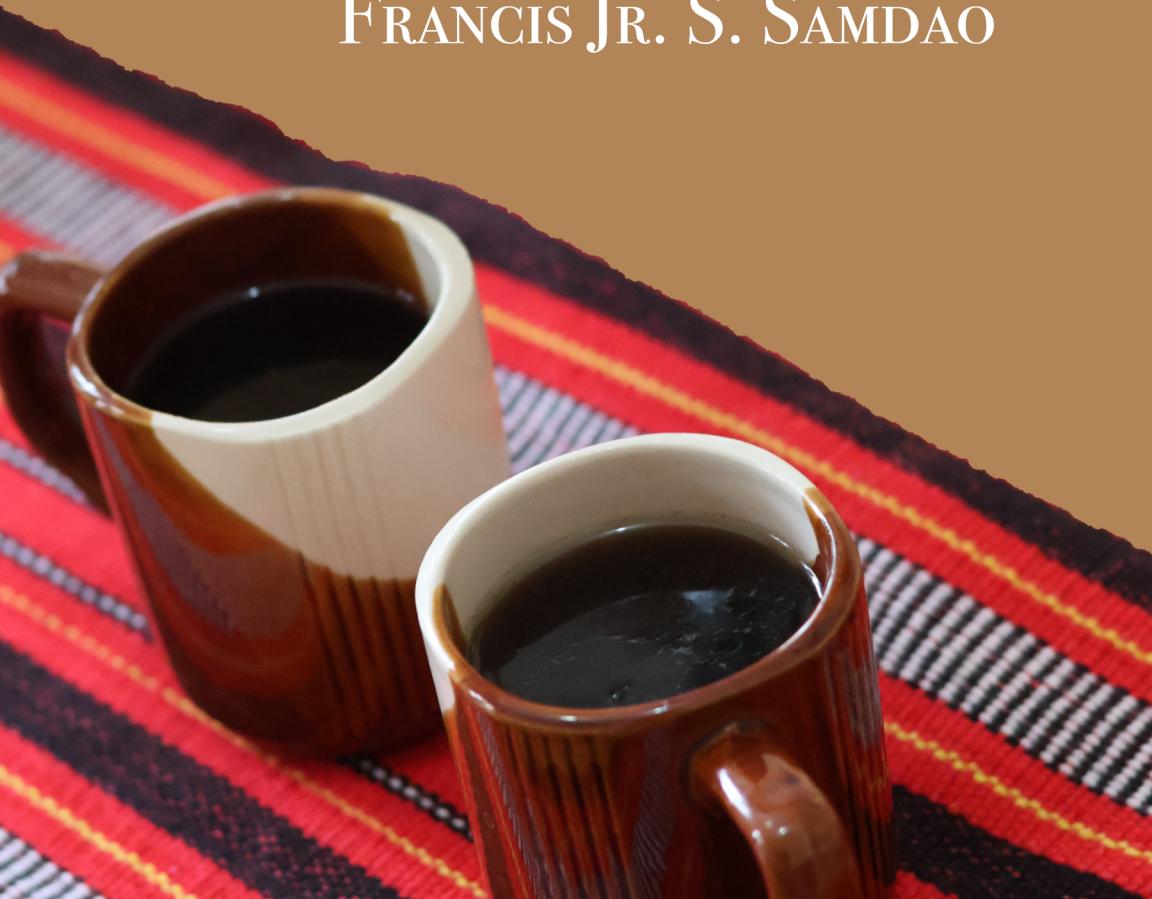


FOREWORD BY FEDERICO G. VILLANUEVA

DRINKING COFFEE WITH SOME CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIANS

FRANCIS JR. S. SAMDAO



ENDORSEMENTS

“In this lucidly written book, Francis Samdao examines the central themes of six theologians. What stands out is that all are pastor-theologians whose theologies grow out of their deep engagement with the struggles and victories, tears and joys of ordinary people. For anyone looking for a richly contoured introduction to Filipino evangelical theology, I highly recommend this book.”

Simon Chan, PhD

Former Chief Editor, *Asia Journal of Theology*;
Former Earnest Lau Professor of Systematic Theology
Trinity Theological College, Singapore

“For too long, the contributions of Filipino theologians to evangelical theology have remained hidden not only from the wider world, but even from many Filipino Christians. As a result, our grasp of the gospel as a whole and its contribution to Filipino culture specifically has been diminished. Samdao is the ideal person to repair this gap. With the diligence of a scholar and the heart of a shepherd, Samdao offers readers an astute guide to the riches offered by Filipino theologians. This book deserves to be read widely both in the Philippines and globally as we seek to discern the full measure of the riches of the gospel.”

Stephen T. Pardue, PhD

Program Director, ThM/PhD in Theological Studies,
Asia Graduate School of Theology (Philippines)

“This book is an excellent exploration of the insightful writings of prominent Filipino evangelical theologians! The author deserves commendation for promoting and embodying theological reflections that are deeply connected to our culture and address the challenges faced by our people. This valuable resource has the potential to inspire a new generation of Asian scholars and writers to create contextual textbooks and resources.”

Theresa R. Lua, EdD

General Secretary, Asia Theological Association

ENDORSEMENTS

“This is an excellent book that highlights the valuable contributions of both male and female Filipino theologians in ways that are both relevant and meaningful. At the same time, it invites readers to engage with these perspectives, whether in agreement or disagreement. The book addresses a range of significant topics, including biblical responses to life’s struggles, the Eucharist in relation to injustices in Mindanao, migration and creation care, contextualization, and holistic mission. As a Filipino theologian, the author underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in doing contextual theology. This work offers a timely and insightful contribution not only for Filipinos and Asians but for all who seek to engage in theology within their specific cultural contexts. This book is for you!”

The Very Rev. Gloria Lita D. Mapangdol, ThD
President and Dean, Saint Andrews Theological Seminary

“A must-read for all kingdom workers and all students of the Bible. Discover the profound insights of Filipino theologians who skillfully weave biblical truth with their vibrant cultural context. This book, authored by Prof. Francis Samdao, celebrates their unique ability to understand and address pressing Philippine realities, from colonization’s lingering effects to contemporary issues such as mental health, social injustice, migration, and environmental care. Through thinkers like Villanueva, Villaroman-Bautista, Peñamora, Gorospe, Gener, and Maggay, readers witness theology deeply rooted in local experiences. These scholars exemplify a holistic approach, demonstrating how faith actively engages with societal challenges, offering relevant, practical wisdom for healing and transformation. It’s theology by, of, and for Filipinos, enriching the global body of Christ with contextualized wisdom.”

Bishop Noel A. Pantoja, DMin
National Director, Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC);
President, Philippine Relief and Development Services
(PhilRADS)

ENDORSEMENTS

“A wealth of rich Christian thought. From its context of severe poverty, intense complexity, and multiple challenges, the Philippines has produced a disproportionate number of outstanding Christian leaders, and it is time for the world to listen. Dr. Samdao’s collection of reflections on key Filipino Christian thinkers is a gift both locally and globally.”

Perry Shaw, EdD

Author, *Transforming Theological Education*;
Global Consultant for Local Leaders International.

“As the Gospel continues to deepen its roots in the different regions of the Majority World, so will the fruits of theological reflections become more distinctive, diverse, and defiant. In this book, Dr. Francis Samdao dares us to taste the bold flavors that characterize the voices of key theologians in the Philippines today. A much-needed piece of work that fills the gap in nurturing the seeds of local theologizing, especially in the minds and hearts of the next generation. Definitely, a must-read in context-rooted theologies and a must-have for every seminary, Bible college, and other theological training institutions.”

Ptr. Rei Lemuel Crizaldo

Theological Commission Coordinator,
The World Evangelical Alliance;
Author, *Boring Ba Ang Bible Mo?* Winner of the
Filipino Readers' Choice Award in 2015

“Drinking Coffee with Some Contemporary Filipino Evangelical Theologians is the *timplang pinoy* of theological conversations—curious, warm, and profound. Dr. Francis brews with every page rich reflections, serving up doctrinal depth with lighthearted conversations. This work is an invitation to readers to inquire of the deep things about God while keeping their souls stirred and their mugs warm.”

Marie Joy Pring-Faraz, PhD

Academic Dean, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

ENDORSEMENTS

“Dr. Francis Samdao offers an engaging introduction to some of the most relevant Filipino Evangelical theologians today, explaining why their work deserves our attention. This invaluable resource combines careful scholarship with practical insights and will appeal not just to seasoned scholars but also to anyone curious about the tangible use and positive impact of theological reflection on the Filipino experience. Let’s get these important conversations going!”

Beatrice Victoria Ang, PhD

Director, Center for Theological Inquiry in Asia

“The book invites readers to sip coffee with six leading Filipino evangelicals as they engage in theologizing on issues such as lament, mental health, injustice, holistic ministry, contextualization, migration, and ecology. Rooted in local lived realities and open to global dialogue, this volume celebrates a theology that is both Filipino and evangelical, encouraging readers to engage their faith within today’s cultural and social landscape and the wider body of Christ.”

Rev. Laurence Gatawa, PhD

President, PTS College and Advanced Studies;
Chairman of the Board, Asia Graduate School of Theology, Philippines

“Dr. Samdao offers us an inspiring glimpse of how the universal gospel is sown in particular contexts. Working from and for the Philippines, he shows us how the uniqueness of Filipino culture—as a place colonized three times over by Spain, the United States, and Japan—has sown and reaped cross-cultural perspectives in doing local theology. Do pull up a chair at a cafe and listen as Samdao and his fellow Filipino theologians share insights on faithful Christian living that also apply in other places!”

Jerry Hwang, PhD

Executive Editor, Evangelical Review of Theology
Author, *Contextualization and the Old Testament*

ENDORSEMENTS

“Living in the West, it is difficult to find a comprehensive overview of theologians in Asia. Francis Samdao has written a much-needed resource to introduce us to the fine scholarship occurring in the Philippines. He has also produced a volume that can give future Filipino theologians pride in the rich traditions from which they spring.”

Rev. S. Blair Waddell, PhD

Senior Pastor, Providence Baptist Church, Alabama, USA;
Visiting Professor, Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary and
Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary-Philippines

DRINKING COFFEE WITH SOME CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIANS

FRANCIS JR. S. SAMDAO

Foreword by
FEDERICO G. VILLANUEVA

Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary Inc.
Baguio City, Philippines



*Drinking Coffee with Some
Contemporary Filipino
Evangelical Theologians*

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Evangelical Theologians*

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❖ Dedication

To my beloved wife, Shilo Rose Tacay-Samdao,
thank you for your love and prayers.

To Simon Chan,
your theological insights shaped my thinking.
Thank you for your friendship and prayers.

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FOREWORD

It is a great privilege to be asked to write this foreword and also to be included as one of the Filipino evangelical theologians featured in this book. *Nakakapagpalakas ng loob*. This is our Filipino way of saying “it is very encouraging,” though this English expression cannot capture the depth of the word *loob*.

This book is much needed since most of our books in the seminary are written not by Filipinos or Asians but by Westerners. I remember my seminary days, when we would be asked to read countless articles and books on various subjects of study, such as theology, Bible, and practical ministry. I would look at the bibliography and be amazed at the many writings on the various subjects. Most of them, if not all, were written by Westerners. Most of our teachers were also from the West, and the few locals tended to use only reading materials written in the West. When I became a faculty member at a seminary, I unconsciously perpetrated this trend. Only after years of teaching did I realize that there was not a single reading requirement written by a Filipino or an Asian in my syllabus.

It's not that no such books were available, but the few that existed were not even known to us, because they were either not promoted or deliberately excluded. We tend to always view foreign-authored books and articles as better than our own. This is a reflection of our continuing colonial mentality. I will never forget

what an American told me when he learned that Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* was one of the best-selling books in the Philippines: "Certainly, you don't need an American to tell you what your purpose in life is!" I could have said, "Of course!" But I had nothing to say, because his point was true. Most Filipinos would rather buy a book written by a foreigner than one written by a fellow Filipino. Students in the seminary, including their teachers, would rather quote foreign references than local ones. Filipino scholars writing an article, book, or dissertation tend to cite or quote works written by foreigners. Compared to our neighbor Indonesia, we are way behind.¹

The late Filipino theologian José de Mesa is right: We need to strengthen our view of ourselves. *Kailangan nating palakasin ang ating loob*. De Mesa writes, "*Wala pang kaugaliang teolohiko ang Pilipinas na masasabi na 'sariling atin.'*" (We still don't have a way of doing theology that we can call our own.)²

How do we empower ourselves? First, by reading the writings of our Filipino and other Asian brothers and sisters. I am not saying that we should no longer read books written by Westerners. In a global context, we can no longer afford to do that. But for a long time, we have focused only on Western works and tools and have neglected to read our own. Reading our own is our way of empowering ourselves. It entails believing that our own people can produce knowledge that is not only comparable to but even better than works from outside. They may not be better in terms of packaging, but the contents—because they are drawn from our own experiences, our own *loob*—speak more to us than works written by foreigners.

¹Ramon Guillermo, "Sariling Atin: Ang Nagsasariling Komunidad na Pangkomunikasyon sa Disiplinang Araling Pilipino," *Social Science Diliman* 12, no. 1 (2016): 29–47. Guillermo mentions that 66% of the theses written by Filipinos at the Asian Center (University of the Philippines) do not have even a single reference written in Filipino (p. 38). Those written in English tend to use English sources exclusively (p. 40).

²José M. de Mesa, *Mabathalang Pag-aaral: Ang Pagteolohiya ng Pilipino* (Manila: Vee Press and De La Salle University, 2010), 9.

All theology, as we know, is contextual. There is no such thing as a “perspectiveless” perspective, to borrow a term used by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Thus, if we read only works from the West, not only are the illustrations foreign, but even the emphases, the angle from which the subject is approached, will naturally differ from our own. That is why it is not surprising that we have difficulty understanding foreign books. For some time, I thought I was dumb for struggling to understand the German scholar Jürgen Moltmann. But then I realized that not only is his book a translation from German to English, but his way of writing, his very framework, differs from my own. We Filipinos, like many Asians, are more emotive. We like to communicate through stories. But most Western theology books, especially biblical studies books, don’t include stories. Including stories seems to be viewed as “womanish,” which is apparently one reason why Western theologians tend not to include them. But one should look at how Jesus himself taught and how the Gospels are written.

Second, we empower ourselves by writing. Writing is one of the most difficult things to do. It even becomes more difficult for us Filipinos because of our colonial mentality. Filipino anthropologist Albert Alejo, S.J., testifies that when he begins to write, what he calls *mga tiyanak ng kalooban* (monsters of the heart) suddenly appear. One of them says, “So many people have already written about that. What else can you add?”³ For me, when I write, another *tiyanak* says, “Who are *you* to write anything of significance? Do you even have what it takes?” I never saw myself as a potential writer until my Ph.D. thesis supervisor asked me if I would be willing to publish my dissertation. I felt overwhelmed. The only piece of literature I had published before that was a little poem about birds, which appeared in our school paper when I was in year five. I never dreamed that my dissertation would be published. But it was accepted by a prestigious European publisher, which

³Albert E. Alejo, S.J., *Tao Po! Tuloy: Isang Landas Ng Pag-Unawa Sa Loob Ng Tao* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990), 6.

means that the *tiyanak* is wrong. Even those outside our country can recognize our own ability.

This does not mean, however, that our scholarship's quality is confirmed only when it is affirmed by the West. The real test of our scholarship is when our own people understand and read it and can connect with what we are saying and writing. Those of us who have had the opportunity to study abroad must remember that we are called not only to contribute to global scholarship but, more importantly, to people where we are. After finishing your Ph.D. or your seminary studies, devote yourself to the needs where you are. In the Philippines, books have yet to be written on various aspects of theology, counseling, spiritual direction, pastoral ministry, and contextual biblical interpretation. We are grateful to the ministry of Langham Publishing (<https://langhamliterature.org/>), which helped many Majority World scholars not only to earn their doctoral degrees but also to write textbooks, articles, and reference works for our own context. We now have our own Asia Bible Commentary series, books on Asian Christian theology and Asian Christian ethics, and others.⁴ But there is more to do. The Indian theologian Saphir Athyal emphasizes considering our own context when we are doing theology: "Christian theologies of different times and different places, while covering essentially the same general subject matter one way or another, should let their particular contexts decide what particular area of faith should receive special emphasis."⁵ He adds, "Only the keen sensitiveness of the Asian church to the world around it can give it an awareness as to what area of theology should receive primary treatment and serve as the pathway to the total scope of theology."⁶

⁴Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue, eds., *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019; Aldrin M. Peñamora and Bernard K. Wong, eds., *Asian Christian Ethics: Evangelical Perspectives* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022).

⁵Saphir F. Athyal, "Toward an Asian Christian Theology," in *What Asian Christians Are Thinking: A Theological Source Book*, ed. Douglas J. Elwood (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1976), 73.

⁶Athyal, "Toward an Asian Christian Theology," 73.

To do our writing well, we have to know our own contexts. I use the plural form “contexts” since even in the Philippines, we have different contexts. Writing about our own cultural and historical context requires deep and broad knowledge of it. When I became the general editor of the Asia Bible Commentary series, I discovered how little I know of our own context. I knew more about the history and culture of Israel than about our own Philippine history. The Asia Bible Commentary is “a pastoral and contextual” commentary.⁷ But how could I write from my own context if I don’t even know my own history? This led me to do some heart searching. Finally, I decided to do further work in Philippine studies. This opened up a new world for me, a new perspective from which I could view theology and the Bible. Sometimes you begin to appreciate your own house more if you go out and see it from the outside.

Owing to the more communal nature of our culture, one of the best ways of writing books is through group writing retreats. We have done something like this here in the Philippines, which resulted in the writing of *Faith and Bayan* and *Ama Namin*.⁸ We are currently working on a book on the Ten Commandments (*Sampung Utos*), which will be written in Filipino. For the past three years, we have been working on a book project in Indonesia called *Selamat Indonesia* (Salvation in the Indonesian Context), which is being written in Bahasa Indonesia. We need to form what Melba Maggay calls “hermeneutical communities.” I pray there will be more of these in our different countries. Often, English

⁷I have written volumes on Psalms and Lamentations in the Asia Bible Commentary series. Federico G. Villanueva, *Psalms 1–72: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016); Villanueva, *Psalms 73–150: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022); Villanueva, *Lamentations: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016).

⁸Lorenzo C. Bautista, Aldrin M. Peñamora, and Federico G. Villanueva, eds., *Faith and Bayan: Evangelical Christian Engagement in the Philippine Context* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022); Timoteo D. Gener and Jason Richard Tan, eds., *Ama Namin: The Lord’s Prayer in Philippine Life and Spirituality* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2023).

books are translated into Chinese, Bahasa Indonesia, or Tagalog. I yearn for the day when books will not only be written in Filipino or Bahasa Indonesia and other Asian languages, but that these will be translated into English.

Third, we empower ourselves by doing precisely what Dr. Samdao does in this book—writing about Filipino evangelical theologians to introduce them and their books, ideas, vision, and laments. This is the more advanced stage, since this means that some of our very own have already been writing. And the fact that we have this book in our hands, thanks to Dr. Samdao, shows that we, as Filipino evangelical theologians and biblical scholars, have reached a significant milestone. Dr. Samdao has done a great job in documenting our arrival at this point. I really appreciate what he did here. Writers usually talk about their own ideas and promote their own agendas, but in this book, Dr. Samdao discusses and reflects on his fellow Filipino scholars and theologians.

Maraming salamat, Dr. Samdao, sa pagpapaglakas mo sa aming kalooban. (Many thanks, Dr. Samdao, for greatly encouraging us.)

Federico G. Villanueva, PhD

Regional Commissioning Editor for Langham Publishing
and Scholar Care Coordinator for current
Asian Langham scholars

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Although I am listed as the author of this book, God used many people to make this project possible. I am humbled and grateful to God for his grace throughout the three-year journey of working on this book. His sustaining presence strengthens me during times of discouragement and doubt. Truly, *I was never alone*. I am deeply grateful to my wife, Shilo-Rose, for her love and unwavering support. She has been patient and understanding during the long hours of reading and writing.

I have been blessed to receive great inspiration from senior scholars. To Federico Villanueva, who captured the intent and saw the potential of this work, thank you for replying to my inquiries. I am honored to have you write the foreword. Your support has kept me motivated throughout the challenging process of writing and reflection. Lorenzo Bautista's encouraging words stuck with me: "You have a worthy project there deserving all the support it needs to succeed." Thank you, "Professor Boy." Likewise, S. Blair Waddell

has been an ongoing source of encouragement, and Simon Chan has been very supportive of my writing journey.

A special thank-you to Bruce Barron, former executive editor of the *Evangelical Review of Theology*, for his rigorous feedback on the entire manuscript, which sharpened my arguments and saved me from publishing some passages with flawed reasoning, inconsistencies, or ambiguity. Moreover, he undertook the meticulous task of copyediting this book. How I wish I possessed a portion of his analytical and copyediting skills. It is an honor to continue learning from his generous mentorship.

I am blessed to have had these scholars take the time to review the first draft of each chapter, despite their busy schedules: Simon Chan, for his effort and valuable insights in critiquing chapter 7; Aldrin Peñamora, for his comments on chapter 3 and for pointing me to some of his works; Timoteo Gener, for providing feedback on chapter 5; Andrew Messmer, for reviewing chapter 6; S. Blair Waddell, for reading the introduction twice and chapter 5; and Violeta Villaroman-Bautista for her comments on chapter 2. I also appreciate Geoffrey Butler for reviewing chapter 2. His background as a Pentecostal scholar and as someone married to a counselor made him an especially insightful critic for that chapter. I am grateful as well to Lester Edwin J. Ruiz for his generous and honest feedback on the published shorter version of chapter 3, which helped me strengthen this new version. He not only provided valuable comments but also suggested additional sources to help me integrate Peñamora's works into a broader range of scholarship.

Before the manuscript goes to the layout artist, some generous scholars read the draft and provided endorsements. My sincere appreciation goes to Simon Chan, Theresa Lua, Stephen Pardue, Gloria Mapangdol, Perry Shaw, Noel Pantoja, Rei Lemuel Crizaldo, Joy Faraz, Beatrice Ang, Lawrence Gatawa, and S. Blair Waddell.

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and supported my travels abroad, where I engaged with various scholars and refined my thinking for this book.

Honorina Lacquian, my first theology professor during my seminary studies and now a friend and colleague, generously lent me valuable books that I used in this project. I am likewise grateful to Analyn B. Muñoz, my local history professor at the University of the Philippines Baguio, for introducing me to *Pantayong Pananaw (from-us-for-us perspective)*, which both inspired and affirmed my goals in writing this book. To all my TH3 (World Christianities) students, thank you! This course has pushed me to research and engage more deeply with the works of these Filipino theologians.

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I also want to acknowledge the academic and ecclesial communities to which I have belonged, as they have profoundly shaped the way I think theologically today. These include: Holy Innocents Episcopal Church, The Lord Is My Shepherd Christian Ministries Baguio, Taloy Flock of Christ, West Baguio Baptist Church, Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, and the University of the Philippines Baguio.

It is a joy to thank the whole village of institutions and individuals whom God used to advise, guide, and sharpen me along the way. However, as with all human endeavors, any errors are mine, and mine alone. May God's glory be shown in this book!

INTRODUCTION

#APPRECIATINGOUROWN

“Another problem is that we do not talk to one another. In our publications we seldom if ever quote from or cite one another’s work, instead drawing almost exclusively on the published works of Western scholars.”¹

In my graduate studies in theology, I was frequently steered toward reading Western thinkers. They are worth reading, but if I listen only to Western voices, I miss the profound insights and rich literary contributions of Asians, including Filipino scholars. Their wisdom and passion for God (*Diyos*), neighbors (*kapwa tao*),² and our country (*bansa*) are expressed in distinctive and invaluable ways. I am indebted to them for their deep understanding that

¹Federico G. Villanueva, “The Calling of Asian Christian Scholars: A Biblical Scholar’s Perspective,” *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology* 22, nos. 1–2 (March–September 2018): 19–20.

²*Kapwa* refers to “the unity of the ‘self’ and ‘others’ . . . It is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others.” Virgilio G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience* (Quezon City, Philippines: The University of the Philippines Press, 2016), 52. *Kapwa* is a value at the core of Filipino psychology. Violeta V. Bautista, “The Socio-psychological Make-up of the Filipino,” in *All Things to All Men: Introduction to Mission in Filipino Culture*, ed. Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1988), 3. *Kapwa* lies at the core of Filipino values. Ma. Elizabeth J. Macapagal et al., *Social Psychology in the Philippine Context* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013), 11.

the proclamation of the gospel includes a demonstration of God's justice, mercy, and love toward all.

Angukali Rotokha and Jerry Hwang believe that the dearth of theological resources that deal with Asian contexts "has meant that seminarians and thinking Christians in Asia are still reliant on Western resources, leaving them at a loss for how to read and apply Scripture faithfully in a manner that connects God's authoritative word to the specific contexts and issues facing their communities."³ Five years ago, my doctoral dissertation supervisor, S. Blair Waddell, told me that he does not hear much from us in Asia in terms of contributions to Christian scholarship.⁴

There are various reasons for the concerns mentioned above. In his latest book, *Why Evangelical Theology Needs the Global Church*, Stephen Pardue, who teaches in the Philippines, mentions that Majority World⁵ scholars have produced insightful literature. This development provides reasons for evangelicals to celebrate because theologians from the Global South are contributing to the larger body of Christ by offering fresh reflections on the relationship between Scripture and their cultural concerns. Nonetheless, their writings are not always readily accessible, especially because some are written in local languages and published in regional spheres. Another challenge is that even though some publishers (notably Langham) have been promoting Majority World literature, scholars unfamiliar with the particular cultural realities underlying these works still struggle because they

³ Angukali Rotokha and Jerry Hwang, Introduction to *Exploring the Old Testament in Asia: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. Jerry Hwang and Angukali Rotokha (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022), 1.

⁴ A personal conversation with him at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in 2020. Bong Rin Ro notes that Asians are diverse, with multiple religious, racial, historical, and cultural backgrounds. Asia is the largest continent in the world, consisting of five major regions: Central Asia, North East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and West Asia. He writes that of the 7.6 billion people worldwide, 60 percent reside in Asia. Bong Rin Ro, Foreword to *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspective*, ed. Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), xv.

⁵ I use the nomenclatures "Majority World" and "Global South" interchangeably throughout this book.

lack the necessary contextual understanding.⁶ Also, there have been relatively few resources within evangelicalism that dig deeply into the specific and significant challenges and problems of Asian evangelicals.⁷

In 2023, the theology department of the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary had a meeting with the dean. We talked about theology courses and other concerns. I proposed a new course named “Asian Christianities.” The dean suggested that we make it “World Christianities” to present Asian thought side by side with Western systematic and philosophical frameworks. In this way, students can see and appreciate the diversity in doing theology.

I conceptualized the course and presented the syllabus to the theology department and the dean, and it was approved. As

⁶Stephen T. Pardue, *Why Evangelical Theology Needs the Global Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 3. Some examples of insightful literature written in local languages by Filipino evangelicals and Roman Catholic theologians are Levy Lara Lanaria, ed., *Ang Maganda sa Teolohiya* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Communications Foundations, 2017); Federico Villanueva and Jayeel Cornelio, *Discipleship for Today's Filipino: Ang Calling ng Christian Para sa Bayan* (Manila: OMF Literature, 2024); Albert E. Alejo, S.J., *Tao Po! Tuloy! Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila, 1990); José M. de Mesa, *Mga Aral sa Daan: Dulong at Paraang Kultural sa Kristolohiya* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2004); de Mesa, *Mabathalang Pag-aaral: Ang Pagteteolohiya ng Pilipino* (Manila: Vee Press and De La Salle University, 2010). Some insightful books published regionally, see Pascal D. Bazzell and Aldrin Peñamora, eds. *Christologies, Cultures, and Religions: Portraits of Christ in the Philippines* (Manila: OMF Literature, 2016); Lalngakthuami, *Understanding Jesus: Indigenous Women's Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2019); Adonis Abelard O. Gorospe, ed. *Naming the Unknown God* (Manila: OMF Literature, 2006); John Suk, ed. *Doing Theology in the Philippines* (Manila: OMF Literature, 2005).

⁷Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue, eds., Introduction to *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), 2. Even Langham notices that few resources are culturally relevant to the Majority World. Langham Partnership, “We Publish Books,” accessed January 25, 2025, <https://langham.org/what-we-do/we-publish-books/>. To clarify, my use of “few” does not intend to dismiss valuable resources, particularly those published by Langham and other publishers.

I started to prepare some lessons and the syllabus, I studied some Asian thinkers and issues, coming to appreciate more fully the evangelical literature on Christianity in the Asian contexts. More specifically, I am delighted by the writings of Filipino evangelical scholars. Thus, I have written this book to introduce Philippine theological works to Asian pastors and seminarians. Moreover, I hope that readers will also learn about some significant and relevant concerns that theological leaders are encouraged to address.

My Thesis and Purpose

In light of our deep connections with our unique locations and particularities, remaining receptive to rediscovering who Jesus is and what it means to follow him and proclaim the gospel in our contexts is essential.⁸ As Stephen Bevans indicates:

Incarnation is a process of becoming particular, and in and through the particular the divinity could become visible and in some way (not fully but in some way) become graspable and intelligible. . . . Through us God must become Asian or African, black or brown, poor or sophisticated. Christians must be able to speak to inhabitants of twenty-first-century secular suburban Lima, Peru, or to the Tondo slum dweller in Manila, or to the ill-gotten affluence of a Brazilian rancher.⁹

⁸ Aldrin M. Peñamora, “God’s *Basileia* in Asia’s *Res Publica*: Situating the Sacred in Asia’s Public Sphere,” in *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspective*, ed. Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), 248. In the words of Lester Ruiz, “[O]ne’s location and positionality are decisive, not to mention constitutive, not only in the selection of the manner in which one engages with these movements but also in the choices both of conversation partners and substantive, methodological, metatheoretical, and political/institutional problems.” Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, “Revisiting the Question Concerning (Theological) Contextualization,” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* 3, no. 2.4 (January 2012): 4.

⁹ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 8.

Christian pastors and teachers ought to make their theology relevant to believers' real lives. The Philippine evangelical theologians discussed in this book show how to do this. They offer valuable insights that can enrich our theological discourse and pastoral ministry. They can also assist us in decolonization and in understanding the importance of theologizing using our resources.

I observe a common pattern as I review some theses and dissertations at the seminary where I serve. Usually, students use foreign thinkers as "conceptual frameworks" when dealing with Asian existential issues. I was one of them. Western thinkers are helpful in many ways. However, these sources also carry those concerns in their region that may not be relevant to our country or may not answer the questions we raise in Asia. If we take seriously the reality that Christianity's center of gravity shifted in the Global South, Christian theology must also be understood from the Majority World's perspectives.¹⁰ Asian thinkers might benefit from relying more heavily on fellow Asians who can connect Christian truths to our contexts more effectively and persuasively.

During the last century, the evangelical movement has grown in Asia. The Christian population in this region surpasses their counterparts in North America.¹¹ Therefore, it is not surprising to see the surge of Asian Christians entering seminaries to be equipped for the ministry. But theological education is still captivated by Western resources. Despite the rising number of Asian seminarians, theological education is maturing slowly, in the sense that resources or textbooks published by Asian writers

¹⁰Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, "Introduction: From Asian Furrows Sprung . . . : Christian Theology in Asia," in *Asian Theology on the Way: Christianity, Culture, and Context*, ed. Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press Edition, 2015), xiii.

¹¹The traditional centers of Christianity were North America and Europe, but the demographic shift has come to the Global South. Such is the greatest single change during the last century. Christianity is a global religion, and the Western church is only a part of it. John Parratt, Introduction to *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, ed. John Parratt (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–2.

for Asians are few.¹² Evangelical seminaries in Asia need biblical and relevant Asian resources that deal with our questions in our region, such as these:

- ⌚ As Asian Christians, how can we follow Christ and, at the same time, respect and honor our parents?
- ⌚ How can we minister to a culture where bribery is rampant and is treated as a “gift”?
- ⌚ How can we help theologically in addressing the historical trauma caused by the Khmer Rouge era and encourage reconciliation and hope for the future?
- ⌚ How do we witness effectively for Christ in a society where sensitivity and respect for other cultures and religions are strongly upheld and encouraged by the government?
- ⌚ How can we understand demonic beings in light of Scripture?¹³

I desire to participate in bringing the insights of some contemporary Filipino evangelical thinkers to the attention of Asian Christian leaders. I have written this book primarily as a supplementary resource for classroom discussions and ministers.¹⁴ I plan for this book to be neither a purely scholarly reading nor a purely pastoral reflection. It is somewhere in the middle. The idea was to combine the richness of theological academic works

¹²Rotokha and Hwang, Introduction to *Exploring the Old Testament in Asia*, 1. For some recent writings that cover the rich histories, cultures, religions, and challenges in Asia, which are relevant to theology, see Amos Yong, Mark A. Lampert, and Timothy T.N. Lim, eds., *Uncovering the Pearl: The Hidden Story of Christianity in Asia* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023); Klaus Koschorke, *A Short History of Christianity beyond the West: Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450–2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2025).

¹³The questions above are taken from an interview I conducted with some Asian ministers and students. Their names are withheld for confidentiality.

¹⁴I want to encourage them to see themselves as theological servants of a theological community. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 2.

with the knowledge of the practical ministry situations. I hope that seminarians and practitioners find this meaningful, intellectually stimulating, and pastorally relevant. To make the book more accessible, I have tried to avoid overly technical academic discussions. I resonate with the hope that Pardue expresses:

It is heartening that in the past two decades many leaders have publicly expressed their conviction that evangelical theology must reckon with the theological expressions of Majority World churches (which now outnumber in membership the historically dominant churches of North America and Europe). More heartening still is the proliferation of insightful theological work emerging from evangelical scholars in the Majority World, and the promise of much more to come in the years ahead.¹⁵

Evangelicals in the Global South ought to appreciate and draw on Western theological frameworks, materials, and influences. However, Minority World¹⁶ dominance can prompt evangelicals in Asia to address inquiries and concerns discussed by foreign thinkers rather than dealing with the issues of our own people and contexts.¹⁷ Jesus' incarnation, life, death, and resurrection reveal the triune God and human nature to all of us within our unique cultural contexts. Thus, our human experience in Asia is a legitimate part of theological contemplation and formulation.¹⁸

¹⁵Pardue, *Why Evangelical Theology Needs the Global Church*, 3.

¹⁶I follow Perry Shaw in using the term “Minority World” to refer to the “West” or “Global North,” highlighting that Western perspectives, often considered normative, actually come from a minority culture. See Perry Shaw, “Moving from Critical to Constructive Thinking,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 45, no. 2 (2021): 128, http://theology.worldea.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ERT-45-2_digital.pdf.

¹⁷See Melba Padilla Maggay, “Theology, Context, and the Filipino Church,” in *Global Mission: Reflections and Case Studies in Contextualization for the Whole Church*, ed. Rose Dowsett (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011), 149.

¹⁸See Fabio Baggio, Introduction to *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia*, ed. Fabio Baggio and Agnes M. Brazal (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), vii.

I desire to contribute (*makapag-ambag*) to the flourishing of Filipino theologies, not just for Filipinos but for all of global Christianity, for the glory of God. I am indebted to Filipino scholars who present steps for decolonization in the academy, which I have tried to follow in this work. First, decolonization encourages scholars to recognize alternative perspectives, particularly muted and silenced epistemologies or views. Thus, it is essential to extend our citation practices beyond Minority World sources and literature. Second, scholars ought to engage seriously with people in the Majority World as knowledge producers, not merely as objects of academic studies.¹⁹

Reflecting and living out the Christian faith in our contexts necessitates rereading the Bible, drawing on cultural sources, considering our experiences as a church, looking back on the history of Christianity, and dealing with societal issues. I hope this book entices you to read my primary sources: the texts written by the contemporary Filipino evangelical authors covered here. As such, I include a bibliography of the works I used in this book.

Scope and Limitations

Scholars have offered various definitions of evangelicalism.²⁰ According to Singaporean theologian Simon Chan, evangelicalism for the past twenty years “has become so theologically fluid and fragmented that it is becoming increasingly difficult to pin down.”²¹

¹⁹Dada Docot, Stephen B. Acabado, and Clement C. Camposano, “Extending the Conversation: Recent Explorations in Philippine Studies,” in *Plural Entanglements: Philippine Studies*, ed. Dada Docot, Stephen B. Acabado, and Clement C. Camposano (Quezon City, Philippines: Bughaw, 2023), 8.

²⁰Should readers want to see the different perspectives about evangelicalism from Western eyes, see Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, eds., *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). Of course, the classic tenet of evangelicalism is Bebbington’s Quadrilateral. See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2–17.

²¹Simon Chan, “Toward An Asian Evangelical Ecclesiology,” in *Asian*

Filipino theologian Timoteo Gener states that from a biblical perspective, evangelical people are rooted in the *euanggelion* (the gospel or the good news). Drawing on Mark 1:1–15, Luke 4:14–21, and John 20:21, evangelicals are Christians across various times and locations who desire to live in harmony with the mission and purpose set forth by Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. Gener explains that “evangelical” is not to be confined to institutional associations or establishments affiliated with specific theological beliefs, denominations, or groups. Instead, being evangelical signifies participation in the global Christian movement, living out Christ’s mission as ambassadors or agents in the world.²² The World Evangelical Alliance’s website states that evangelicals stress the importance of a personal relationship with God. They also emphasize that salvation is only by faith through Jesus Christ, belief in the triune God, and high regard for the Scripture as a biblical authority in daily living.²³

Historically, evangelicals are diverse but associated with the revivals that occurred in central Europe and America from the mid-eighteenth century onward.²⁴ Evangelicalism can also be seen as “a social phenomenon that transcends traditional methods of definition.”²⁵ Evangelicals are committed to sharing the good

Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives, ed. Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), 141.

²²Timoteo D. Gener, “Divine Revelation and the Practice of Asian Theology,” in *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives*, Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), 29–30; Gener, “Asian Evangelical Theology: Theological Commitments and Interdisciplinary,” *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology* 23, no. 2 (September 2019): 109–10.

²³World Evangelical Alliance, “What Do We Mean by ‘Evangelical’? In Brief,” accessed January 15, 2025, <https://worldea.org/who-we-are/who-are-evangelicals/>.

²⁴John Wolffe, “Who are Evangelicals? A History,” in *Evangelicals around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century*, ed. Brian C. Stiller, Todd M. Johnson, Karen Stiller, and Mark Hutchinson (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 26.

²⁵Gina A. Zurlo, “Demographics of Global Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicals around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century*, ed. Brian C. Stiller, Todd M. Johnson, Karen Stiller, and Mark Hutchinson

news with others through words and actions under the power of the Holy Spirit. For Gener, evangelical is being missional by embodying the gospel of Christ.²⁶ More specifically, Rei Crizaldo explains, “Evangelicals’ refer to the wing of Protestantism in the Philippines closely identified with the network and the work of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) and its allied organizations, e.g., Lausanne Movement.”²⁷

In focusing on contemporary scholars in the evangelical tradition, I am not claiming that Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and mainline Protestants do not live in harmony with the mission and purpose established by Jesus Christ. On the contrary, I encourage reading theologians from these streams as well.²⁸ However, evangelicals embody a strong, distinctive evangelistic fervor in the Philippines. This captures Gener’s emphasis on proclaiming and living out the good news of Jesus Christ, centered on his reign and offer of salvation.²⁹

I use the term “theologians” in a broad sense. The thinkers in this book come from different disciplines: systematic theology,

(Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 34.

²⁶Timoteo D. Gener, “Filipino Evangelicals and the Issue of Inerrancy: A Call for Reorientation,” *Phronésis* 10, no. 2 (anniversary issue): 63.

²⁷Rei Lemuel Crizaldo, “Pathways for Decolonization in Philippine Evangelical Discourse,” n.p. https://www.academia.edu/99842421/Pathways_for_Decolonization_in_Philippine_Evangelical_Discourse?email_work_card=thumbnail. This paper was presented at the National Conference of the Philippine Studies Association on August 25–27, 2021, on the theme “500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines.”

²⁸From the Roman Catholic Church, I recommend Filipino theologians like José de Mesa, Dionisio Miranda, Leonardo Mercado, Joefrey M. Almazan, Rico C. Jacoba, José Mario C. Francisco, and Ma. Christina A. Astorga, among others. Readers may also be interested in the writings of Filipino Jesuit philosopher Roque J. Ferriols. See also the works of Filipino scholars from mainline Protestantism, such as Ferdinand A. Anno, Eleazar S. Fernandez, Melanio Aoanan, Victor Aguilan, Revelation Velunta, and others. Some of their writings are used as sources in this book.

²⁹Timoteo D. Gener, “Pag-aarial sa Hilagang America Tungo sa Paglilinang ng Teolohiyang Pilipino,” in *Banwa at Layag: Antolohiya ng mga Kuwentong Paglalakbay ng mga Pilipino sa Ibayong Dagat*, ed. Axle Christien J. Tugano (Manila: Limbagang Pangkasaysayan, 2023), 312.

biblical studies, missiology, Christian ethics, and psychology. I also draw on the writings of other Filipino evangelical thinkers, even if they are not the main subjects. I use literature by Filipino scholars from other disciplines, especially the social sciences, because they have contributed to analyzing Philippine realities. I also draw on other writings as I interact with the works of some contemporary Filipino thinkers, because when theologizing in Asia, we need the “contributions from non-Asian theologians as well as those working in non-theological disciplines worldwide.”³⁰

Although there are different kinds of theologians (folk, lay, ministerial, professional, and academic),³¹ I have chosen to focus on a group of professional theologians whose ideas are relevant to the work of pastors, Christian leaders, and seminarians. I have omitted some other excellent Philippine scholars. For example, I have not covered Edgar Ebojo, partly because understanding his deep work as a New Testament scholar and textual historian is beyond my understanding.³²

Despite not fully grasping the depth of Ebojo’s research, here is a brief overview of some of his essays. In his essay, “Spirits, Scribes, and Scriptures,” Ebojo explains that the New Testament manuscripts give us a glimpse of the nascent church’s practices and beliefs. As such, the textual differences or variants may provide significant details and various angles concerning the early church’s history.³³ In another essay, Ebojo also discusses Christology in the

³⁰Simon Chan, “The Church and Women: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Evangelical Feminism,” *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology* 23, no. 2 (2019): 7.

³¹See Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology: An Invitation to the Study of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

³²See Edgard Battad Ebojo, “Myths about Modern Translations: Variants, Verdicts, and Versions,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 304–23. In the area of philosophical hermeneutics, see Jonathan V. Exiomo, *Interpreting the Text: Towards a Filipino Biblical Hermeneutics from a Ricoeurian Perspective* (Quezon City, Philippines: Alliance Graduate School, 2008).

³³Edgar B. Ebojo, “Spirits, Scribes, and Scriptures: An Asian Textual Historian’s View on Spiritual Warfare and the Transmission of the New

Philippines, as he utilizes textual criticism in exploring differences in the New Testament textual variants concerning the issue of Christ's humanity and divinity.³⁴ In an anthology on views of principalities and powers in Asian contexts, Ebojo contributes an essay in which he claims that even some scribes experienced discomfort about whether to affirm or suppress the belief in the otherworldly. He contributes to Filipino spirit world theologies through his expertise in text-critical study, and he encourages Filipino theologians to work in constant dialogue with the biblical text while remaining rooted in our contexts.³⁵

I have also omitted some promising young Filipino evangelical thinkers such as Rei Lemuel Crizaldo and Dick Eugenio, although I have used some of their writings as sources. I hope others will fill this gap and continue the conversation.

Why This Book Matters

Filipino New Testament professor Revelation Velunta claims that colonial scholarship highly influenced biblical studies in the Philippines, particularly within Protestantism. Moreover, many denominations continue to rely on “mother” institutions located in the United States.³⁶ This shows that we are in a neocolonial period—a colonialism with a different face. Filipino psychologist-

Testament Texts,” in *The Gospel in Culture: Contextualization Issues through Asian Eyes*, ed. Melba Padilla Maggay (Manila: OMF Literature, 2013), 76–106.

³⁴Edgar Battad Ebojo, “Scribes and Scriptures and ‘the Son of Man’: Christological Interests and the Transmission of New Testament Texts,” in *Christologies, Cultures, and Religions: Portraits of Christ in the Philippines*, ed. Pascal D. Bazzell and Aldrin Peñamora (Manila: OMF Literature, 2016), 138.

³⁵Edgar Battad Ebojo, “The ‘Other-Worldly’ in the Hands of the ‘This-Worldly’ Scribes: A Text-Critical Paradigm for Filipino Spirit World Studies,” in *Principalities and Powers: Reflections in the Asian Context*, ed. Timoteo D. Gener and Adonis Abelard O. Gorospe (Manila: OMF Literature, 2007), 202–23.

³⁶Revelation Velunta, *Reading the Parables of Jesus Inside a Jeepney* (Cavite, Philippines: Revelation E. Velunta, 2017), 61.