

This is an important insight, amply justifying the comparison to female Sufis (p. 122). A closer analysis of explicit textual cues from the biographies might have further enriched our understanding of the way in which the models provided by the Imams and their women were embodied and reflected on.

Ultimately, Pierce has chosen to give us a broad overview of multiple interlocking themes rather than a minute case study or a work that concentrates purely on a single theme. His interrogation of questions of gender in the biographies of the Imams is to be welcomed as a pioneering step into what proves to be an extremely fruitful field for further inquiry.

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Christian Exegesis of the Qurʾān: A Critical Analysis of the Apologetic Use of the Qurʾān in Select Medieval and Contemporary Arabic Texts. By J. SCOTT BRIDGER. American Society of Missiology Monograph Series, vol. 23. Eugene, OR: WIPF AND STOCK, 2015. Pp. xii + 188. \$25 (paper).

Christian Exegesis of the Qurʾān invites the reader to an interesting controversy among some evangelical Christians over the perceived appropriate method of using the Quran as a “point of contact” when evangelizing among Muslims. J. Scott Bridger’s argument as to why the Quran can be an appropriate apologetic contact is based on biblical examples and—most importantly for Bridger—on the fact that such a model has been used by Arabic-speaking Christians from the very beginning of Arab Christian theological discourse up to the present. In fact, he remarks somewhat scoldingly that it would behoove evangelicals to “become aware of the rich history of theology written by Christians residing in the world of Islam” (p. 40). (To be fair, this is a common complaint put forward by scholars in mainline Protestant and Catholic circles who are aware of this history.) This Bridger does in chapter one, where he briefly reviews the witness of Arab Christianity in the midst of a culture that has been steeped in the language of the Quran and its theological positions. While he does not note this, one might posit that this lack of awareness of the Arab Christian theological tradition is due to the overwhelming assumption among many Christians in the United States, and especially many within evangelical Christian communities, that equates Arabs with Islam. Such a view has a long historical legacy (even though it defies literal readings of Acts 2:11).

Bridger takes issue with the argument of Sam Schlorff, in *Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims* (Upper Darby, PA, 2006), who argues that Christian evangelists should not use the Quran or any form of Islamic culture as a “point of contact” to lure Muslims or to help them understand biblical truths. Schlorff posits that one cannot separate the message of the Quran from “the believing community” that has perpetuated its historic interpretation through Islamic culture, which has carried such beliefs (p. 29). Thus, to use the Quran, argues Schlorff, is to somehow validate the Islamic perspective. Bridger, however, lays out his view that all human cultures can be vehicles for Christians to use as “points of contact” to express God’s revelation by “subverting” previous cultures and traditions. Thus, Bridger states, even the Quran can be used “in evangelistic contexts and apologetic discourse” (p. 61) to demonstrate the truth of Christianity as revealed in the Bible.

Bridger lays out his argument in three steps. In chapter two he provides the commonly used missionary biblical text of Paul on Mars Hill in Acts 17. He argues that this biblical example demonstrates Paul’s use of the religious beliefs of the Athenians and quotes from their historical works, in order to “resignify” what they might mean for belief in the God of Jesus Christ. Again, Bridger critiques Schlorff’s fear that using any reference to the Quran or to Islamic culture will validate them as a “source of authority” (p. 62).

In chapter three, Bridger reviews this history of Arabic Christian theological arguments about the nature of God and revelation. He examines what most scholars now consider to be the first Arabic Christian theological discourse, *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid* (On the Triune Nature), from the eighth century, and the works of the Melkite Bishop of Harran Theodore Abū Qurra. Bridger concludes that

“both authors utilized theological content derived from the New Testament to communicate their position on doctrines like Christ’s preexistence, divinity, Incarnation, death and resurrection, but they did so using language derived from the Qur’ān” (p. 101). In chapter four, Bridger notes the continued witness of this Arab Christian tradition through the work of the contemporary (and controversial) Syrian Christian author Mazhar al-Mallūhī and the publishing house Dār al-Kalīma. Bridger analyzes al-Mallūhī’s *Qirāʾa sūfiyya li-Injīl Yūhannā* (A Sufi Reading of the Gospel of John [Beirut, 2004]) as a positive example of the apologetic method he proposes. Finally, Bridger concludes his argument in chapter five by exploring the theological points of culture and language as a vehicle for the expression of the Gospel. It is here that Bridger clearly undermines Schlorff’s argument about Islamic culture. “God views all cultures and every language as inherently redeemable and worthy of embodying *and* articulating the message of redemption in Christ” (p. 135, italics in original). Thus, argues Bridger, the Quran is a valid “point of contact” for apologetic opportunities to evangelize among Muslims without fear of validating their own views of the sacredness of the Quran.

An interesting dynamic throughout Bridger’s *Christian Exegesis* is the underlying assumption of the author, and many other evangelical Christians of similar piety, that the Bible is verbally inspired (p. 155). That is, every word in the Bible, either in its current form or some other form (in the original autographs, for example), is God-given and the final arbiter of faith and life. Often called “verbal plenary inspiration,” this view articulates that God aurally revealed the written words of Scripture. Thus, it should be taken a priori as God’s direct message, which it is humanity’s responsibility to understand and follow. True comprehension of the Word of God does not need to be mediated by explorations into historico-critical methods that place the biblical texts within specific human cultures or contexts. In other words, the Bible is inerrant. This is a different scriptural theology from that espoused by Christians who understand the Bible to be “inspired” by God (see 2 Timothy 3:16–17), where God has used human beings and cultures from which theological truths can be exegeted. For Bridger, and other evangelicals who have a similar inerrant view of the Bible, the role of the evangelical Christian is to undermine the “*mode, form and content* of revelation” (p. 156, italics in original), which Muslims hold is defined by the Quran. What is interesting about this debate and present argument is that, in many ways, this belief in the verbally plenary inspiration of the Bible is similar in nature to the classical Islamic view of the inimitability (*iʿjāz*) of the Quran, in which the Quran is the direct speech of God revealed to Muḥammad verbatim. It is, in and of itself, a miracle unlike anything else. Ironically, evangelical Christians and orthodox Muslims share the same view about the way that God reveals. There is, then, a comparative theology of scripture that simply offers competing messages which become irreconcilable simply by virtue of each other’s insistence on the “mode” and “form” of the text, as opposed to the “content.” Perhaps evangelical Christians with such a high view of the Bible share more in common with orthodox Muslims than they realize.

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Philosophical Perspectives on Modern Qurʾānic Exegesis: Key Paradigms and Concepts. By MASSIMO CAMPANINI. Themes in Qurʾānic Studies Series. Sheffield and Bristol: EQUINOX, 2016. Pp. x + 154. \$29.95, £19.99 (paper).

The book under review is a condensation of the two enduring research interests—Quranic Studies and philosophy in the Muslim world—of the Italian scholar of Islam Massimo Campanini, with the purpose of presenting the Quran as a book of philosophy. While a relatively slim volume, the book’s coverage ranges wide, with occasional close readings of select samples from the Quran as actual exercises in philosophically informed exegesis and discourse analysis. To manage this ambitious venture, the book has been organized into two parts, geared toward explicating his understanding of philosophical engagement with scripture as a phenomenological hermeneutics.