

A Book Summary and Response to
Sacred Misinterpretation: Reaching across the Christian-Muslim Divide
by Martin Accad

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Summary of the Book's Core Insights:

In his book ***Sacred Misinterpretation: Reaching across the Christian-Muslim Divide***, Dr. Martin Accad argues that Islam and Christianity's murky relational history connotes largely negative theological understandings of one another (7). His book summarizes major historical theological conflicts between Christianity and Islam while examining their social implications (30-1).

He first illustrates how Christians and Muslims misinterpret the other's sacred text through illegitimate application of their own tradition's hermeneutical principles on the other tradition's text (64-5). The author encourages humble dialogue on our understandings of God (80), as Christians acknowledge that worship of the true God comes through Christ's mercy and not correct intellectual understanding (104-5). He then examines Muslim writers' efforts to rid Jesus' image of Christian layers of divinity while restoring Jesus' role as servant (110).

We are urged by the author to practice the incarnation and cross by bringing healing to interpersonal and international conflicts and seeing these powerful doctrines brought to life (145). Christians are also encouraged to deepen their dialogue on the eternal relationship of the Father and Son by resisting esoteric terminology (184).

They should affirm the intimate connection between the Qur'an and the Bible while leaning into early Muslim scholarly tradition that supported Biblical authority (215-6). Accad attempts to demonstrate that the accusation of intentional textual corruption did not appear until the violent conflict and political tensions of the eleventh century (255-8).

The author then encourages Jesus followers of two things. They are to resist defensive reactions to accusations of textual corruption by patiently explaining the history of the New Testament text (259). And they should reflect on Muhammad as a burdened messenger who desired to bring the good news of the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus to the world instead of utilizing polemical approaches (321). In his final chapter, Accad boldly asserts that Muhammad may function as a bridge to Christ through his proclamation of the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition (339). The book concludes by urging Jesus followers towards humility in their missional approaches and approaches to political conflict (345-6).

My Response to Dr. Accad's Book:

Accad's book is a robust reflection on the historical theological conflicts between Islam and Christianity. His book has a clear academic audience, but he also includes valuable information for the educated lay person who desires to better converse with their Muslim neighbor. His political comments challenge Western Christians to rethink their approaches to global conflicts while forcing them to reflect on how these conflicts influence their own theological understandings of Islam. This comes from the author's high value on faithfully studying the text and theological tradition of another community, which requires a laborious effort to understand the scholarly tradition of another faith community.

It is true that Accad's later comments are likely to disturb even more friendly Christian dialogue partners of Islam, as he pushes followers of Jesus toward deeper reflection on their theological understanding of Muhammad. His argument is supported by an alternative under-

standing of time that suggests that Muhammad prepared the polytheistic people of Arabia culturally and morally for a future encounter with Christ (337-8). Additionally, he argues that the Qur'anic representation of Christ without the exegetical *tafsir* (Arabic word for exegesis, usually of the Qur'an) tradition is far closer to the New Testament witness than later Muslim tradition has allowed (339).

Accad's work has encouraged me to not only engage with the Qur'an but further research Muslim scholarship to better understand its interpretive tradition. Although many readers may not engage Islamic scholarship to the degree that Accad encourages, he provides opportunities for faithful practice that all Christians might take up to love their Muslim neighbors peacefully and sacrificially in everyday interactions and politics. The book comes at a significant time in history, as Christians now regularly engage Muslims in the West and make economic and political decisions that also impact Muslims faraway. Interacting with this book can catch many Christians up on a theological dialogue that is becoming increasingly significant for our daily lives and well-being. Dr. Martin Accad makes it clear that people of faith have an opportunity to restore relationships between these communities by practicing the prophet Micah's call to mercy, justice, and humility (346).