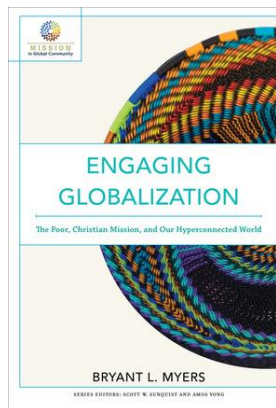BOOK REVIEW

Engaging Globalization: The Poor, Christian Mission, And Our Hyperconnected World
By Bryant L. Myers

Reviewed by Dan Williams

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. $28.00

Three months ago, when I received my copy of Bryant Myers' *Engaging Globalization,* I immediately flipped to the title page to see when it had been published. At the time, I wondered if the content would still be relevant. After all, in the 18 months between the book's publication and my reading there had been a jolt to a previously consistent trend of increasing global connectivity. Nationalistic concern led many nations to exit old alliances, raise tariffs, strengthen border security, and increase scrutiny of asylum seekers. Was this book published just in time to become irrelevant?

As I began to read, I learned quickly that my skepticism was unwarranted. In the same way that Myers' earlier work, *Walking with the Poor,* digs beneath surface issues of poverty to build a framework for understanding and addressing it, *Engaging Globalization* goes beyond obvious trends in technology, economics, politics, and culture to build a framework for the Church to address what Myers identifies as globalization's most important question: "Are we and is the world becoming what God intends?" (4). The Church asks this question far too infrequently, indicative of how shallow our engagement with globalization's challenges has been, and how much we need Myers' work.

To answer this critical question, the book opens by establishing a set of theological assumptions, focusing on the biblical concepts most essential to the topic of globalization. These assumptions may seem tame at first, affirming such things as the relational nature of God and the value God puts on human choice. However, because God's Word is sharper than any two-edged sword, Myers does not shy away from addressing how these affirmations should cut deeply into how we engage globalization. For example, how should God's relational nature shape our view of capitalism, and how should God's value of individual choice shape our view of socialism? The first section issues a much-needed challenge to consider more fully how our beliefs should influence the way we engage these questions.

The next two sections walk through the history of globalization and its impact. While many of the important milestones in globalization's history may seem familiar (colonial empires, the Industrial Revolution, World War II, the Cold War, etc.), Myers' unique contribution is pointing out the Church's influence on each one. To shift the tides guiding modern-day globalization, he challenges us to consider the Church's past and future role. The current societal relegation of the Church to spiritual matters was not always the case. Historical examples such as William Wilberforce and Victorian evangelicals in Britain show how God's people were active, albeit imperfect, in seeking to sway social, political, and economic trends to line up with their understanding of God's design. For believers and practitioners of integral mission, this is important history for the Church, and for the Accord community, to understand as we seek to engage beyond our siloed existence in the spiritual realm.

In his historical overview of globalization, Myers notes a rising tide of compassion and concern for human development following World War II. He zooms in on this trend to understand how those living in poverty are being affected by globalization, and to explore contemporary thinking around development. This section exhorts the Christian development community to rediscover the unique value we offer to a growing secular development community. It's a must-

read for anyone participating in international relief and development, whether as supporters or practitioners. And yet, it is here that Myers' humility gets in his own way. While he highlights how secular thinkers approach the problem of poverty, he fails to mention his own previous work in *Walking with the Poor* that has been so formative for Christian relief and development practitioners. The omission results in an incomplete picture of the prevailing paradigms for understanding poverty, even as his call to re-engage rings true.

The book concludes by considering how the Church might best shape the future of globalization. Myers offers no forecast as to how current global trends will affect the future trajectory of globalization. He does not prescribe a single specific recommendation for how the Church should engage. True to his vocation as a professor, he provides multiple and differing viewpoints, allowing the reader to wrestle with the alternatives. Myers only insists that we engage. He makes it clear that, left alone, secular forces guiding globalization will not inevitably lead to a brighter future, and they will certainly fall short of God's design. Resisting globalization's progress or ignoring globalization's effects would be abdicating the Church's role in ushering in God's Kingdom.

Are we and is the world becoming what God intends? To wrestle faithfully with this question, I highly recommend *Engaging Globalization* to the Accord community as essential reading. Because it is written as a summary of a seminary course, buckle up for a dense read. The style may be heavy for a general audience, but it's worth the effort. How to respond to globalization may well be, as Myers suggests, the most important missiological question of our day. As international relief and development practitioners, we are often asked by churches for perspectives on how to engage the world. We have the opportunity to play a unique role in encouraging the Church to better understand globalization's chief questions, and to prayerfully seek a faithful response.

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