

Summary of Chapter

Tennent opens up this chapter by talking about the changing “face of Christianity.” Christianity is moving from the Western Church to the Southern Church and Tennent believes there are many things we can learn from them. Tennent helps to understand the minds of the African Christians, particularly relating to Christology. Tennent talks about the deity of Christ, the importance of the reflection of past voices, and hearing the new voices from the Majority World Church. However, a great portion of the chapter is dedicated to African Christology. Tennent talks about its depth, its development through the generations, and key themes. He concludes the chapter by pinpointing the names Jesus is called by these African Christians and evaluates them using the four pillars that build African Christology that Mbiti suggests as the guide. He evaluates the names of Christ as the Healer and Life-Giver and Christ as Ancestor out of the six total images in African Christology.

Key Learning Points/ Questions

Being new to seminary, the word Christology was a new term to me (as are many terms and ideas) and I learned that it means “the branch of Christian theology relating to the person, nature, and the role of Christ.” Something else that really stuck out to me in this chapter was when the example of Jesus asking Peter “Who do people say that I am?” and then asking “Who do you say that I am?” This example is given to demonstrate the call of African Christians to know Jesus in a way that is separate from how the missionaries have taught them who Jesus is. Another learning point is when Tennent mentions the four things that Paul Hiebert says that a church needs are “self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating,” and Paul Hiebert added the fourth one which is “self-theologizing.” The words “theological captivity to the West,” though I’ve never heard it said this way before, were words that I understood right away and they made me reflect on my past mission trips with church, my testimonies that I made about me, and now I am led to repentance even as I write this reflection paper. Some other points that were great were “Jesus as Healer” not only physically and spiritually, but relationally; “Jesus as Ancestor” and ancestors being a way to communicate as the African religion believes that they cannot talk to God directly. So, saying that Jesus is the Ancestor is also saying that Jesus is the Mediator.

Missional Implications

There was one part in this chapter Tennent talked about the “pre-Christian” stage of Africa, where they were condemned by Western Christians for believing in witchcraft, fetishism, and superstitions. The thought that came in my head, though random, was one of hope. I thought of Japan, which is another country that believes in those things. Although, yes, they are in a completely different context, different culture, different history, I have hope that the Holy Spirit will permeate into Japan and they will meet the Person of Jesus. This chapter has a lot of things to teach us about missions. This chapter has taught me the importance of the context of culture when going on missions. When I went on mission trips as a middle and high schooler, I used to think I was going to spread the Name of Jesus. Never in that little brain of mine did I think of how the people of Mexico, for example, would take in my testimony of how I had a dad who I

know loves me but didn't know how to portray his love to me. Of course, my pastor didn't choose my testimony and now I know why. This chapter has shown me that missions should be about loving, equipping, and building.