

own telling, these years were ‘relatively trouble-free’. The second act is his very difficult and stress-filled time at Spurgeon’s; the early years of opposition and resentment in his church at Chelmsford; and the very fruitful years that followed during his continuing ministry in Chelmsford and into ‘retirement’.

This, in brief, is Paul Beasley-Murray’s story. Some readers will be more interested in certain scenes from his life: for example, many in the BUGB and even beyond will read with interest (for good and ill) his account of the years at Spurgeon’s. And I imagine other accounts of those years will be forthcoming. But more important than any one scene is the whole of this story — the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ, minister of the gospel, and servant of the church who has remained steadfast and joyful through difficult years personally and ecclesially.

How has this been possible? Beyond, or perhaps in the midst of, the obvious — God’s grace and Beasley-Murray’s personality and temperament — we can identify three sources of faithfulness. The first source is attentiveness to God and Scripture. A second source of faithfulness is family and friends. A third source of joyful steadfastness is Beasley-Murray’s ‘innovation for mission’ or ‘missional innovation’.

In these three ways, Beasley-Murray’s story is a testimony to his personal resilience in the midst of obstacles, mistakes, and failures; God’s graciousness in these times and in times of flourishing; and an invitation for us to tell our own stories as witness to the work of God.

Martin Accad, *Sacred Misinterpretation. Reaching across the Christian-Muslim Divide* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2019), 365 pages. ISBN: 9780802874146.

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‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.’

This benediction (Matthew 5.9) is an important inspiration for Martin Accad, Chief Academic Officer at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon, and Director of its Institute of Middle East Studies. The aim of IMES and Accad's passion is The Institute's objective to bring about positive transformation in thinking and practice between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and beyond.

An important objective for writing *Sacred Misinterpretation* is therefore 'to make a positive contribution to the history of theological dialogue between Christians and Muslims'. Accad acknowledges the deadlock in Christian-Muslim dialogue but sees possibilities to move beyond it by 'engaging in a text-based study of Christian-Muslim theological dialogue and its relation to the conflict between Islam and Christianity'.

He will present Christian doctrines 'to Muslims in a way that is faithful to the Christian tradition, while taking seriously Muslim theology and the history both of interpretation of key qur'anic verses and of Muslim interpretation of biblical texts'. He calls it a metadialogue. He describes the history of Muslim thinking on key themes in the Christian-Muslim dialogue and starts a conversation about how these ideas are present in classical, evangelical Christianity. That dialogue will reveal the crucial obstacles contributing to the present deadlock and highlight the positive and creative elements that could help us to move forward. Accad realises that there will be permanent differences between Muslims and Christians that will not be resolved; however, he sees possibilities for dialogue on faith issues.

After introducing his approach, and following a methodological chapter on hermeneutics and dialogue, Accad addresses four religious themes (in 7 chapters): God; Jesus; the (perceived corruption of the) Bible; and the prophet Muhammad. Every chapter contains a historical overview of Islamic thinking on these topics, specifically in the formative ages of classical Islam (8th–14th centuries AD). Accad also portrays how Muslims have read and interpreted the gospels in this context, to prove their qur'anic thinking. He then critiques the Islamic thinking in all its diversity from a Christian perspective and illustrates every issue with incidents from his own war-torn Lebanese history. He concludes with a chapter on how to progress beyond conflict.

Accad has written an excellent and well thought-through masterpiece of high academic quality. He targets teachers, professors, theologians, and theological students. Interested lay people and students of religion might also benefit from this work. It could also prove very helpful in interreligious dialogue and building bridges between Muslims and Christians. Accad hopes ‘to reinforce positive constructive relationships between Christians and Muslims of good will through gracious dialogue on sensitive theological issues as a small contribution to thwarting religious fanaticism’. That is much needed in our present time of polarisation. The question remains if it is really possible to go back to the beginning of Christian-Muslim relations in order to create better understanding and relationships. There is a — not always positive — history of fourteen centuries of Muslim-Christian relations. And will Muslims be ready to accept Accad’s suggestions for renewing the theological interaction? That remains to be seen. Nevertheless, the only way to find out is to engage in religious encounter and Accad’s book is an impressive guide on that path.