

TH 502: Theology in a Global Context

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1.31.2023

Tennent Reflection Paper #1
The Emergence of a Global Theological Discourse

In Chapter 1, Tennent not only tells us the purpose of this book and how this book is structured along the traditional Western systematic theology line without apologetics, but also presents five very important trends in the theology of majority world Christians.

According to Tennent, we are now in the midst of the most dramatic change in Christianity since the Reformation. He points out the problems that need to be considered in this change. That is, Christianity began in central, cultural and geographical centers, but it did not achieve even and steady growth, he points out. As for the reasons and grounds, he looks at the entire picture of Christian history and talks about the existence or non-existence of Christian culture or Christian civilization.

Tennent presents some snapshots of the geographic and cultural translatability of Christianity in this chapter. It is the transformation of Christianity from a Jewish birth into a Gentile world. As we know through the Bible, Gentiles who feared God accepted the Jewish Messiah as their Messiah and were practicing their new faith in Jewish ways. The second snapshot is the fall of the empire and the birth of "barbarians" and the Byzantine faith. There is an important period to be aware of here, and that is the 4th century. Because, in the 4th century, Jewish Christians were only a small part of the church. However, Christianity, which repeatedly progressed and retreated from the 4th century, weakened in the West after the 9th century, but

was emerging as a new force in the East. We can find the important factor of these changes in Migration. According to Tennent, the gospel proved it was culturally and geographically translatable.

The lesson we can learn from the phenomenon of Indian Christianity, which flourished despite the stagnation and persecution of American Christianity, which was rich due to these changes, is what it means to be a Christian, and how we believe in the context of the new reality of world Christianity. Tennent says that it has the effect of stimulating theological reflection on whether we should practice this.

Through his statistics, I discovered something surprising. In contrast to Europe, Christians in Africa are growing rapidly. Also, as I know through the history of Christianity, the growth of Christianity in Korea and India, and furthermore, the spread of Christianity in China, I can see in what direction Christianity is spreading.

As Tennent recounts these various Christian vicissitudes and the evidence that followed them in this chapter, he poses a very important challenge. It is to move the core of Christianity from cultural and geographical to theological. Right away, I discovered that what the author wants to say in this book is here. The problem is that while the majority of the world has developed culturally and geographically, theological development has been confined to the Western world.

In response to these questions, he says: "There is a need for a reintegration of the various disciplines of theology such that systematic theology, historical theology, and practical theology are in better dialogue with each other and all theology is done with a greater sensitivity to its universal and particular aspects." p.12)

The reason for the gap between Western theologians and missionaries can be found here. Theologians are well-educated in theology, but missionaries must recognize that they are not properly educated in theology because they have to spend more time on other cultures and regions.

As Tennent said, one of the most important and strategic needs today is a positive and mutually beneficial relationship between missiology and theology.