

Theology in the context of World Christianity

Reflection Paper Chapter 4

Anthropology: Human Identity in Shame-Based Cultures of the Far East

Paul Oliferchik

TH502: Theology in a Global Context Spring 2023

2/5/23

In chapter 4, Tennent contrasts shame based cultures with guilt based cultures. The western countries tend to be more guilt based while more Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist regions much more shame based. Nevertheless, while some may be more dominant in one or the other, Tennent points out that both still exist in every culture. One of the key questions Tennent addresses, is how might the gospel be more effectively articulated in a shame and honor culture. Tennent goes through the Scriptures and highlights a lot of passages where many of the Biblical authors address an honor and shame culture. Towards the end of the chapter, Tennent goes into the application of the Atonement and how we talk about it. While in the West, there has been a greater emphasis on the judicial/guilt aspect, the Atonement speaks to even more than just that.

I found it really interesting how Tennent explains what he calls “multicoordinated personal decisions.” When groups at a time respond to the gospel, he highlights that these experiences should not be viewed down upon as if they are expressing personal faith and repentance. He says while conversions are always personal, they do not have to be individualistic. He highlights how common it is for whole families to come to faith in Christ in honor and shame cultures. I think a great missional implication we can take from this, is to incorporate how Jesus took all of our shame upon Himself on the cross. When we speak of the Atonement and the Theology of the Cross, I think we must not only highlight redemption from guilt but also redemption from shame. While through Adam we identified more with guilt and shame, through Christ, we can now identify with righteousness and honor. Jesus reversed the curse on the cross and did not give us what we deserve. He honored us so much, that He thought it worth it going on the cross for us. By addressing both guilt and shame, it can help our message have more of a global impact and help us marvel more in the gospel message ourselves.