

In accordance to chapter seven of Tennent, the author desires to discover the most optimal evangelical Theology of Religion after mentioning four widely held ones. The first is called the exclusivism which hold a strong conviction towards three nonnegotiables which are the “unique authority of Jesus Christ as the apex of revelation and the norm by which all other beliefs must be critiqued, the proclamation of the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the decisive event in human history, and finally that salvation comes through repentance and faith in Christ’s work on the cross. (Tennent 197). In further detail, this particular model asserts the point that while believers of other religions would not gain salvation, through the means of general revelation, they are able to conceive some aspect of truth in the Lord through assumably their altruistic deeds in the world. (Tennent 198).

The next model is named the “new fulfillment model” in which the first two points of the previous model are advocated by this theological posture while the third and final viewpoint is not. “They affirm that Christ’s work on the cross is ontologically necessary for salvation but that it is not epistemologically necessary.” (Tennent 201). In more direct terms, this signifies that believers of alternative religions will indeed gain eternal salvation through general revelation. This perspective is further reinforced by the perception that “if every human being has been objectively provided redemption in Jesus Christ through the Cross, then it must be possible for every human individual to become personally eligible to receive that provision.” (Tennent 201).

Moreover, the third theological model of religion is the “mutuality model” in which it advocates are known as “pluralists.” Their perspective is somewhat similar to that of the inclusivists with the exception that it dismisses the three primary viewpoints of the exclusivists of the replacement model. It does not believe that Christianity is the true religion and it refuses to believe that the Christian faith is “the fulfillment of other religions.” (Tennent 203). Although inclusivists acknowledge the existence of special revelation of the Lord given to Christian believers, the pluralists do not believe in such a concept at all. They are much more receptive towards the notion of general revelation which they believe interrelates all religions to a universal truth about God.

The fourth and final model is called the “postmodern model.” This particular model supports the “assertion that there are no universal truths and that is arrogant to assert that such truths may exist.” (Tennent 204). It also contends the point that all the various religions are divergent from one another and eliminates any similarities between them while also invalidating the concept of religion in general. (Tennent 204).

Tennent then begins to reconstruct the standards which evangelical theology of religions must fulfill. The first is that “a theology of religions must have an ethical and relational orientation, not merely a descriptive and doctrinal one.” (Tennent 218). The second is theology of religions must maintain a larger Trinitarian theology with more emphasis on Christ. (Tennent 218). As reasoned by the author, “Christology provides the only truly objective basis for evaluating the truth claims, whether those claims emerge from within Christianity or in response

to normative claims from other religions.” (Tennent 218). The third standard or component is that the biblical truth must not be compromised, as “we have become increasingly accommodating to the relativistic mood of the culture.” (Tennent 219).

Thus, in more direct terms, we as Christian believes must handle the dilemma of privatization, social justice in the external world, as well as protecting the “exclusivity of the gospel message.” (Tennent 219). The fourth standard established by the author is that the three “nonnegotiables must be articulated within the larger context of the doctrines of creation, revelation, anthropology, the Trinity, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and importantly, eschatology.” (Tennent 219). Therefore, by theologies of religion adhering to this standard, they will be prevented from becoming “too individualistic or theologically reductionistic.” (Tennent 219).

Lastly, it is contended that Christians in the West must have a more valid comprehension of the “global dimension of religious pluralism and World Christianity.” (Tennent 219). Thus, a theology of religion must be created from the concept of the global church, particularly from Majority World churches, not exclusively from western scholarly influences but from different cultures and nations in order to gain a fuller picture of what Christianity truly is.

In finality, I personally concur the most with the first model of exclusivism or the replacement model. While I believe that they do indeed experience general revelation, I do not believe that, it is sufficient enough state that they will be saved, because they still inevitably need to believe in Christ. In regards to dealing with other religions, we cannot go the Tabula Rasa approach which is the absolute denial of the validity of all other religions. In retrospect, we as Christians cannot commit ourselves to the accommodation approach, since we will have to give up a crucial component to our Christian faith such as biblical truth, the infallibility of Scriptures, and the Trinitarian framework in which all alternative religions such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism reject. Admittedly, all religions address four primary questions such as what is the ideal state of the world? What went wrong? What is the solution? How then should we live? While there are varying theological answers to those particular questions for each religion, there is undoubtedly a similarity in regards to the concept of moral behavior, such treating everyone with respect, be humble, be loving, help the sick and needy, etc. Nonetheless, although it may be tempting to state that all religions in general are the same, that is a false notion. As a final note, just as we as Christians can learn from divergent religions from the general revelation they had been given, how much more can we learn from Majority World churches in which the practice of the Christian faith is much more valid and untainted by a number of erroneous intellectual theological constructs of the West.