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Theology in the Context of World Christianity
Timothy Tennent – Interaction Paper – Chapter 2

Summary of Chapter

Tennent detailed how, despite "etymological" similarities between the words "Allah" and God and monotheistic viewpoints between Muslims and Christians, "the Father of Jesus is not the God of Muhammad" (Tennent, p. 48.)

Tennent illustrated how early Arabic Muslims and non-Muslim Arabic speaking Christians used the term "Allah" to "translate the broad concept of God" (Tennent, p. 30-31.) But, now the term "Allah" is used by Christians and Muslims refers to their respective communities and traditions which respectively hold either the Bible or Qur'an as "sacred and revelatory" (Tennent, p 31.) So, this means there will be differences in how Christians and Muslims view our respective defining texts and corresponding beliefs in comparison to other religions.

Consequently, the "Islamic doctrine of corruption (tahrif)" means, in the eyes of certain Muslims, Jews and Christians utilize texts which distort the meaning of Scripture (Tennent, p. 34.) Another point of contention for certain Muslims is the Christian belief in the Triune God and the deity of Christ. To Muslims, to believe in the Triune God means a repudiation of Islamic monotheism wherein God is unified (tawhid) (Tennent, p 39-40.) To Christians, unbelief in the dignity and deity of Christ means "severing our identity with the Father" (Tennent, p 39.) Thus, this solidifies Tennent's view that, to Muslims and Christians, "the Father of Jesus is not the God of Muhammad" (Tennent, p. 48.)

Key Learning/Questions:

Some questions: 1) What are some steps Christians are taking to understand the Muslim culture both in a religious context and relationally? 2) Are there successful missional ways Christians have connected with Muslims: both here and abroad?

Missional implications

When addressing an Islamic culture, Christians must know of and start with our original etymological" similarities, in the missional context. Then we can engage, in a relational fashion, of the reconciliation that can only be found in Christ not in a works-based theology.