

Chapter 1

The Emergence of a Global Theological Discourse

Submitted by Laverne Robinson

Timothy Tennent describes the shift in Christianity that is changing the face of the whole Christian movement. He writes to motivate and inspire his audience, primarily seminary students, to think more globally about theology and a new shift in theology emerging today. It is important that students are prepared for cross-cultural ministries both here and around the world. This chapter clearly demonstrates that the gospel is culturally and geographically translatable. Tennent more importantly helps us to understand that Christian faith is not only culturally translatable, but it is theologically translatable.

Chapter 1 in Tennent's book, Theology in the context of World Christianity, describes Christian theology from the viewpoint of Christians from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We are challenged to consider life on the "mission fields" where theology is practiced. Tennent helps his audience to understand that Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America matter theologically because they are the majority of Christians in the world today. Tennent focuses on the potential for theological renewal and vitality if Christians in the West listen more attentively to those of the New Majority World who are more contextually based learners, than generations that

preceded them. Tennent alerts his audience to the fact today's missionaries are observing the growth of Christianity and the increased complexity of second generation or church growth are seeing the need for theological reflection now to see what God thinks about this dramatic shift in Christianity since the Reformation. We must become aware of how these changes will influence our understanding of church history or study of theology and our conception of world mission. Tennent outlines five trends in the Theology

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of Majority World Christians and states that if these five trends continue to be present in these new southern Christians then these Christians will emerge as the new great hope for the sustenance and transmission of the Christian faith in the twenty first century (p.15).

The question becomes what are the implications of Theological Translatability in the New Global Context that call Christian leaders to take up the challenge to approach the theological task from a more global perspective? I believe theological discussion in today's context must be globalized because questions can be raised that systematically answers all questions, for all Christians, for all times

(p.12). We serve a universal God, therefore there is a need for all theology to be systematic theology, historical theology and practical theology must be taught with a greater sensitivity to its universal and particular aspects. Tennent believes that a mutual and positive relationship between missiology and theology can create a positive change in this dramatic shift in Christianity. I agree, as we learned in class, it is often the Christian mission that creates the need for fresh theology. Theology is intentional and ongoing.