

agreement of the others. ‘How could Jesus be so impudent . . . not even the Sultan of Oman has the right to walk into the humblest citizen’s home... the only person who would have that privilege would be God himself’. Such gems are scattered throughout the book.

Remembering the authorship of the foreword, the reader will quickly recognise the potential of such an approach. The openness and frankness of the narrative provides the opportunity for Andrew to end the book with four excellent apologetic appendices dealing with: Corruption of Scriptures, Islamic views of the crucifixion, the Identity of Christ, and the Bible on Arabs and Arabia.

In the final appendix Andrew highlights Abraham, who was the friend of God. It reminds me that in recent weeks a friend from the Middle East has been rejoicing in his faith lineage with Abraham. The one who was justified by faith is indeed, as promised back in Genesis, the father of many nations and through whom all nations are blessed to this day (Genesis 12 and Romans 4).

This is a book to get hold of, especially if you are interested in the Arabian Peninsula or in finding creative ways to let local culture throw light on Scripture.

Reviewed by Keith Fraser-Smith

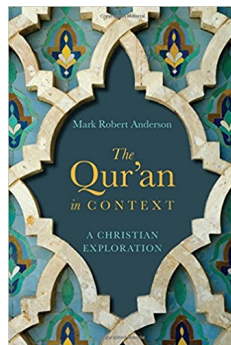
The Qur’an in Context: A Christian Exploration

By Mark Robert Anderson

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. 340 pages.
ISBN-13: 978-0830851423, ASIN: B01D8W4IJA (Kindle)

We have waited a long time for a book such as this! With Muslims in the daily headlines, it is incumbent upon all of us to better understand Islam’s holy book. Anderson presents us with an accessible, gracious and rigorous Christian engagement with the Qur’an.

The Qur’an in Context is an honest, scholarly and empathetic analysis of the teaching and worldview of the Qur’an. He elucidates the core teachings of the Qur’an and shows their relationship to core topics in the Bible. He gives special weight to a careful exploration of the Qur’an’s view of Jesus (the book originated as a Master’s thesis on Jesus in the Qur’an completed at McGill University). Anderson has done an *outstanding job*, through careful research and analysis, of elucidating the Qur’an’s worldview and its core teachings and exploring how they do and do not relate to biblical teachings and worldview.



Anderson begins by describing the world as it was when Muhammad appeared on the scene (the Qur'an's context), then carefully presents Qur'anic teaching on such matters as God's transcendence, justice and mercy, Adam and the fall, and sin and salvation. He then presents key devotional, social and political dimensions of the Qur'an's spirituality. He continues with a careful presentation of the Qur'an's Jesus, exploring Isa's origins, words, works, death and his community as understood in the Qur'an. He concludes with an assessment of the Arabic Qur'an and its tenuous connection to the Bible. He finishes with an appeal for honest and serious dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

Anderson writes out of years of experience living with and engaging with Muslims in the Arab world and he is fully up-to-date with, and engages with, contemporary scholarly discussion of the Qur'an. Yet his writing is clear and accessible for any Christian and/or missionary seeking to understand the Qur'an's thought world. Though his well-argued and well-supported analyses seriously undermine Muslims' claim that the Qur'an is a sequel to the Bible containing similar theological categories and perspectives, he never attacks Muslims or Islam. He continuously takes Muslims, the Qur'an and their perspectives very seriously and treats them all with gracious respect. This book would be an excellent book for serious Muslims to read, as it is a fine example of how Christians can graciously and truthfully examine the foundations of non-Christian religions and belief systems.

Those who know the Qur'an well will find that Anderson's work evidences *direct contact with the text of the Qur'an*. Because he knows Arabic well, he is not just exegeting English translations of the Qur'an. He does not read Christian meaning into the text, but seeks to take the Qur'an on its own terms. I doubt that any informed Muslim could seriously disagree with Anderson's overall elucidation of Qur'anic doctrine, though some may dispute minor points of detail.

Anderson does not follow a politically correct reading of the Qur'an as is often found in the Western academy. *The Qur'an in Context* thoroughly refutes the claim continuously made by Muslims, and frequently made by secular and some Christian scholars, that the Qur'an follows on from the ideas and worldview of the Scriptures and builds on a biblical foundation. Given the conclusions that Anderson presents, it is not really possible to speak of 'the three Abrahamic' religions as if they are all somehow related to each other. The only significant connection that the Qur'an has to Abraham is that the Qur'an *claims* that its message is the maturation and fulfilment of Abraham's religion. This book soundly refutes this claim and shows that the thought worlds of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures is almost completely unrelated to the thought world of the Qur'an.

My colleague at Houghton College, Benjamin Hegeman, has developed a course in which students read through the entire Qur'an in chronological order and read the majority of the Sira (official biography of Muhammad). We have been teaching this exploration of Islam's source documents here and internationally for

more than 10 years. This book would be an excellent companion to that course, or a book to read after one has read the Qur'an and Sira and grasped its worldview. Anderson's understanding of the Qur'an reflects very closely the understanding our students have when they complete their study of the Qur'an and the Sira.

This book is a must-read, whether you've never picked up the Qur'an, or have read it and gotten lost in its alien worldview and obscure text, or have read and studied it many times and know it well. Anderson's 'exploration' is profound, nuanced and robust, and it should go a long way towards catalysing Christian engagement with Muslims as well as Christian scholarly engagement with the Qur'an to new levels of gracious, intellectual clarity. I would recommend that everyone who is engaging regularly with Muslims familiar with the Qur'anic basis of their faith read and study this book with great care.

Mark Anderson maintains two websites that I warmly commend to your attention. He is available to lecture and teach and can be reached through his websites. <https://understandingislam.today/>; www.understandingchristianity.today

Reviewed by Don Little

Don is the director of The Lilius Trotter Center, Pioneers Missiologist & Associate Professor of the Christian Study of Islam at Houghton College.

For further reading I would encourage you to check these titles:

Dodge, A.J. 2013. *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation*. Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd. (An excellent careful scholarly annotated translation.)

Durie, Mark. 2018. *Qur'anic Theology: Biblical Reflexes in the Qur'an*. Lexington Books (forthcoming). (A thorough study of Qur'anic theology.)

Elass, Mateen. 2004. *Understanding the Koran: A Quick Christian Guide to the Muslim Holy Book*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. (Short, but accurate and fair.)

_____. 2013. *The Teachings of Jesus and Muhammad*. eChristian Books.

Reynolds, Said Gabriel. 2014. *New Perspectives on the Qur'an: The Qur'an in its Historical Context 2 (Routledge Studies in the Qur'an)* 1st Edition. New York, NY: Routledge.