

Alex Worthington
Theology in a Global Context
Tennent Reflection Paper, Chapter 2
2/14/23

In Chapter 2, Tennent looks at theology proper and the similarities and divergences between the Christian God and Muslim Allah. Particularly, it is the question, “is the father of Jesus the God of Muhammed” that gives a unique lens through which to explore the theology of Islam and Christianity. This goes beyond mere etymology (though the roots and relationship between the English and Arabic words are interesting) and requires doing deep and thoughtful theology.

This exploration is best summarized by the Venn diagram on page 36. There is a lot of shared space between biblical affirmations of God and Qur’anic affirmations of Allah, and the shared affirmations should not be minimized out of discomfort of association. However, they don’t overlap entirely and there are differences that should not be minimized out of pluralistic concern either. Further, even the shared affirmations lie within different theological contexts: for a Muslim to say that Allah is one from a non-Trinitarian lens is actually carries different meaning than a Christian saying that God is one from a Trinitarian lens.

As Tennent pointed out, this question has pastoral implications. Explorations of the “God of Muhammed” and the “Father of Jesus” are not just etymological or ontological, they are deeply personal and experiential to 2+ billion people who claim either of the two faiths. He points out as well that engaging in this personal and theological question is actually much more important than what German theologians said hundreds of years ago. Overall, this was a very helpful chapter in identifying the important points in this discussion which is often degraded through shallow discourse.