

Accad, Martin. *Sacred Misinterpretation: Reaching Across the Christian-Muslim Divide*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2019, 396pp. By Justin D. Compton.

In his book, *Sacred Misinterpretation*, Martin Accad writes to improve the religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Accad is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, Lebanon, and founder and director of the Institute of Middle East Studies. Though based in Beirut, he also teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has written and lectured extensively on Islam, Middle Eastern Christianity, and Christian-Muslim relationships.

Accad observes that dialogue between Christians and Muslims has been shaped by tension and conflict. Having grown up in Lebanon, Accad is personally aware of such tensions. In addition to his personal experiences, he also calls attention to the recent political and social tensions involving Christians and Muslims including the Arab Spring from 2010 to 2014 (5–6), September 11, 2001, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (23), and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (23). These recent tensions stand on the shoulders of historical conflicts, like the rise of the Islamic Empire and the Crusader Wars from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries (16). Religious tension contributes to political and social tension. Though religious differences rarely cause a conflict directly, they certainly intensify conflict during political and social dissension. According to Accad, healthy and respectful religious dialogue can significantly influence the growth of peaceful relationships in the soil of current and historical tension. Additionally, relationships that grow from such fruitful religious dialogue will improve the social and political dialogue (6). Consequently, people of faith should lead the way by humbly exploring each other's theologies and making that exploration the foundation for dialogue. Because Accad is a Christian, his primary audience is Christians. He wants Christians to understand Muslim theology in order to better dialogue with Muslims. He clearly states his premise and motivation: "your view of Islam affects your attitude

to Muslims; your attitude, in turn, influences your approach to Christian-Muslim interaction, and that approach affects the ultimate outcome of your presence as a witness among Muslims” (7).

Accad contends for what he calls a “kerygmatic” approach. His goal is to intentionally and proactively articulate this approach (9). According to Accad, the kerygmatic approach focuses on the positive proclamation of Jesus Christ. It avoids “polemical aggressiveness, apologetic defensiveness, existential adaptiveness, or syncretistic elusiveness” (9). It portrays Christ as God’s revelation and the center of salvation. Positive proclamation of Christ is “suprareligious” (10). It does not proclaim a religious system or a message of condemnation, but it positively proclaims “the good news of God’s invitation of humanity into relationship with him” through Christ (10). This approach is not new—it was used by Jesus and his followers (18–21). The church takes the kerygmatic approach by “active participation and contribution in society, and the ongoing proclamation of the church’s faith through liturgy” (9).

Summary

After his introduction, Accad devotes chapter two to the different hermeneutical approaches used by Christians and Muslims. He details how Christians and Muslims misrepresent and misinterpret each other’s sacred texts: each reads their own hermeneutical methods into the other’s holy book. He helps Christians to understand the legitimate qur’anic interpretation according to Muslims, and also proposes a hermeneutical method for Christians to use as they dialogue respectfully with Muslims.

Chapter three considers the dialogue between Christians and Muslims about God. Accad overviews how Muslims proclaim and defend their view of monotheism by exalting God as one and refuting the divinity of Jesus, asserting that he was merely a human prophet and servant who himself claimed that only God is God. He concludes that the question of whether Christians and Muslims worship the same God is emotional and not rational, and the best starting point for dialogue is Jesus.

Chapters four and five are devoted to the Muslim understanding of Jesus. Chapter four

details how Muslims have historically sought to correct the false Christian understanding of Jesus. Chapter five considers the view of Jesus which Muslims present as proper. Muslims feel that Christians misrepresent Jesus by adding characteristics to him. Therefore, Muslims have historically worked to proclaim Jesus as a prophet of Islam. He was a human, born of a virgin, but not divine or the Son of God. He was not crucified by the Jews, because God replaced him with another who looked like Jesus, but taken up to heaven by God. Thus, the cross has no salvific value. Jesus was a prophet-servant in the line of prophets, but Muhammad is the final prophet. Muslims believe that Jesus' message—the Gospel—aligns with the Qur'an. Indeed, the Qur'an served to correct false beliefs and disagreements about Jesus. Islamic tradition considers it absurd that God would need to send a son to die in order to achieve salvation—all God needed to do was say "let it be" (*kun*) and it would be. Accad encourages Christians to begin with the areas of agreement and then move to other areas of dialogue. For example, the Islamic tradition does not state when or how God replaced Jesus and took him to heaven, so Christians should examine those questions which have gone unanswered by tradition. Yet, he warns it is never appropriate to denigrate Muhammad.

Chapters six and seven consider how Islamic tradition relates to the Bible. Muslims view the Bible both positively and negatively. Chapter six overviews the positive approach. Muslims have traditionally accepted the Torah and Gospel as authoritative and historically reliable documents. The Gospel is a bridge between the Torah and the Qur'an. The Gospel confirms the Torah and is confirmed by the Qur'an. In fact, Muslim authors often quote the Bible to prove their arguments against Christianity and to authenticate Islamic teaching. However, they often change the wording or reinterpret the Bible to make it more appropriate to the point they intend to make. The Qur'an supersedes and corrects previous revelations, and the Qur'an was necessary because Jews and Christians did not faithfully obey their scriptures. Chapter seven is devoted to the Muslim accusation of *tahrīf* or corruption of the biblical text. According to Accad, the Qur'an does not claim that the text of the Bible is corrupt, but that the interpretation of the Bible by Jews and Christians is corrupt. Therefore, the Qur'an seeks to correct misinterpretations of the biblical text.

It was not until the eleventh century, Accad observes, that Ibn Ḥazm began using *tahrīf* as a polemical starting point and considered it a corruption of the text itself. Today, most Muslims consider *tahrīf* to be a corruption of the text. To promote healthy dialogue, Accad encourages Christians to begin with the positive affirmations of the biblical text found in the Islamic tradition and the Qur'an, and then patiently explain to Muslims the history of the New Testament text.

In chapters eight and nine, Accad focuses on how Muslims have read and interpreted the Bible Muhammado-centrally. Islamic thinkers have long claimed that the Bible supports Muhammad as a prophet and foretells of his coming. Chapter eight provides an overview of the Christian accusations against Islam and Muhammad, and how Muslim apologists used the Bible to defend their position. Chapter nine centers on the most common Islamic Muhammado-centric use of the Bible: that Muhammad is the Paraclete promised by Jesus in John 14–16. Accad summarizes the writing of several Muslim scholars to track the historical development of this assertion. To promote fruitful dialogue, Accad encourages Christians to begin with the biblical passages that Muslims use to exalt Muhammad, and use these to read the Bible with Muslims. When talking about Muhammad, Christians should begin with the Qur'anic depiction of Muhammad as a messenger.

In the final chapter, Accad provides concluding thoughts to promote better dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Christians must rightly understand Islam as Muslims understand Islam and not be moved by the winds of media or public depiction. “Islam is a community following its holy book, according to precedent” (324). The precedent is Muhammad's life, the holy book is the Qur'an, and the community is the billions of Muslims worldwide. Accad contends that Muslims can be divided into two distinct groups. Medinan Muslims are primarily inspired by the parts of the Qur'an which were revealed to Muhammad in Medina, and they tend to be more militant because they are inspired by those dimensions of the Qur'an. Meccan Muslims are primarily inspired by the parts of the Qur'an revealed in Mecca, and they tend to be more moderate, focusing on the moral and spiritual dimensions of the Qur'an. Accad believes that the Meccan form of Islam is more promising for Islam's future. Additionally, Christians can receive

Muhammad as a messenger from God to the Arab people who prepared the way for Christ. Receiving Muhammad this way can be a starting point for conversations. Accad concludes by providing a vision for the future where all people of faith adopt the call of Micah 6:8 to mercy, humility, and justice, and where Christians truly understand Islam, take action against oppression and injustice toward Muslims, and humbly worship God.

Critical Evaluation

Valuable Aspects

Accad provides valuable contributions to the discussion regarding Christian-Muslim dialogue. First, his stated goal is admirable. Accad recognizes that theological tension between Christians and Muslims has contributed to social and political tension throughout history. He also recognizes that healthy and fruitful theological dialogue can improve these tensions. I am thankful he promotes a Micah 6:8 version of Christian-Muslim dialogue that encourages mercy, justice, and humility. Such dialogue, when practiced by both groups, eventually results in mutually respectful and peaceful conversation.

Second, Accad provides valuable information on the history and the current status of Christian-Muslim dialogue. He carefully presents the Muslim understanding of hermeneutics, God, Jesus, the Bible, and the Muhammado-centric reading of the Bible. In each chapter, he shows the history and development of the conversation using the Qur'an and the best Islamic primary sources. He compares the Muslim and Christian views on these topics. This book is a valuable resource for Christians who want to learn what Muslims believe about Christianity. It will also help those who wish to interact with the early Islamic sources that shape current Muslim belief. Accad states, "The contents [of this book] will be helpful to readers who want to know more about what the Qur'an and Muslims say about Christian theological issues" (xxvi). I agree that Christians today must avoid being misled by the influence of culture and media regarding Islam. This book helps by giving Christians the tools they need to understand Muslim beliefs in a way that promotes deeper discussion and love for our Muslim neighbors.

Concerning Aspects

There are many aspects about this book which are concerning. I do not think that Accad's approach will produce the dialogue he desires, and I do not think his version of dialogue brings glory to the one true God. I find Accad's primary goal, his view of the Bible, and his kerygmatic approach troubling and unhelpful.

Accad's Primary Goal. Accad does not seem to have the appropriate biblical motivation behind his desire for dialogue. His primary goal is clear from the beginning: he wants "to join the positive dialogical conversation by engaging in a text-based study of the Christian-Muslim theological dialogue and its relation to the conflict between Islam and Christianity" (xxv). Accad desires to promote peaceful religious, social, and political dialogue in this world to move both religious traditions beyond the hatred and violence of the past and toward global peace. He believes this book will help his readers "think through these [Christian-Muslim dialogue] issues biblically in the current multifaith environment in which most of us live" (xxvi). Thus, he elicits Micah 6:8 as God's vision for global peace (24). Yet, Accad is not thoroughly and consistently biblical. Contrary to Accad, the Bible commands Christians to glorify God by exalting the supremacy of Jesus Christ. This is God's primary goal and should be the primary goal for every Christian. The Bible says that "God has highly exalted him [Jesus] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9–11). Christians exalt Jesus to the glory of God the Father by obeying Jesus and making disciples (John 14:15–24, Matt. 28:18–20). We make disciples not with violence or force, but by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:22–31). To be sure, promoting global peace is a worthy secondary goal. Christians are commanded to live peaceful, quiet, godly, and dignified lives (1 Tim. 2:1–2). We are commanded to love our neighbors and our enemies (Matt. 5:43–48). Yet, we understand that not everyone will treat us kindly. We will be hated, persecuted, and rejected (Matt. 5:43–44, John 15:18–21). The preaching of Jesus will be foolish

and a stumbling block to some (1 Cor. 1:23). Therefore, we cannot promote these worthy secondary goals above the primary goal of glorifying God by exalting Jesus Christ. God does not primarily want peace in this world. He wants Christ to be exalted and for sinners to turn from their sin and false belief to Jesus Christ.

Accad neglects God's primary goal and overly promotes the secondary goal. In fact, I am not certain he believes that Christ should be exalted above every other name. Accad states, "we are ultimately not called to be God's defenders, for his truth in the end will surely prevail. And it is my conviction that it will not prevail through one particular religious tradition, but through suprarreligious criteria that transcend all of our human understandings" (259). Accad is vague and does not define "suprarreligious criteria." It appears that he believes that God's truth will prevail in some way that is above or beyond religion. Yet, the Bible affirms that Jesus is the truth (John 14:6) and that God's truth will prevail when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord (Rev. 11:15). Accad seems to believe that God's truth will prevail either through every religion or beyond any particular religion. However, according to the Bible, Jesus and his truth will prevail through the religious tradition of the people of God in Christ, the Church (Eph. 3:20-21). This tradition is the Christian tradition. Certainly, Christians are fractured and divided in some ways, but this reality does not thwart the truth prevailing for all eternity through Christ and his people.

Accad's View of the Bible. Accad's view of the Bible is alarming to Christians who consider the Bible true, trustworthy, and authoritative. Accad does not find the Bible fully reliable, and he certainly believes it is fallible. On page 20, Accad is commenting on the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4. Footnote 14 on that page provides a troubling piece of information:

I skip John 4:22, as commentators generally consider it to represent a parenthetical reflection of the Gospel writer, expressing what Jews would have believed: "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." The verse certainly flies in the face of the essential message of the passage if it were an affirmation of Jesus's own belief.

Accad is wrong about the consensus of commentators on John 4:22. I can direct Accad to a few

commentators who do not consider it parenthetical.¹ Nonetheless, even if John 4:22 is parenthetical and added as commentary by the apostle John, such commentary would be equally inspired by God and trustworthy (2 Tim. 3:16). Accad believes that this verse is not inspired by the Holy Spirit, not true to Jesus' original message, and should not be considered reliable. By calling the author of John's Gospel the "Gospel writer," Accad suggests that he does not believe that the apostle John wrote this Gospel; thus, he does not trust the claim of apostolic authorship attributed to the Gospel. Accad wants Christians to believe that the author was a misguided disciple who inserted his thoughts—which contradict Jesus' real message—into the text. Such claims sound like Muslim accusations, not Christian beliefs.

Accad makes another troubling statement later in the book.

Christians desiring to engage in constructive dialogue with Muslims are invited to resist being drawn to thinking about their Scriptures as though they were another descended Qur'an. To be fair to their tradition, they need to affirm that it is Christ, the culmination of the Judeo-Christian revelation, who is the eternal and living Word of God, whereas all human frailty that might appear in God's other means of revelation are subservient to God's salvific act in Christ (258).

When Accad speaks of "human frailty that might appear in God's other means of revelation," he suggests that human frailty may contribute to errors and mistakes in the biblical text. Accad appears to believe that the Bible records and contains the revelation of Jesus, but is a lesser form of revelation. According to Accad, Jesus is the true revelation of God; thus, the Bible, as a lesser revelation, contains errors caused by human frailty. While I agree that Christians should not affirm a dictation form of revelation as Muslims do, Christians have traditionally affirmed that all Scripture is breathed out by God, and that the Holy Spirit carried along the authors as they wrote and spoke (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).² The Bible is authoritative, infallible, and trustworthy.

¹ See the following commentators who do not affirm John 4:22 as parenthetical: F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 110. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 223–24. J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 251. Jo-Ann A. Bryant, *John*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 86.

² Consider the following historical Christian affirmations of the inspiration, authority, and trustworthiness of Scripture: Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1950) 1:17–18. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, in *Nicene*

Every word of the Old and New Testaments is true and without error.

It appears that Accad believes the text of the Bible is corrupt. It contains errors that were inserted into God's revelation in various ways. This is exactly what Muslims believe about the Bible. It is difficult to imagine that a God glorifying dialogue can occur between a Christian and a Muslim when neither believe in an uncorrupted Bible.

Accad's Kerygmatic Approach. Accad is inconsistent with his kerygmatic approach, and this approach will not result in God-glorifying dialogue. On pages 8–9, Accad presents his SEKAP Spectrum of Christian-Muslim dialogue, which he developed in a previous publication. The spectrum stretches from syncretistic to polemical interaction. The middle and preferred position, according to Accad, is kerygmatic interaction. The kerygmatic approach avoids polemical aggressiveness, apologetic defensiveness, existential adaptiveness, and syncretistic elusiveness. Instead, it positively proclaims "God's gracious and positive invitation of humanity into relationship with himself through Jesus" (9). Based on his definitions of these approaches, Accad consistently displays an existential adaptiveness, not a kerygmatic proclamation of Jesus. He defines existential adaptiveness as those who are "smart adapters" (9). They find smart ways to adapt the message of Christianity to Islam, or the message of Islam to Christianity. For the most part, Accad encourages Christians to give up theological ground and adapt their message to accommodate Muslims' beliefs according to the Qur'an.

For example, Accad wants Christians to affirm what the Qur'an says about Jesus and use it as a starting point for dialogue. He contends, "Notable for Christian-Muslim relations is that nowhere in the Qur'an or in the entire Muslim tradition do we encounter any slander of Jesus. . . . Jesus himself remains blameless" (82). He then demonstrates how the Qur'an portrays Jesus. According to Accad, Muslims assert that the Qur'an is a fulfillment of Jesus' message and that it

and Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1954), 5:192-193. Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1956), 6:101. John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Timothy*, in *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 21 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 249. B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2015). For a thorough historical theology of the inspiration, authority, and trustworthiness of the Bible see Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 59-119.

corrects Christianity's misrepresentation of him (82). The Qur'an challenges the Trinity and thus the divine nature of Jesus (83). The Qur'an teaches that Jesus dismissed his equality with God (84). Later, Accad states that Muslim scholars taught that Jesus was a human servant of God who confirmed the prophethood of Muhammad (157–162). Accad wants his Christian readers to see these Qur'anic portrayals of Jesus as non-slanderous. However, Accad is wrong. These Qur'anic teachings are indeed slanderous to Jesus, because they portray him as less than he proclaimed himself to be. Jesus is the last word from God and the fulfillment of all true divine revelation; he does not confirm Muhammad's prophethood or any other so-called prophethood (Heb.1:1–4). Jesus is fully divine, the second person of the Trinity, and one with God the Father (John 1:1–5, 10:25–30, Col. 1:15–20, Heb. 1:1–4). Jesus did not dismiss his equality with God. He proclaimed it (John 10:30). Jesus was a human servant, but his servanthood does not diminish his divinity (Mark 10:45). The Qur'an says many positive things about Jesus, but the key goal of the Qur'an is to reduce Jesus to merely a human prophet subservient to Muhammad. This message is slanderous. Accad says that Christians should start with the Qur'anic Jesus, but he does not clearly state how long we should stay with the Qur'anic Jesus before moving to the real Jesus of the Bible. I believe he wants Christians to linger with the Qur'anic Jesus for an extended time before continuing to the biblical Jesus. If so, this approach is an existential adaptation. True kerygmatic proclamation of Jesus cannot hold the conversation at the Qur'anic Jesus too long. True kerygmatic Christians must immediately clarify that the Qur'anic Jesus is not the real Jesus.

Accad also displays that he is more of an existential adapter than a kerygmatic proclaimer when he encourages his readers to accept Muhammad as a messenger. Christians, according to Accad, should accept Muhammad as a “precursor of Christ for his people, similarly to the way that Abraham and Moses were instrumental in preparing for the coming of Jesus” (332). Using Galatians 4:1–5 and Hebrews 1:1–3, Accad asserts that Christians can consider time in a different way. When the Bible says that Christ came “at the fullness of time” or that God spoke “at many times,” “various ways,” or “in these last days,” one may interpret it not as linear chronological time, but as moral or cultural time (336–38). So, Muhammad's message of

monotheism to the Arab people culturally and morally prepared the way for the message of Jesus to the Arab people (338). Accad insists that Christians can accept Muhammad as a messenger—a *rasūl*—in the primary sense of the word, as “a person who is sent” to his people with a message to prepare them for God’s salvation (338). Unfortunately, Accad is incorrectly interpreting and applying the Bible. Receiving Muhammad as a precursor and messenger is not biblically acceptable. Accad’s case for “moral and cultural time” is unconvincing. When the Bible says Jesus came “at the fullness of time,” it does refer to chronological time. The Bible says that Jesus came at a certain point in history, according to the plan of God (Matt. 2:1–3, Luke 1:5, 2:1–2). Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate (John 19, Acts 3:13, 4:27, 1 Tim. 6:13). God invaded history with Christ at a certain point in chronological time. Furthermore, when Christ arrived at the fullness of time, the mysteries of God which were hidden in previous generations were revealed. God wants this revealed mystery to be proclaimed to all Jews and Gentiles (Col. 1:24–29). Thus, there is no need for another prophet-like messenger. Consider how Paul and Barnabas proclaimed Jesus to the polytheistic people of Lystra in Acts 14:8–23. They used God’s general revelation in creation—like rain, fruitful seasons, good food, and gladness—to call them out of their polytheism and proclaim Jesus as Savior and Lord (Acts 14:15–17, 22–23). God did not need to send a messenger to prepare the polytheists of Lystra. His previous revelation by the Old Testament prophets and his general revelation in creation are sufficient to prepare all people to hear the good news of Jesus. Similarly, God did not need to send a precursor messenger to prepare the polytheistic Arabs. Consequently, Muhammad is either a prophet of the true God or a false prophet who leads people astray. These are the only two biblical categories. Accad affirms that Muhammad “walked in the path of the prophets” (331). However, contrary to Accad, Muhammad was prophet-like—but only because he fits the biblical description of a false prophet (Matt. 7:15, 24:11, Titus 1:10–16, 2 Pet. 2:1, 1 John 4:1). Muhammad proclaims a different message and tells people they can find salvation in a person other than Jesus. Christians cannot, in any way, accept another messenger with “another gospel” that differs from that preached by Jesus and the apostles (Gal. 1:8–9). Accad is not displaying a kerygmatic proclamation of Jesus. Instead, he is existentially adapting the teaching of

the Bible to try and create a shaky middle ground which will not result in true God-glorifying dialogue.

In addition to his adaptations, Accad misrepresents Jesus' kerygmatic approach. Accad uses Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus (John 3:1–15) and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–29) as examples of how to use his kerygmatic approach (18–21). According to Accad, Jesus did not “destroy the buildings” of their religions, nor did Jesus replace their destroyed religious buildings with a new building (21). Christians follow Jesus' example by inviting Muslims to become part of the “community of the Spirit” (21). Accad asserts that Muslims do not need to be convinced that they are evil before they willingly become followers of Jesus (21). Instead, Accad says,

[W]e call on the Spirit of Christ to *indwell* the building of Islam, as well as the building of any other religious institution, including Christianity. The *supra-institutional community of the Spirit* has no alternative institution to offer adherents of any religion but invites all to inaugurate the reign of Christ within their own institution (21).

Like his use of “suprareligious” cited previously, Accad does not clearly define “supra-institutional.” One may only gather that he sees the community of the Spirit as somehow above or beyond any institution. It appears Accad believes that Jesus invades other religions by the Spirit and makes them “Jesus” versions of themselves. At best, Accad is unclear and needs to clarify his assertions. Yet, I feel Accad is purposely using vague words with unclear definitions to suggest some sort of inclusivism in which Jesus saves people by reigning all religions, including Islam.

Regardless of Accad's intentions, he misrepresents the way Jesus proclaimed himself to others. Jesus immediately calls Nicodemus to follow Moses by exalting Jesus as the one Moses promised, and by being born again into the Kingdom of God. In fact, Jesus criticizes Nicodemus for not already understanding this truth as a teacher of the law in Israel (John 3:10). Jesus calls the Samaritan woman to leave her false Samaritan worship and worship God in a new way, in Spirit and truth, by following him as Messiah. He points out the evil of her sexual sin as well as her need for salvation (John 4:13–26). When she calls Jesus a prophet (John 4:19), Jesus makes sure she understands that he is not merely a prophet, but the promised prophet and Messiah (4:25–26). Consider also how Jesus proclaims himself to the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16–22) and how he

calls all people to discipleship (Luke 14:25–33). Jesus proclaims himself as the only way to God and calls all people to forsake everything and follow only him (Mark 8:34-38, John 14:6). When the first Christians proclaimed Jesus to other people groups, recorded in Acts, they proclaimed Jesus in the same way. A truly biblical kerygmatic approach must proclaim Jesus as Lord, then call people to forsake sin and self, to renounce everything, and to follow Jesus (Acts 2:36-41, 16:30-34, 17:31-32).

Lastly, Accad’s use of his kerygmatic approach is inconsistent with his presentation of the approach. Accad devotes all of chapter three to explaining how Christians should and should not interpret the Qur’an. Christians must not interpret the Qur’an as we interpret the Bible. Accad explains that there are many Qur’anic verses that seem to support the Trinity, call Jesus a Word from God, and say the Holy Spirit is sent from God (37). Yet, we cannot interpret these with a literary approach or with personal logic like we interpret the Bible (36–38). Instead, Accad asserts, we must interpret the Qur’an like Muslims do (45–56). Christians must “adopt the Islamic method in using the tradition in Qur’anic exegesis, even if we reach unconventional conclusions” (57). “The fundamental Islamic principle of Qur’anic exegesis is that the meaning of the text should always find justification from traditional precedent, from the *sunna* and earlier *tasfir*, not from personal intellectual effort (*ijtihad*)” (64). However, Accad often interprets the Qur’an literarily, using his personal intellectual effort, and dismisses the Islamic tradition’s interpretation. He also encourages Christians to interpret the Qur’an like he does, and to use such interpretations as a starting point for dialogue. For example, Accad posits that the Qur’an, particularly in Q 5:72–73, does not attack the doctrine of the Trinity (99). Instead, he states, early Muslims encountered a fringe version of Christianity and thus had incorrect assumptions about Christianity (100). Yet, Muslim scholars—as Accad demonstrates in the preceding pages—interpret these verses as attacks on the Trinity and have used these verses to condemn the Christian understanding of the triune God. Regardless of what kind of Christianity the early Muslims encountered, the Qur’an strongly rebukes the Trinity, according to the Islamic interpretation. In this chapter, Accad does what he tells his readers not to do: he reinterprets the Qur’an and the Muslim tradition in the way he thinks

it should be interpreted. Accad uses similar tactics when considering the qur'anic teaching on *tahrif* (219–21). As he clearly states in chapter three, such interpretation will not promote fruitful religious dialogue.

Conclusion

While this book has great value, Accad's approach to dialogue overlooks the biblical way to proclaim Jesus Christ, and it will not produce God-glorifying conversation. It contains a wealth of helpful information about the history and development of Christian-Muslim dialogue. It is filled with information that may improve a Christian's understanding of Islam, qur'anic exegesis, and their Muslim neighbors. Reading this book will help Christians better dialogue with Muslims. Yet, Accad's approach to dialogue encourages Christians to give up too much theological ground and to proclaim Jesus and the gospel differently than the Bible directs. Contrary to Accad, the best way forward for true dialogue is for Christians and Muslims to be open and clear about their beliefs. They should begin their conversation with respectful, tolerant honesty. Muslims believe Jesus is only a human prophet. Christians believe Jesus is divine and human and the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. Muslims believe Muhammad is a true prophet. Christians believe Muhammad is not a true prophet. Christians and Muslims should respect each other by not changing the words, translations, or interpretations of the other's sacred text. Each group should be allowed to interpret their own sacred text and all dialogue should begin with those interpretations. If the Muslim claims that the Bible is corrupt, let's put the Qur'an to the same tests of corruption and see which book passes the tests. As we have this open conversation, let's agree to interact with peace, justice, and humility (Micah 6:8). Let's agree to not kill or hurt one another and to speak against violence and oppression perpetrated by those who share our religion. Let's promote religious freedom in all countries and cultures so that all people can freely follow God as they choose and freely speak to others about their religion. Let's stand together in kindness and gentleness, and talk about God and his truth. "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

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