I AGREE WITH YOU, OR MAYBE NOT

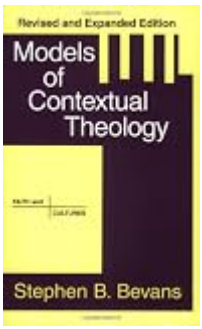
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In which I suggest that it might be a good idea to read some "unsound" books from time to time.
Category: Observations

I've been wracking my brains, but I can't think of anyone that I agree with 100% on Biblical or theological issues. Even the best writers say some things that I find myself disagreeing with. What's worse, I don't even agree with myself much of the time. As I read and study more and see God at work in different situations, my understanding changes (and hopefully grows). There are things I've written on this blog that I now profoundly disagree with.

Please don't get me wrong, I'm not setting myself up as the only infallible guide to theology and Biblical studies; perish the thought. I am absolutely convinced that many of the idea and views that I hold on to are wrong; I just haven't got a clue which ones those are. Time will tell.Â At the same time, there is a core of belief that I am sure of and which I don't see as being, in any way, up for grabs.

However, there is another side to the coin. There may be no one I agree with 100%, but there aren't many authors that I disagree with 100% either. This means that when it comes to my field of interest, mission studies, I can learn things from people with whom I have profound disagreements in other areas.



Let me nail my colours to the mast; I'm a conservative evangelical of broadly reformed convictions. As you would expect for someone of my theological stripe, there are some things in Roman Catholic doctrine and practice that I disagree with profoundly. However, I also think that Catholic theologian Stephen Bevans' bookÂ Models Of Contextual TheologyÂ is a masterpiece. It is something that everyone involved in mission needs to grapple with.

Or take this quote:

> *For Jesus Christ was sent into the world as a real mediator between God and men. Since He is God, all divine fullness dwells bodily in Him (Gal. 2:9). According to His human nature, on the other hand, He is the new Adam, made head of a renewed humanity, and full of grace and of truth (John 1:14). Therefore the Son of God walked the ways of a true Incarnation that He might make men sharers in the nature of God: made poor for our sakes, though He had been rich, in order that His poverty might enrich us (2 Cor. 8:9). The Son of Man came not that He might be served, but that He might be a servant, and give His life as a ransom for the many - that is, for all (cf. Mark 10:45). The Fathers of the Church proclaim without hesitation that what has not been taken up by Christ is not made whole.(4) Now, what He took up was our entire human nature such as it is found among us poor wretches, save only sin (cf. Heb. 4:15; 9.28). For Christ said concerning Himself, He whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world (cf. John 10:36): the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me; to bring good news to the poor He sent me, to heal the broken - hearted, to proclaim to the captives release, and sight to the blind" (Luke 4:18). And again: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what*

> *was lost" (Luke 19:10).*
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> *But what the Lord preached that one time, or what was wrought in Him for the saving of the human race, must be spread abroad and published to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), beginning from Jerusalem (cf. Luke 24:27), so that what He accomplished at that one time for the salvation of all, may in the course of time come to achieve its effect in all.*

It's good stuff, despite the rather archaic language. What might surprise some is that it comes from the Papal DecreeÂ *Ad Gentes* on the Missionary Activity of the Church. Yes, there are bits in this decree that I disagree with, but there are also some parts that I find interesting, thought provoking and inspiring.

I was brought up believing that I should only readÂ *soundÂ* books. That is, books by authors that I already agreed with. The problem with this is that you miss out on so much that is good and though provoking from outside of your own world. Just because I read some Catholic and Orthodox works on mission, it doesn't mean that I'm abandoning my Evangelical convictions; but it may mean that I'm a better informed and more thoughtful Evangelical.