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Theology in a Global Context
Tennent Reflection Paper, Chapter 1
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In the introductory chapter to *Theology in the context of World Christianity*, Tennent explains the demographic shift in Christianity around the world, the theological translatability of Christianity, and lays out some implications of that shift and translatability for the process and study of theology.

The global center of the church is no longer in Europe. In 1900, and for the previous eight hundred years, the center of gravity of Christianity (the point on the globe with an equal number of Christians living north, south, east, and west) was located in Europe. The center of gravity for the last fifty years has rapidly been moving south and east. As the church in the West has shrunk, the church in the global South has been growing.

Also important for considering how to do and study theology is the dual realities that the gospel is universal and particular. The gospel has a universal force; it transcends cultural particularities and is true for all people, of all cultures, throughout all of time (Tennent, 13). The gospel is also particular; its message and call penetrates and becomes rooted in our individual cultures (Tennent, 12). These two realities need to be held in tension as we form and study theology.

The theology of the majority world should be studied for the last reason alone, but the need extends further as the majority world also offers some helpful correctives to the recent errors or weak spots of Western Christianity. According to Tennent, the Western church takes a lower grade on sensitivity to social issues, articulation of the uniqueness of the gospel amongst other religions, and living out the corporate aspects of New Testament life than the church in the majority world. These last two points (the universal truth of the gospel expressed in particular cultures and the relative strengths of the majority world church) are reason enough for Christians broadly and students of theology in particular in the West to heed the insights and reflections of church in the majority world.

Lastly, Tennent notes that embracing the particular aspects of the gospel does not preclude systematic theologies or commitment to particular theological perspectives (Tennent, 17). The call is not towards theological relativism. The call is to embrace and learn from new forms of theological discussion that are emerging in the global church.