Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing How We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). xxi + 295 pp.

A bridge building book that launches into new territories without losing the way home, this is a cutting edge and classical integration of missiology and theology. Tennent (PhD, University of Edinburgh) wrote it as professor of world missions and Indian studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Subsequently he has become president of Asbury Theological Seminary. His previous publications include *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam* (Baker, 2002), and *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations: The Legacy of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay* (ISPCK, 2000). Tennent’s broad experience and skillful scholarship presented in accessible language make this an excellent textbook for missiology and theology students. In spite of sometimes uneasy relations, Tennent argues, missionaries and theologians critically need each other. A central attempt of the book is bringing these two worlds together for a positive exchange.

Tennent insists global Christianity’s expansion positively influences major theological categories. His goal is to expand our “ecclesiastical cartography,” the shifting geographical shape of contemporary Christianity, and how that affects Christian belief and practice. Chapters 1 and 10 nicely bracket chapters 2-9. Chapter 1 sets the tone for an emerging global discourse among Christians by suggesting the serial (rather than progressive) growth of Christianity invites theological as well as geographical and cultural translatability. Universal truth is informed and enriched by particular/local expressions. Therefore, Majority World churches need to be heard by Western churches (as Westerners are already heard by the global South). Potentially a whole new generation of Christian leaders may take up a more global perspective with important practical implications for revivifying Christianity. Tennent insists this is not a peripheral conversation; rather, it requires the full and undivided attention of Christians everywhere. Chapter 10 revisits the recurring theme of essential exchanges between missiology and theology. Tennent emphasizes four key themes: reintegration of the theological disciplines; renaissance in systematic theology; particularization of theological discourse; and theological engagement with ideologies of unbelief and non-Christian religions.

*Theology in the Context of World Christianity* is structured like a typical Western theology text, using traditional categories in accepted sequence to frame its conversation because they are already well known outside the West and will aid understanding in the West as well. Apparently, accommodating Majority World Christianity does not necessarily require abdicating everything Western so much as integrating multiple compatibles. Nevertheless, the contents are genuinely constructive, creative conversations. These interactively discuss the doctrine of God against a backdrop of Muslim background believers regarding Allah; revelation for followers of Jesus formerly Hindu with other sacred texts; human identity (anthropology) in light of shame based cultures of the Far East; African Christians’ struggles with classic Christology in non-creedal culture; soteriology through Pure Land Buddhist belief in salvation by grace through faith; pneumatology in the con-
Tennent avoids easy answers or facile generalizations, straightforwardly tackling tough questions. For example, on the thorny but timely question, “Is the Father of Jesus the God of Mohammed?” he suggests, analyzing etymology, history, and theology as well as pastoral insights from Arabic Christians, that though shared Abrahamic monotheism indicates an affirmative reply, Christian perceptions of God (Trinity, Christ’s deity) are so utterly unfathomable to Islamic perceptions of tawid (Allah’s absolute unity) that a negative answer arises instead. Surprisingly, Tennent argues from comparative predicates of Allah (Quran) and God (Bible). Apparently this does not necessarily mean that Muslims in no wise know God or are guilty of idolatry, although obviously they would not know God as Jesus’ Father. (One wonders whether etymology, ontology, and epistemology become a bit confused here. What we predicate of or know about God and whether it applies to the same Being may be different questions.) Yet Tennent says Mohammed was in a carefully qualified sense a true prophet pointing people away from polytheistic idolatry. However, he was not the final and infallible seal of all prophets and erred greatly regarding Christ and Christianity. At the least, Tennent demonstrates that Christians in predominately Muslim countries have much to say to those in predominately Christian countries about God’s identity.

The pneumatology discussion is mildly disappointing. It is an interesting account of the exciting narrative of Latin American Pentecostalism’s phenomenal evangelistic success noting pneumatology’s remarkable dynamism. However, every other topic chapter except this one wrestles strenuously with difficult, controversial themes. Does not pneumatology offer comparable conversation? There are bright spots: cessationism’s insufficiency; surprising ecumenical implications; and counteracting arid Enlightenment rationalism. Overall, Tennent offers excellent and appreciative discussion. Yet in depth engagement with Pentecostal pneumatology does not happen still. Then Tennent takes cheap parting shots at the prosperity gospel and televangelism scandals. For the most part, the chapter is “Pentecostal friendly” so this comes across as a disavowal of an overly positive treatment.

Technically, Tennent does not do comparative theology. He is preeminently occupied with how Christians outside the West confronted daily by pluralistic ideas are required to think through issues and how that unique process molds or informs them. Usually, as with Asian Christians on sacred texts, he admirably accomplishes his objective; occasionally, as with Pure Land Buddhism’s soteriology, he drifts toward merely comparative conversation. Here one wishes for more explicit input from Majority World Christians. Nevertheless, even these slight detours are not serious distractions but still informative and helpful.

Spiritual introverts may instinctively withdraw from Tennent’s adventure while spiritual extroverts likely will rejoice in its daring. However, if Christianity’s future vitality is inextricably bound up with how it responds to its own growing global diversity, then there is certainly more at stake here than psychological predispositions to withdraw or reach out. Tennent has history on his side. Christianity facing serious challenges or shifting centers frequently responds with unexpected or irregular advances without retreating from an