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TH 502

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Chapter 4: The Mission Field of Shame and Guilt

1: Summary of Chapter - "We are not merely individually or privately guilty before God. We are also corporate participants in a race that has robbed God of the honor due him" (96). Shame-based and guilt-based cultures were the main topics of chapter four of Tennent's *Theology in the context of World Christianity*. The author begins by outlining everyday situations that may lead a person living in a traditional Japanese culture to commit the act of hari-kari (ritual suicide of disembowelment) (77-79). The practice is so famous that it has made its way into Asian movies¹, and even into the cultural songs of Antigua². The author goes on to introduce a working definition of each culture. Shame-based "rely on external sanctions for good behavior, arises from the pressure of external sanctions formed in the court of human opinion" (79). While guilt-based "rely on an internalized conviction of sin, arises from some internalized value system" (79). However, it is essential to point out that "no known cultures of the world can be spoken of as exclusively guilt-based or shame-based" (79-80, 94). The author smoothly transitions into Biblical evidence of Honor and shame in the Old Testament and points out that "The Old Testament contains at least ten different words, occurring nearly three hundred times, to convey various aspects of shame" (83). Additionally, the New Testament has "one prominent word and six Greek roots that are often translated as shame (86-87). A great takeaway from this chapter is the

1<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1728196/>

2<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xmjna45ZZik>

following, "Western systematic theology has been almost exclusively written by theologians from cultures framed primarily by the values of guilt and innocence. There has been a corresponding failure to fully appreciate the importance of the key values of honor and shame" (91). This statement reminds us to continue seeking perspectives outside of our own.

2: Missional Implications - "Honor and shame are among the most important values in the ancient Mediterranean world and continue to play a vital role in the formation of human identity in much of" (101). I enjoyed how the author outlined a few points regarding "the dynamics of guilt and shame in the crucifixion of Christ and within the larger context of the passion" (89). My favorite was, "even though Jesus accepted this shame, it did not involve an actual loss of honor. Jesus stands up and exhibits control of the situation, giving directions to the Roman soldiers (John 18:8), acknowledging that this arrest took place to fulfill Scripture (Matt. 26:54, 56), healing the man's ear (Luke 22:51), and even causing the soldiers to draw back and fall to the ground. At the same time, Jesus remained standing (John 18:5)" (89). This verse was incredibly liberating, as it allowed me to see how I can break free of the curse of guilt and shame culture. This will assist in setting others free. This formula will be quite a useful one in my toolbox as I venture into the mission field of shame and guilt. Also, "keeping in mind, because shame-based cultures are group-oriented, the process of Christian conversion may be different from what we are accustomed to in the West" (97). This may be seen as a negative at first glance. However, the power of "extended families and other larger social groups coming to Christ together" can not be denied (99).

3: Key Learning Question - I liked how the author tackled breaking out of shame and guilt culture by providing a framework of how Jesus took control of the situation. Would you happen to have a framework for how to take control in situations of fear?