Corwin, I.L.,
David Lundy; Proofreader: Sandra Dick.

PO Box 4006, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 1AP UK



EDITORIAL

The world is in turmoil these days as terrorism and suicide bombers bring death and destruction. News commentators interview politicians and police authorities in their search for explanations. As Christian workers in the Arab world, we look more closely at questions of theology and seek to understand the thinking and practices of the Muslim peoples we know. At the same time, we press forward in our efforts to share the Gospel with them. We hear amazing stories of God's work to reveal Christ in a variety of situations throughout the Arab world. We do not lose heart, but continue to make Him known and to disciple those Arab Muslims who are coming to faith in Christ.

This issue of *Seedbed* has a variety of articles to stimulate our thinking of how we evangelise and how we disciple. We are reminded also of the importance of prayer behind all our efforts. I look forward to your reactions and suggestions that are stirred up by our colleagues' articles. Have you any experience with the

question of coincidence that IL has raised from his teaching of students? Or can you add to Um Ithnain's guidelines for personal evangelism? What has been your involvement with transformational development as described by SM? What practical suggestions can you make for its implementation? How have you applied its principles to church planting issues? What advice do you have for discipling MBBs and encouraging their formation of a community?

Bear with us as we continue to work through the electronic publication of *Seedbed* — both for AWM colleagues and for other subscribers. If you have not yet contacted us to let us know if you would like the electronic version, please do so soon. We are trying to bring our records up to date as well as to develop a system of archives for past issues. If you would like any of the materials mentioned by our authors in this *Seedbed*, please get in touch with me.

Donna Smith (Editor)
editor.seedbed@wornet.org

COPYRIGHT 2005

Please note *Seedbed's* copyright policy as set out below:

- To reprint any article that has been previously published elsewhere and so acknowledged in *Seedbed*, contact the original publisher and the author for permission.
- To use any other article from *Seedbed*, ask permission of the editor. The text must not be altered and an acknowledgment must be made of both the author and *Seedbed*.

The above procedures apply whether you wish to publish the material as hardcopy or post them online.

Book Review: Walking with the Poor

Reviewed by Donna Smith

Walking with the Poor.. Principles and Practices of Transformational Development, Bryant L. Myers. (Orbis Books and World Vision, 1999, 6th printing, 2003). 279 pages.

The terms *transformational development* and *holistic ministry* have come to the forefront in mission discussions in recent years. I felt the time had come for me to better understand this topic that has been of passionate concern to some of my colleagues. In reply to my request about where to begin, one friend suggested that I read *Walking with the Poor*, where Bryant Myers comprehensively treats the subject.

Not only does Myers thoroughly examine the questions of poverty and the poor, and transformational development, but he also brings in a biblical assessment of the situation with reflections on who we are and what we are to be and do. The reader comes away with more than a solid grasp of good practices of development, and also a vision for a Christian understanding of both the problems and the processes of change that honour God and affirm the role of the church. Practitioners will find essential principles to apply to their practices and to affect their own formation, giving them attitudes and spirituality that will make them truly holistic. And always there is an emphasis on the community itself and its involvement in change.

The final section is entitled 'Christian Witness and Transformational Development'. Believers who are concerned with their witness to others while providing practical aid for the poor and suffering will find this section most helpful. There are comments on why we must witness; our goals; Gospel as life, deed, word and sign; the importance of the Bible and its use in transformational development; and the focus and evaluation of Christian witness – including changing worldview. This division concludes with useful appendices taken from other sources: 'Scripture Search Texts for Biblical Reflection', 'Biblical References on Transformation for Reflection and Liturgy' and 'Standards and Indicators for Christian Witness'.

Myers is careful to acknowledge the work of others in transformational development as he explains the thought processes leading to his present conclusions. Throughout the book, he provides clear diagrams to illustrate the subject matter of the text. At the end, he has included notes on each section to show his thinking. A full bibliography and detailed index provide further tools for the serious student.

Little did I know the influence that this stimulating and thought-provoking book would have on me. With highlighter in hand, I found myself able to read only a few pages at a time

because there were so many key thoughts to mark and mull over. Here are a few gems:

- Transformation must be about restoring relationships — just and right relationships with God, with self, with community, with the ‘other’ and with the environment (*p.36*).
- Our point of departure for a Christian understanding of poverty is to remember that the poor are people with names, people to whom God has given gifts and people with whom and among whom He has been working before we even know they are there (*p. 58*).
- The non-poor suffer from an over-inflated view of who they are when they play god in the lives of the poor. They also have forgotten their true vocation when they use their gifts not to serve but to control and oppress (*p. 110*).
- People, not money or programmes, transform their worlds (*p. 116*).
- In some cases, things actually got worse because the community had become dependent on external resources and now suffered from diminished capacity (*p.128*).
- The Gospel message is an inseparable mix of life, deed, word and sign (*p.134*).
- The first step is to treat people as if we believe they are made in the image of God and are as worthy of respect as anyone. How we treat and listen to the poor can be the beginning of recovering identity (*p 234*).
- Changing worldview means more than changing behaviour. It is even

more than changing beliefs or values. Changing a worldview means changing a people’s entire story so that the community adopts a new story. This can be only done by a people, not by individuals. While changing the worldview of a people must be a goal of discipleship, it is the work of the Holy Spirit of God (*pp. 236-237*).

Yes, the author is dealing mainly with questions of development and relief. But his principles also bear great significance for church planting and other related ministries to people. His analysis strikes home as I apply the principles to my experiences in North Africa. How I wish that I had more fully fathomed these truths forty years ago! What a difference that knowledge would have made in my own attitudes and actions. And the principles do not apply just to those working in non-western countries. A local British pastor maintains that this book is revolutionizing his present approach to reaching his community for Christ.

Paul Hiebert writes in the foreword, *This book is a masterpiece of integration and application in thinking about Christian ministry* (*p. xv*). I agree wholeheartedly with him and with his additional comment:

A truly holistic approach to mission rooted in biblical truth is as essential in planting vital churches that remain Christ-centred over the generations as it is in Christian ministries of compassion (*p. xvi*).

Do we want to see vibrant, lasting national churches where we serve?

Then we must take to heart the warnings and suggestions that emerge from this outstanding commentary on valid ministry.

We deplore the fragile churches and weak Christians that we see around us. But have we critically examined the views and practices of the 'non-poor', the Christian workers who have allowed their worldview to influence the way they minister to the 'poor' (materially or spiritually)? We must see our 'identity' in biblical terms of who we are and what we do. As Myers remarks in his introduction:

The poor and the non-poor need God's redemptive help to recover

their true identity as children of God made in God's image and their true vocation as productive stewards, given gifts by God to contribute to the well-being of all (p. xviii).

I offer this brief review as coming from one who is untrained in transformational development, but very enthusiastic about its importance. This book, although not a light read, has profoundly affected my views on ministry to others. I recommend it highly with the challenge to consider how to apply these truths to your attitudes and actions in serving Christ, whether in development or in church planting.