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TH 502

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Chapter 3: The Rise of Sacred Text from Others

1: Summary of Chapter - As he seeks to further "Examine the shift of global Christianity" (53), Tennent zooms in on the country of India for Chapter 3 of "Theology in the context of World Christianity." In particular, the author is "interested in how Christians with Buddhist, Muslim, or Hindu background regard the sacred text in their pre-Christian past, including the Upanishads - Sometimes referred to by Indian theologians as their Old Testament. For just as the Old Testament served to prepare the way and point people to Christ in the early Jewish context, so the Upanishads serve as a kind of preparatio evangelica for the gospel in the Indian context" (53). The author also explores other Indian texts, such as "The Vedas, which some Indian Christians even include its readings during Christian worship service." Additionally, Indian theologians believe that the old Indian text helps to frame the Bible as we know it today, because theologians such as Appasamy believe, "many of the traditional Eastern emphases "inherent in Christian thought" have been lost in the long sojourn of Christianity in the Western world. Now that Christianity is coming back to its home in Asia, the Christian texts can be read with greater clarity and power, for "it is when the Bible is placed in its old environment that it can be fully understood" (55). The theologians believe that this may guard against "spiritual amnesia, that is, assuming that when someone comes to Christ, everything in their past must be jettisoned to make room for Christ" (55). It is upon this note that Tennent dives into his thesis question, "Should Christians make use of the sacred text of another religion if it helps them in

communicating the Christian gospel?" (55) The author then goes into brief similarities (but not much about differences) of the relationship between the canon of the New Testament and other text, including the "Canonicity, revelation, and inspiration in other religions" (60). The relationship includes Hinduism (61-62), Islam (62-64), and Buddhism (64-67). Then Tennent outlines arguments for the use of "other sacred text" for Christians (67-70). Finally, the author concludes with "Guidelines for the use of nonbiblical 'sacred' text" (71-73). T was an interesting chapter with an interesting perspective, indeed.

2: Missional Implications - Im at a loss for words when Tennent asks, "Many Christians in the Majority World have taken Paul's quotation of Greek poets or John's use of logos as an important precedent, modeling for us how we should communicate the gospel when we are in an Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, secular, or any other setting where people are unfamiliar with Jewish texts, prophecies, and expectations. Is this a legitimate application of Pauline or Johannine practice? Should we encourage insightful quotations from the Islamic Quran, the Hindu Upanishads, the Buddhist Tipitaka, or the Sikh Granth, if it will help us to communicate the gospel in the varying contexts in which Christian witness takes place today?" (59). I honestly do not believe it would be beneficial to carry our missions that way. Yes, I understand that Paul did it (70), but Paul did not have the New Testament, as we know it, available to him. One takeaway that I do find beneficial, though is Tennent's statement, "Christ does not arrive in any culture as a stranger" (69). I believe it was Tennent who also wrote, "God gave pagans the stars to worship so that they would not become atheists." That is super powerful but may lose its power if we continue to point the "others" back to the stars.

3: Key Learning Question - "In December of 1974, Roman Catholic scholars in India convened a week-long conference in Bangalore entitled, "Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures." The

papers and official statements from the conference were eventually published in a book containing more than seven hundred pages. The central question that brought the conference together was: Can we use the scriptures of other religions in our worship?" (67-68)... To that, my question would be, If we begin to include the "sacred text" of "others" in Christianity, what then prevents a Satanist, Wiccan, or other pre-Christian to bring their "sacred text" to mix it to prove their points? Although Tennent is extremely optimistic about this (not that I'm pessimistic), I would proceed with extreme caution upon this potentially slippery slope. I'm just not sure where to draw the line (as yet) if there is one.