

Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam by Timothy C. Tennent.

(Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 270pp, paperback, \$19.99

There are already several excellent books which defend historic Christianity as it relates to the challenges brought by religious pluralism, and there are several outstanding books on comparative religions from a Christian perspective. What is often absent from such books is a straightforward give-and-take *dialogue* between conservative adherents of different religious persuasions. For example, there is typically no opportunity to hear what a Hindu would say in response to a particular critique. This is precisely the niche that Tennent's book is intended to fill. "This book seeks to prepare Christians as they begin to take more seriously our obligation to listen and respond to the objections of non-Christian religions. Genuine dialogue can occur in a way that is faithful to historic Christianity while being willing to listen and genuinely respond to the honest objections of those who remain unconvinced." With this object in mind, Tennent has based this book on many actual conversations he has had over the years with Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists from around the world.

In the first chapter of the book, Tennent cogently evaluates three positions that are taken by Christians in their approach to other religions: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism. Chapters two through seven record a Christian's honest and open dialogue with two Hindus, two Buddhists, and four Muslims – all of whom are committed to their respective faiths and who have specific objections to raise regarding Christianity. The give-and-take conversations provide for clarification of views and excellent responses to issues of importance to adherents of other religions. Reasonable ground-rules are followed throughout the interactions, and the discussions are focused on specific doctrines that get at the issues which distinguish Christianity from these religions. Chapters eight through ten of the book present several case studies or essays that highlight major aspects of the relationship between Christianity and other religions.

The book contains a complete glossary of terms, bibliography, subject index, and Scripture index. The dialogues and concepts that are presented can become quite technical, so the audience for this book would probably be those with special training in philosophy and theology. It would be more appropriate for use in an upper-division seminary course than in a Sunday School class for the layperson.

This book challenges conservative Christians to be more intentional about having serious conversations with people who hold diverse viewpoints in our pluralistic world. "Put simply, the match cannot be played if the players remain in the safety of the locker room. The creeds of historic Christianity are not bunkers in which to hide; they are the basis for a global proclamation." In this book, Tennent models an approach that conservative Christians can follow as an example to engage people of other religious persuasions in effective dialogue, with the ultimate goal in mind of seeing them come to Christ.

Reviewed by Steve Lewis, *High Peaks Bible Fellowship*