

Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?

In this chapter, Tennent develops a comparative analysis of predicates in both the Christian and Islamic faiths. He gives an in-depth analysis of the name “Allah.” He states based upon theological research, the name ‘Allah’ was actually used by Arabic Christians and used in Arabic translations of the Bible prior to the start of Islam. Tennent gives acknowledgement to Timothy George, a systematic theologian, who first published a work in 2002 entitled “Is the Father of Jesus, the God of Muhammad?” (Tennent, p. 26). He also acknowledges the renowned biblical scholar, Lamin Sanneh, who also published an article entitled “Is the ‘Allah’ of Arabian Islam the same as the ‘Allah’ of pre-Islamic Christianity?” (Tennent, p.32). “Tennent clearly states he is not advocating pluralistic religion by engaging in discourse regarding the matter. He further states the Eastern religions tend to be more pluralistic and Western religion has traditionally been a part of a systematic study of scriptural revelation (Tennent, p.25). Tennent makes four key points relating to the use of the Name “Allah.” They are 1) the etymological correlation between the word “Allah” and the Jewish word for God (el, eloah, elohim); 2) the historical and archaeological evidence of the widespread use of the name “Allah” in monotheistic Arabic speaking groups in the region; 3) the use of the name “Allah” in Christian and Jewish scriptures has a long history to the present day; and 4) the name “Allah” was used to translate the broad concept of God and was not used to translate the personal, covenant name for God using the tetragrammaton YHWH. And Arabic translations followed Jewish customs by inserting the title LORD (Adonai) in place of elohim. (Tennent, p. 30-31). Tennent also discusses the ontological nature of monotheism (Tennent, p. 31). Tennent states God/Allah represents oneness and powerfulness. Tennent concludes by expressing his pastoral soteriological concerns. He states in accordance with others “The god of philosophers is not the God revealed in scripture. Based on predicates, etymology of the name “Allah and pastoral implications, Tennent ultimately concludes that the Father of Jesus is not the God of Muhammad.

Two pertinent questions that are relevant to the discussion in the chapter are 1) How do we effectively witness to those who embrace a different faith system? and 2) How can we establish missions that fuse cultural similarities through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ?

This subject matter will provoke many intense theological discussions. I believe Tennent gets it absolutely right when he states, “We must be cognizant of the global context in which we live and begin fostering a more engaged mission-focused theology that is informed by actual global realities.” I agree with Tennent’s view that this concept is effective for Christian witnessing. Tennent discusses an intriguing topic that has many viewpoints. Some will agree and others may disagree with Tennent. It is commendable that Tennent uses scriptural, archaeological, historical evidence to support his thesis. He also diplomatically presents arguments from both the Christian and Islamic perspectives before he reaches his conclusion. This denotes his scholarly approach to engaging the reader in this chapter. There will probably be ongoing debates and theological perspectives regarding this subject matter. It is great that Tennent chose to expound upon the research of others who have explored the question, “Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?”

I will attempt to hold seminars in my church to train evangelists and missionaries to be cognizant of the global context in the 21st century. Furthermore, I will encourage cross-cultural evangelism by inviting seminarians, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and biblical scholars from the

majority world to my church and denominational activities. This will promote the further development of different cultural, political, and social perspectives.