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Theology in a Global Context  
Tennent Reflection Paper, Chapter 3

In Chapter three, Tennent examines bibliology by looking at the sacred texts of other major religions. Tennent starts the chapter with some very controversial quotations by Indian theologian A.J. Appasamy, the most surprising of which is the assertion that only by reading Hindu sacred texts can someone really understand the Bible. Based on the content in the rest of the chapter, it seems that Tennent would disagree with that notion, but the challenge stands to examine critically how we view other sacred texts and their usefulness in Christian contexts.

He puts it very succinctly: "Should we encourage insightful quotations from the Islamic Qur'an, 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... many make a strong distinction between a pastor quoting from an inspiring poem or a popular movie and quoting from a text that is regarded as sacred by another religion." (Tennent, 59). Most Christians fall into one of two extremes: the theologically Liberal who have embraced relativism and put all other sacred texts on the same level, or the conservative who vehemently rejects any other religious text.

After breaking down the Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist view of revelation, and canonicity, Tennent sets out some ground rules for how a Christian can appropriate another sacred text. These rules lie on the ground of understanding both continuity and discontinuity between the Christian story and the stories of other cultures or religions. Tennent says the use of nonbiblical sacred texts should be limited to evangelistic outreach, where a predominantly non-Christian audience would be benefited by a nonbiblical quotation. Second, they should be used as a corroborative witness to a biblical message, not as an independent testimony. And last, they should be lifted outside of their original contexts and clearly reoriented in a new Christocentric setting. As we look to Paul's example, he does all of these things.