

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Anvil* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_anvil\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_anvil_01.php)

**Stephen Bevans**

## **A Theology for the Ephesian Moment**

**Stephen Bevans writes of what he has learned as he tries to engage in theology from a global perspective — some of the joys and the challenges. He reminds us that not only are all theologies contextual but also that they are all limited. He explains that the problem with contextual theologies is just that — context — but that we have to grapple with this in our diverse world.**

### **Introduction**

In Fall, 2009 Orbis Books published my work, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*. <sup>1</sup> The book was a long time in the making. I had been teaching a course on 'Introduction to Theology' since about 1974 — five or six times during my time in the Philippines and about fifteen times at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where I teach at present. The course had always been a favorite with students, but as I became more aware over the years of the global nature of theology and its missiological nature, the course began to take on a more global perspective, and several years ago I realized that I had the material for a book.

The book, for the most part, was a real joy to write. I basically wrote it in four summers, because I didn't have a lot of time during the school year. The book is in four parts. Part I, entitled 'Faith Seeking Understanding: The Nature of Theology,' contains chapters on Revelation and Faith, and how faith inevitably leads to seeking understanding of faith, which is the basic dynamic of theologizing. As I say in a third chapter, then, this basic dynamic means that anyone who believes, even the simplest person with no theological education, does theology. In this third chapter as well, I draw out several implications of Anselm's famous — and to my mind, unsurpassed — definition: theology is always contextual, done in community, is more an activity than a content, combines the intellectual and the spiritual, is more than 'discursive' in that it can be embodied in poetry, film, the plastic arts, architecture.

Part II focuses on the essential communal, or ecclesial aspect of theology in more detail, and is entitled 'Faith Seeking Together: The Ecclesial Nature of Theology.' Here I begin with a chapter on the communal, ecclesial nature of theology as such, based on an anthropology more common in the Global South than in the North, and much more attuned to the communal anthropology of the Bible. With this foundation I write about the relationship between theology and tradition, and then theology and ecclesial authority, which in my Roman Catholic tradition is named the Magisterium.

Part III, entitled 'The Way Faith Seeks: Theological Method,' reflects first on the basic method of Historical Investigation and Theological Reflection, a method that in the light of the breakthrough in liberation theology is revised to include not only intellectual understanding but intelligent action. The second chapter in the section deals with 'Contextual Methods,' (this is a summary of my book *Models of Contextual Theology* <sup>2</sup>), and the third chapter reflects on 'Catholic Method,' or the particular perspective that embraces a sacramental world view and so has a basically positive view of historical context and culture.

The final part of the book, by far the longest, is nevertheless a brief history of theology. In this section — divided into four chapters — I made an effort to include as many examples of non-Western theology as I could, and to include the often-neglected theological work of women as well. The chapters are also written from an ecumenical perspective, including Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant theologies, and takes pain to include theologies that, from the seventh century, have been in some kind of dialogue with Islam. The perspective of the ‘new church history’ <sup>3</sup> is taken, and so, for example, the theology arising from the evangelization of Latin America and Asia in the sixteenth century is dealt with before the theology coming out of the European age of Reformations. As Cuban-American church historian Justo González has written, the birth of the church in the Americas ‘will be proven to be more significant for the future history of the church catholic than the birth of the Lutheran, the Reformed, the Tridentine, or any other tradition stemming from the Reformation.’ <sup>4</sup>

What I would like to offer in this essay are basically some reflections on what I learned as I tried to write theology from a global perspective — or to use a shorter phrase, ‘global theology.’ In doing this I hope to make a contribution to an understanding of how theology, and consequently theological education, needs to be done in our twenty-first century, globalized, post-modern, and post-colonial world. Much of what I learned has been positive, but some has been more negative. There are certain regrets that I have now that I have published my work, things that I could have or should have done. Some of these insights have come from reviews of the book, or from conversations with colleagues. Others I have realized on my own. I hope I have learned from my mistakes and shortcomings, however, and from these I have come to certain resolutions in terms of further writing or teaching of theology. I want to share these resolutions as well.

In a first part of this essay I will reflect on the nature of theology in global perspective in general. Then I will offer a number of concrete things — some more, some less significant — that I have learned, have come to regret, and have resolved to work better at.

## **I. Global Theology**

### **All theologies are contextual**

When I speak of ‘global theology’ in this essay, what I do not mean is the effort to create a theology that is ‘universal’ or ‘one-size-fits-all.’ There are certainly universal principles of Revelation, e.g. God is a God of love, God’s cause is the cause of the flourishing of creation, God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, but there are no universal theologies. And so writing or doing global theology, I am convinced, must start with the conviction that all theology — diachronically in history, synchronically in our own day — is contextual theology. Theology cannot but be contextual — that is, the concerns that brings it to articulation, the culture and times in which it is written, the social location (affluent, male, member of a dominant culture) are all underlying conditions that shape a person’s or a community’s faith and its expression in theology. In the words with which I begin the second edition of my book, *Models of Contextual Theology*, there is really no such thing as theology; there are only contextual theologies. <sup>5</sup> Because of this fact, we must think of the Christian tradition (which includes its biblical record) as a ‘series of local theologies,’ as my colleague Robert Schreiter has so well said. <sup>6</sup>

What this means is that today, as in every age but especially with our heightened post-modern and post-colonial consciousness, there exist throughout the world a rich abundance of theologies that have emerged in very particular contexts. There have emerged liberation theologies in Latin America, among oppressed Blacks in the North America, Europe and Africa, among Indian dalits and Korean minjung, among gays and lesbians, among women the world over. There have emerged theologies that dialogue seriously with local cultures, whether in the highlands of Peru, the lowlands and mountains of the Philippines, whether in the context of ancient Chinese culture or newly-rediscovered Native American or Aboriginal tribal ways. There have emerged theologies in dialogue with the world's great religions like Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, and Confucianism. And there have emerged theologies that assert the gospel message forcefully and prophetically in contexts of atheism, secularism, and religious indifference.

### **All theologies are of equal importance**

What is important as a first step in doing global theology is the realization that, at least theoretically, all these theologies are of equal importance. Naturally, not all of these theologies will be adequate to the contexts in which they are being done and are trying to articulate. But as such, as exercises in faith seeking understanding, life seeking understanding, faith seeking intelligent action — whatever definition of theology one prefers — these theologies are all valid. There is not, in other words, a real theology lurking somewhere (in Rome? in Geneva? in Oxford? in the volumes of Karl Barth?) of which the various contextual theologies are marginal variants or applications. Real theology is done wherever and whenever a person or a community of faith attempts to understand her, his, its act of faith.

### **All theologies are limited**

A second step in doing global theology, however, is to recognize the fact that every contextual theology, by its very nature, is limited. As I have taken to saying somewhat ironically, the problem with contextual theologies is that they are contextual. Again, by this I do not mean that we must look to a kind of universal, supra-contextual theology for the real theology. Rather, I mean that while the recognition of our contexts can give life to our understanding of our faith, they also can limit us, and limit our understanding as well. In other words, while our contexts give us a sharp lens to see more clearly, they also function as blinders that can seriously limit our vision. My American sense of individuality can offer wonderful insight into the personal nature of Christian conversion, for example, but it can also hinder my understanding of church, or of the nature of salvation.

### **An Ephesian moment**

The fact is, while we need to be ourselves, we also need others. While Christianity is a religion that incarnates itself in each culture, the fullness of Christ can only be understood when each instance of incarnation is understood. The Scots church historian Andrew Walls says this eloquently: 'The full-grown humanity of Christ requires all the Christian generations, just as it embodies all the cultural variety that six continents can bring.' <sup>7</sup> Walls speaks famously about an 'indigenising principle' native to Christian faith, where our local church and our local culture and context affords us a place to feel at home. <sup>8</sup> At the same

time, he says, there is a 'pilgrim principle' at work as well, one that points beyond the local both to what is universal (i.e. the Truth of Revelation) and to the wealth of other contexts and cultures that can enrich one's own. 9

While this idea of the importance of all contexts for one's own context is not entirely clear in Walls's earlier lecture, in an equally famous later lecture Walls speaks about how our globalized church today is in situation in which it had only been once before, in the community of Greeks and Jews in Ephesus. There in Ephesus, Christians of two very different cultures could have formed two separate churches, but they did not. Christ was the peace that tore down the wall between them, and they became not two, but one (See Eph. 2:14-22), and in that give and take they caught a glimpse of the whole Christ. Neither, says Walls, 'was a form of Christian faith complete and valid in itself, apart from the other. Each was necessary to the other, each was necessary to complete and correct the other; for each was an expression of Christ under certain specific conditions, and Christ is humanity completed.' 10 Now that 'Ephesian moment' has come again. Today, 'new Christian lifestyles...have developed or are developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to display Christ under the conditions of African, Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Latin American life.' 11 The Ephesian moment demands a global theology.

### **Contextual theologies in dialogue**

The third step in doing or writing global theology, and the essence of it, I believe, is to put these contextual theologies into dialogue with one another. This is an immense undertaking, first, because of the thousands of contextual theologies that exist, but secondly because these contextual theologies are always changing and there are always new ones being articulated. What this means is that, just as contextual theologies are never finished systems, but are more occasional in nature, so doing or writing global theology never aims to be a finished product. The more theologians read of contextual theologies, the more they will be enriched and work to write more.

### **Listening to all the voices**

In writing my introduction to theology from this global perspective, therefore, one of the things I tried to do was to 'listen to all the voices' of theologians around the world — majority and minority worlds, Eastern and Western, South and North, female and male, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Independent/indigenous Churches. I know I could listen to many more than I did, and since publication of my book I have continued to glean examples from my reading and experience (just recently, for example, I have discovered a parallel between the Indian/Hindu threefold way of life — jnana marga, bhakti marga, and karma marga — and the classic Catholic way of talking about faith as knowledge, trust, and change of behavior). 12

### **The problem of language**

One of the difficulties in developing this dialogue, however, is language. I know several European languages, but except for English and Spanish, and perhaps French for Francophone Africa, these are not much use in 'listening to all the voices.' In 2009, on a visit to the Philippines, I met a remarkable woman who had just finished her doctorate in theology

with a thesis on Filipino understandings of the body and how such an understanding might contribute to a Filipino theology of ministry. As I listened to the woman explain her ideas to me I became really excited, and urged her to share her ideas with a wider audience. I thought that her ideas coming out of the Filipino context would be very helpful for theologies of ministry elsewhere in the world. However, the dissertation was written in Filipino, which I hardly understand (I spent nine years in the Philippines, but I learned Ilocano, the lingua franca of Northern Luzon), and she said that she really could not express her ideas adequately in English. Not that she could not write in English — she spoke and wrote it excellently — but that English could not capture what she really wanted to say.

Problems of language, therefore, are real, and probably the only way to deal with them is for theologians to learn one or two other languages from the majority world. When I began studying for the doctorate I had to pass examinations in German, French, Greek, and Latin. No serious systematic theologian could function without at least a reading knowledge of these languages. Today, a reading knowledge of Indonesian, Chinese, Swahili, Spanish, Portuguese, and Tagalog would be more important. It is only in this way that theologians doing global theology can really 'listen to all the voices.'

### **Preferential option for the majority world**

Another aspect of the global dialogue that needs to take place is to give a kind of 'preferential option' to theologians from the majority world. By this I mean that, when quoting a source or referring to a theological opinion, it will be more helpful to quote a Taiwanese or Thai theologian who is writing on the topic rather than a Western theologian, to quote a woman rather than a man, or to give an example from Mexico or Hong Kong or Nigeria rather than the United States or Germany. In the same way, the issues of concern for people in the majority world should set the agenda of the theology that we do, not the ordinary topics that have been developed by Western theologians in the past. I have not done this all that much in my book, unfortunately, but the development of the communal, ecclesial nature of theology in Part II is the result of taking seriously the more communal anthropology of the non-Western world. Over the years, this emphasis led me to place discussions of tradition and church authority in the context of community and theology's ecclesial nature. If where a topic is placed in a systematic theology is significant, then my placing discussions of tradition and authority here offers a new perspective on the topics.

### **Acknowledging social location**

A final contribution to dialogue that I think I have made in my book is to clearly acknowledge the social location of a theologian the first time that I mention her or him in my text. For example, I would write something like 'as Taiwanese theologian Shoki Coe insists,' or 'as Protestant feminist liberation theologian Dorothee Sölle explains,' or even 'as White Anglo Catholic scripture scholar Raymond Brown writes.' I think such clear designation of social location helps in the global theological dialogue both to alert readers to a theologian who writes or speaks in a 'different' voice from the West and to alert readers as well to the fact that a particular thinker is a White U. S. male, or a Pentecostal European woman. In this way the reader will be able to judge more clearly the value for her or his context.

Making such identification is, of course, awkward. However, just as feminists have taught us the need to vary our use of gender when referring to God, and even being ambiguous about

how we refer to God's gender, such awkwardness, I believe, is necessary. The point of this last sentence is important because while a global theology is in many ways a step beyond contextual theology, it does not negate the importance of contextual theology. On the contrary, in some way a global theology is also a contextual theology — a theology, however, in global, not local context. In the local church, in particular cultures, one needs to do contextual theology. But in a catholic church one needs also to do global theology by putting the various contextual theologies in dialogue — both for the sake of a richer local, contextual theology and a more complete understanding of Christian faith.

I believe that doing global theology is really exciting, as hard as it is. It is exciting, yes, but it is also necessary. It is the way theology should be done and taught in today's new 'Ephesian Moment.'

## **II. What I Have Learned**

I learned many things while writing my book and after it was finished. Some of the things I learned may sound trivial, and they may be. Others, however, are more significant. I'm going to share everything that I learned, trivial or not, since what might seem trivial to me might be quite significant to others. I learned ten things, at least.

### **A large project**

First, I learned that writing the book was a bigger project than I thought. I had taught the Introduction to Theology course many times, as I have said, and I knew the material very well. When Orbis asked me how long it would take to write the book, I told them that if I would work on it full time in the summer, it would take about six weeks. I was very sadly mistaken! Originally I had not thought about writing the book from a global perspective. It certainly was going to include the works of majority world theologians, and I was definitely going to include a chapter on contextual theology. It was only, however, after I had received the book contract that the eminent Vietnamese American theologian Peter Phan contacted me with the news that he had just contracted with Orbis to edit a series called 'Theology in Global Perspective,' and would I consider writing my book for the series. It was only then that I realized that the book would be much more than simply transcribing my class notes into book form. I had to rethink much of what I was saying, and search for more majority world examples. It was a real challenge!

### **I knew more than I thought...**

But, second, I learned that I knew more than I thought I did. As I got into the rhythm of writing, all sorts of things began to flow, and I began thinking of ideas that I never realized I could have. This was particularly true in Part IV on the history of theology, but in many ways it was true throughout the book. The chapter that I perhaps most enjoyed writing was the chapter on the communal nature of theology. This was an area that I struggled with through the years, and things really came together when I sat down to write it. The book certainly did not take only six weeks to write, but it came pretty easily. I remember coming home in the evenings flushed with excitement, almost intoxicated by what I had been able to express, and I was up early the next morning raring to go again. It was a truly amazing experience.

### **...but I really didn't know that much**

Third, however, despite realizing that I actually knew more than I thought, I also learned that I didn't really know much. As I say, writing the book was a thrilling experience, almost from start to finish, but in the end I felt quite humble about what I had accomplished. Since I have finished writing and publishing the book, whole new worlds of theologizing have opened up to me, and I have little or nothing about them in the book. I finished the book in December of 2009 and began a sabbatical that started in New Zealand. There I stayed with one of the great New Zealand theologians today, Neil Darragh, and I learned immense amounts from him about efforts of doing a New Zealand-rooted theology, both by white *Pakehas* and Maori. <sup>13</sup> From New Zealand I went to Australia, where I encountered a thriving Australian theology as well as the beginnings of theological reflection among Aboriginal and Pacific peoples. <sup>14</sup> Later in the year I spent three months in Oxford, UK, and encountered all sorts of British theologians that I had not known about before, and many of them, for example, Pete Ward of Kings College in London, were engaged in really important contextual efforts. <sup>15</sup> An old priest in my religious congregation, the Society of the Divine Word, once remarked to a friend of mine that 'what [he] didn't know would fill a library.' That's the way I felt after finishing writing the book!

### **The only way to do theology**

The fourth thing I learned — or perhaps more accurately, was confirmed in my conviction — was that doing global theology was the only way to do theology today for a general or multicultural readership or audience. As I said in the first part of this article, this does not mean that, in our particular contexts, we should not abandon doing contextual theology. But we need to recognize, first, the limited relevance of our contextual theologies for others outside our context, and, second, the possibilities both for our own contexts and for the contexts of others for a dialogue among contextual theologies. Again, a global theology is one that is constantly 'on the move,' and like contextual theologies is never finished. It is a contextual theology in our global context. Most importantly, we in the West in particular need to realize that we can no longer do theology as if the rest of the world didn't exist. Perhaps this will be obvious as the recent shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity shifts more and more to the majority world, but now it is something that we in the West need to be consciously aware of as we do theology. It is not enough, for example, for us Catholics to quote the Roman Magisterium in our writings. We need to quote documents by the African bishops, by the Conference of Bishops in Latin America, by Bishops in Oceania, and by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Brazilian, Ghanaian, and Taiwanese theologians are as important to read as Germans, French, and Americans.

### **Majority world examples**

In the process of this I at least began to learn a fifth thing, and that was the habit or habitus of looking for examples from the majority world and majority world theologians. Again, my own ignorance limited me here, but when one begins to really look for examples, one actually begins to find them. I found it exciting, for example, to realize that ways to understand the Christian notion of tradition could be found in the rituals of initiation among various tribal peoples. I remember how, when I was teaching the book for the first time, in Australia, I heard the audible gasp of one of my students, a Fijian, when I talked about tradition in terms

of being in touch with and accountable to our ancestors. He told me later that that was the first time he had really understood the importance of tradition in theology. In writing the book I have been changed. And I think in the process my ability to do theology has been enriched. I don't always find an example in the cultures or practices of the majority world, but now I look instinctively.

### **New metaphors for theology**

Sixth, I have learned — and am still learning — some great metaphors for the doing of theology. Writing the book I used the image, proposed by U. S. feminist theologian Rebecca Chopp (who got the image from one of her students) of a quilt, or perhaps better, the making of a quilt. This is a deeply American image, and comes from the African American heritage in my country. <sup>16</sup> I tell the story in the book about one of my friends, Judy Borchers, who gave me a banner with quilt patterns as an office-warming gift when I moved into a new office in 2006. On the banner was the legend 'Blessed are the piecemakers.' Judy thought it read 'Blessed are the peacemakers' — p-e-a-c-e, as in the Beatitudes. The quilt patterns should have clued her in, however. It was really 'p-i-e-c-emakers' — or quilt makers. A perfect metaphor, I think, for the doing of theology, especially theology in community, where each has a piece of the wisdom to contribute to the whole. Similarly, Justo L González' image of 'Fuenteovejuna Theology,' referring to the sixteenth century Spanish play by Lope de Vega in which an entire town takes the blame for an act of tyrannicide. For Latinos, says González, theology is always done en conjunto, or together. The community is the theologian. <sup>17</sup> During my time in Australia I spoke at a conference on contextual theology at United Theological College in Sydney. After I had concluded my talks the host of the conference, Katalina Tahaafe Williams, a Tongan, gave me a beautiful tapa, a large cloth painted with various geometric designs that is a valued object in her home culture. Subsequently I realized that the tapa is also a fine image of doing theology. It is not something that is done by one individual, but by a community — women — who work on beating the bark and making the cloth of the tapa together. These valuable images for doing theology come from subaltern groups and greatly enrich anyone's understanding of the theological process.

### **Theology is more than words**

One of my favorite chapters in the book is the third chapter, and it was in writing this chapter — originally for a Festschrift for a dear friend of mine who is now deceased — that I learned a seventh thing (or perhaps more accurately, once again, was confirmed in my conviction). This was about the 'non-discursive' or 'non-linear' nature of theology. Theology, in other words, is not just done in articles like this, or in thick volumes of heavy prose. A preacher does theology in every homily or sermon she or he preaches. Some of the best theology I have read has been in poetry — of Gerard Manley Hopkins, for example, or Denise Levertov. Theology is expressed in music — as I write this, for example, I am listening to a Mozart Mass — and one of the most amazing theological presentations I have ever heard was by Ivory Coast missionary James Krabill, who talked about the history of hymnody among a certain tribe in Ivory Coast. As they got more comfortable with Christianity, Krabill said, their hymns got more and more creative and rooted in their ancient culture. <sup>18</sup> Several years ago a colleague told me about the Keiskama Altarpiece, a work done by mostly women in a small village in South Africa to commemorate children and grandchildren who had died of Aids. The altarpiece is based somewhat on the famous

Isenheim altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald, and was itself commissioned to commemorate survivors of the plague. There is also amazing theology in the art of the Chinese painter He Qi and Japanese artist Masao Watanabe. And perhaps some of the best contextual theology I have seen is on a church in a small Aboriginal village in the Australian desert, painted by women with no artistic nor theological training.

## **Surprises from history**

Eighth, since I had to really work hard on the history section in Part IV, I probably learned the most in writing those four chapters. There were many surprises: the fact that, according to Jaroslav Pelikan, we should speak of the four Cappadocians — this would include Basil and Gregory of Nyssa's sister Macrina along with them and Gregory Nazianzen. <sup>19</sup> My colleague Mark Swanson gave a lecture about an eighth century document entitled *On the Triune Nature of God* that is perhaps the first Christian theology written in beautiful Arabic that rivals the Q'uran and is written to dialogue with Islam. <sup>20</sup> The idea of a long dialogue of Christian theology with Islam was new to me, and I met theologians I had never heard of before: Abraham of Tiberius, Theodore Abu Qurrah, and Elias of Nisibis. Other surprises were Filipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, the first American indigenous voice in theology; the Testarian Manuscripts in Mexico — written in Nahuatl pictographs as a basic Christian catechism in the sixteenth century; and Spaniard Juan de Placencia's translation of these in to Tagalog in 1582. <sup>21</sup> These sources point out the falsity of the idea that theology has only recently been done in the majority world. Christianity has always been a world religion, and theology has always been a global reality. We are only now recognizing it and bringing into dialogue. As Andrew Walls has said with characteristic elegance: 'The cultural diversity of Christianity is widely acknowledged today and perhaps now needs little new defence. Perhaps we need, however, to remember that this diversity exists not only in a horizontal form across the contemporary scene, but also in a vertical form across history. Christianity is a generational process, an ongoing dialogue with culture.' <sup>22</sup>

## **A "prequel" to *Models of Contextual Theology***

Ninth, I learned toward the end of my writing that what I had been doing was writing a 'prequel' to my earlier book *Models of Contextual Theology*. My book offers a more extensive theological foundation for what I am trying to do in my earlier book, providing the context for it. It's interesting that my friend and editor at Orbis, Bill Burrows, told me after he read the manuscript that my Introduction book was a 'much deeper' book than my 'Models' book was. Now that book is rooted in a theology of Revelation and Faith, a theology of Tradition and authority, and in a more extensive history of theology that is contextual from beginning to end.

## **A modest beginning**

Tenth and finally, and here are some of my regrets and resolutions, I learned how difficult writing a book on global theology really is. In retrospect, the book is still quite classical, revealing the fact that, despite my commitment to majority world theology, I didn't quite get beyond my classical theological training. It is, in the final analysis, a 'baby step' in the direction of a global theology, but I do think it is a baby step in the right direction. If I were to do — God forbid! — a second edition, I'd do a few things differently. First, I'd try to

dialogue more with other religions. True, this is a Christian introduction to theology, but I am convinced nonetheless that any Christian theology today has to be done in dialogue with the religious thought or theology of other religions. For example, I think there should be a section about Revelation outside Christianity, and a review of discussions about the revelational value of religions other than Christianity. I would also add a section, as one reviewer has helpfully pointed out, on Revelation in the light of the theology of liberation, and how, in such theology, God is imaged as constantly working for liberation and beckons women and men to join in such work.

## Conclusion

We need a theology adequate to the Ephesian Moment in which we find ourselves in today's world, and we need a theological education that helps students who will minister in a church that, for the first time in history, is conscious of the fact that Christianity truly is a world movement. The global theology that I have tried to outline in these pages, and the method of which I have so inadequately tried to develop in my book, is the best way I know of meeting the challenge of theology and theological education today. We are only at the beginning. We have only begun to glimpse the future of our church and the kind of ministers it will need to serve it well and lead us forward. But we have begun, and as we continue, the dialogue of contextual theologies the world over will indeed show us more and more of the splendor of God's love in the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth, who continues to gift his church with his Spirit.



**Stephen Bevans** is currently Louis J Luzbetak, SVD, Professor of Mission and Culture at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, USA. He is a Roman Catholic priest in the Society of the Divine Word, an international missionary congregation, and served for nine years (1972-1981) as a missionary in the Philippines.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bevans, Stephen B. (2009). *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books
- . (2002). *Models of Contextual Theology*. (Revised and expanded edition.) Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books
- Bevans, Stephen B, and Katalina Tahaafe Williams. (2011). *Contextual Theology for the Twenty First Century*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Books
- Chopp, Rebecca. (1995). *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press
- Darragh, Neil, ed. (2008). *The God Book: Talking about God Today*. Auckland: Accent Publications
- Espín, Orlando O. 'Trinitarian Monotheism and the Birth of Popular Catholicism: The Case of Seventeenth Century Mexico'. In *Missiology: An International Review* 20 (2): 177-204

- Gibson, Margaret Donlop, ed. (1899). 'An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS, in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise on the Triune Nature of God'. In *Studia Sinaitica* 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (reproduced Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003.)
- González, Justo L. (2002). *The Changing Shape of Church History*. St Louis, MO: Chalice Press
- . (1990). *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon
- Gutay, José Femilou D. *Life and Words of Fray Juan de Placencia*. (Unpublished manuscript.)
- Gutiérrez, Gustavo. (1993). *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Christ*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
- Irvin, Dale T, and Scott W Sunquist. (2001). *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume I, From Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
- Jørgensen, Jonas Adelin. (2008). *Jesus Imandars and Christ Bhaktas: Two Case Studies in Interreligious Hermeneutics and Identity*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang
- Krabill, James. (1995). *The Hymnody of the Harrist Church among the Dida of South-Central Ivory Coast (1913-1949)*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. (1971). *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Rees, Frank. (1999). *Fair Dinkum Ministry: Stories of Authentic Australian Spirituality and Struggle*. Richmond, VA: Spectrum Publications
- Rainbow Spirit Elders. (2007). *Rainbow Spirit Theology: Towards an Australian Aboriginal Theology*. Hindmarsh, South Australia: ATF Press
- Schreiter, Robert J. (1985). *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
- Walls, Andrew F. (2002). *The Cross Cultural Process in Christian History*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
- . (1996). *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
- Ward, Pete. (2008). *Participation and Mediation: A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church*. London: SCM Press
- 

## Endnotes

- 1 Bevans 2009
- 2 Bevans 1992, 2002
- 3 See, for example, Irvin and Sunquist 2001
- 4 González 2002: 44
- 5 Bevans 2002: 3
- 6 Schreiter 1985: 93
- 7 Walls 1996: xvii
- 8 Walls 1996: 7
- 9 Walls 1996: 8-9
- 10 Walls 2002: 78
- 11 Walls 2002: 78

12 See Bevans 2009: 29-31; Jørgensen 2008: 299-301

13 See, for example, Darragh, ed 2008

14 See, for example, Bevans and Tahaafe Williams, ed 2011. In this book are essays by Australian Chris Budden, Tongan Jiona Havea and Maori Jenny Te Paa; see Rees, ed 1999; Rainbow Spirit Elders 2007

15 See, for example, Ward 2008

16 See Chopp 1995: 72-75

17 See González 1990: 29-30

18 See Krabill 1995

19 Pelikan 1971: 8

20 See Gibson, ed 1899, 2003

21 See Gutiérrez 1993: 444-52; Espín 1992: 184; Gutay

22 Walls 1996: xvii