

Theology in the Context of World Christianity
Timothy Tennent – Interaction Paper – Chapter 10

Summary of Chapter

This chapter focused on the “emerging contours of global theology” (Tennent, p. 249.) We are increasingly faced with a Church which not only global but, culturally diverse and fosters a reintegration of the various branches of theological study” (Tennent, p. 250, 255, 256.)

One interesting branch is practical theology. This new Church requires an analysis of current issues and themes facing world Christianity (Tennent, p. 256.) It was interesting to read about the emergence of Liberation theology in Latin America, due to the efforts of Gustavo Gutiérrez. Its focus “on the marginalized and oppressed” is in alignment with biblical principles (Tennent, p. 263.) Part of the recognition of the marginalized and oppressed lies in the fact of a shift from a “a post western Christianity” where theology is no longer localized (Tennent, p. 251.) No longer is the center of the global Christian movement localized in a few central locations (Europe, Rome) but, it is global in presence and impact (Tennent, p. 262, 264-265.)

Key Learning/Question:

Specific key questions: Should churches devote portions of their month/yearly plan to analyze the issues facing their church [whether in the location, state or nation they are found] and identify the practical steps needed to address them? How can we partnership with global Christians and become less ethnocentric about theology and church history discussions. Key learning: I was surprised to read about the necessity for systematic theology and its ability to “engage church and culture - meaning what are the biblical principles concerning the relationship of the church to the surrounding non-Christian world and culture” (Tennent, p. 257.) Thus, in the “context of global Christianity, we must be Christians first and denominations, ethnicity or nationality second (Tennent, p. 269.)

Missional implications

Given the presence of a post-western world, a Christian has to understand that “the God of Christian proclamation has to be related to what [those we are proselytizing to] already believed” (Tennent, p. 268.) Plus, believers can “no longer presume that the Bible is the only sacred text known to those whom we minister” (Tennent, p. 268.) These present challenges to how we engage missionally, because we need to improve how we participate in discipleship, given the global context.