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TH 502

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Chapter 1: Theological Translatability

1: Summary of Chapter - Chapter one of Tennent's *Theology in the context of World Christianity* intends to introduce audiences to roughly 400 years of how the Christian church's delivery methods, missionary methods, some geography, and all-around thoughts have evolved and transformed through cross-cultural transmission. As it relates to theology and missiology, the author states an aspect many may not have previously realized. Many theological thoughts that the Western world holds dear today are "essentially a Western cultural movement, with few African or Asian actors on the Christian stage" due to "98 percent of the entire world's Protestants lived in the Western world" by 1793 (1). Tennent goes on to outline "three "snapshots" taken at different points in church history to illustrate the cultural and geographic translatability of the Christian faith" (4-6). Tennent wraps up this chapter by reminding the readers, "Some of the issues explored in these chapters have generated extensive, and sometimes heated, debate among missionaries and missiologists" (21).

2: Missional Implications - It was fascinating to learn how the missionaries got sent out from Europe (6). My island is called Antigua. We have Catholic, Anglican, and Moravian churches - at times referred to by us locals as "big church." Antigua is still pretty Christian. Guess they did a good job at Christianizing us. Thanks!

One section of the book I did not enjoy, though, is when the writer tried to remove the relevancy of Ethiopia's vibrancy in terms of Christianity (6). I felt like a bit of whitewashing may have been taking place. I know committed Christians from Ethiopia. So, I went to do a bit of research for myself. Via Joshua project.org, Christianity is still the major religion, with 58.35% Christians and a growth rate of 4.3%, while the global rate is 2.6%¹. I tend to wonder how much more of this book is misleading by not reinforcing speculation with data.

Another "interesting" section of this book finds the author stating, "100 years ago, I would not believe this, and that would happen." Then he goes on an attempt to predict the future (8). For the moment, this book seems (for lack of a better word) weird. Tennent writes about where he lives, has lived, works, and has worked. I need reliable data. Segments of this book seem more about personal experience, which is ok. However, I expected something data-driven, with more meat on the bones. I felt a little better, as the author writes, "many Western theologians have virtually no actual, face-to-face experience with the Majority World church. Sometimes theological writings seem to be completely ignorant of major on-the-ground realities in the world." I believe you.

3: Key Learning Question - I enjoyed one section: "FIVE TRENDS IN THE THEOLOGY OF MAJORITY WORLD CHRISTIANS." With those five trends in mind and given the history of missiology, what do you believe the trajectory of Christianity is globally? Do you believe it will be stifled by the north and its media outlets, due to the media's influence on the masses, or do you believe the majority world will prevail due to its five trends?

¹<https://joshuaproject.net/countries/et>