

***Muhammad Reconsidered: A Christian Perspective on Islamic Prophecy.* By Anna Bonta Moreland. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020. xi+178. \$45.00 (hardcover); \$35.99 (eBook). ISBN 0268107254**

In a meager 132 pages, Anna Moreland provides a robust, measured, and convincing justification, from within the Catholic tradition, for why and how Christians can and should take the Qur'ān seriously from a theological perspective. And while the book could have benefited from an account of the various understandings of prophecy within Islam, its strength ultimately lies in its versatility and degree of clarity. Although the book as a whole will predominantly be of interest to those who engage Muslim thought and the Qur'an, each of its six chapters can be used, either in isolation or conjunction, to explore broader questions in Catholic theology. Therefore, it will be useful, either in part or as a whole, to many people with a variety of theological or academic interests. Further the topics are presented in a way that make it easily accessible to both an academic audience and lay audience alike, making the book an indispensable part of church libraries along with university libraries.

Chapter one opens up with an assertion that the west is in dire need to reexamine its current hermeneutic for engaging Islam. That, in fact, “a genuine understanding of religious traditions has become a theopolitical necessity in the West” (p. 5). This is demanded from the reality that the current understanding of “religion” as developed in and through the modern period has led to a dead end. In order to move past the dead end, Moreland suggests that engaging one tradition in and through another allows us a way forward to a critical and constructive engagement with Islam. Thus Moreland proposes that turning to Vatican II's dynamic understanding of revelation, Aquinas's analysis of prophecy, and the category of private revelation, will foster honest and fruitful engagement between Christians and Muslims.

In addition to laying out the silence of Vatican II in relation to the question of Muhammad and the Qur'ān, chapter two will be useful to anyone who is trying to interpret the coherence and trajectory of Vatican II documents. Most important, both to the larger question of how to understand the direction of the Church post Vatican II and Muslim/Christian engagement, is how the Church comes to understand Revelation as a dynamic self-giving of God that “includes all the ways God has chosen to become manifest to humanity” (p. 21). This understanding of revelation impacts more than just Muslim/Christian engagement, since it encompasses the entire theological program in all its areas, for what is at stake is God's relationship to creation, summed up and recapitulated in the ultimate act of revelation, Jesus Christ. What is central to the larger argument of the book is that, while “Revelation as the perfect instantiation of God's truth in Jesus Christ is closed; revelation as the ever-continuing process by which this truth becomes known in the world through the action of Word and Spirit together is not” (p. 33). We are thus invited to a deeper understanding and appropriation of revelation into our concrete existence. This process, so argues Moreland, is facilitated by an engagement with the religious other, particularly Islam and the Qur'ān.

Chapters three and four bring us to the analysis of prophecy outlined by Aquinas, both in his systematic works and his scriptural commentaries. This section will be useful for anyone engaged in Thomistic studies as there is limited engagement with Aquinas's thought on prophecy in the secondary literature. Its contribution to Moreland's larger project however lies in the three

key position that Aquinas holds regarding prophecy; First: prophecy is a complex, dynamic, periodic, and “other centered” phenomena; thus a person holds the office of prophet, in part or in full, only while under the influence of a spiritual agent. This is important because it means that any prophet (Muhammad or otherwise) is only a prophet *per se* according to Aquinas, while prophesying. This understanding fits well with the historical account of how Muhammad received revelation as periodic over his twenty-three-year ministry. Second: prophets and prophecy continue to exist after the apostolic period, not for the purpose of adding to the deposit of faith, but for instructing and leading the faithful deeper into the revelation of Christ. Third: prophets and prophecy are “other centered,” that is, since prophets are intended to direct the faithful deeper into the revelation of Christ, the validity of the prophet and her/his message does not inherently depend on the faith or moral character of the prophet. What Moreland intends to show is that Christians can, at least theoretically, acknowledge the possibility of Muhammad being a post-apostolic prophet, and that the Qur’ān, in part, can be instructive in leading Christians to a deeper appropriation and understanding of Christ’s revelation.

Chapter five brings us into the thick of contemporary debates regarding the validity of Muhammad and the Qur’ān for Christians, and so this section can serve as introductory material for those interested in the current debates in the study of Christianity and Islam. Moreland examines several positive understandings of Muhammad’s prophetic role, either as a moral prophet, an idoloclast, a prophet for Arabs, or as a liberator. All of these, while attempting to discern Muhammad’s role for Christians or in light of Christ’s revelation, fall short of answering the “theological significance of Muhammad for Christians” (p. 106). Other attempts, which ultimately reject Muhammad’s role as a prophet for Christians, try to answer these questions from a theological commitment to core doctrinal positions within Christianity and find an inability to embrace Muhammad as a prophet in terms acceptable to both Christians and Muslims. The final chapter links together both the Vatican II account of revelation, its appreciation of Muslims and Islam, Aquinas’s account of prophecy, and the notion of private revelation, while navigating the difficulties and debates outlined in chapter five. Using analogy as a hermeneutic tool for understanding Islamic prophecy in a Christian context, Moreland concludes that, while “it might be prudent for the Church to remain at the level of theoretical openness in its official documents. . . this should not keep individual Christians from accepting the invitation of this book to mine the Qur’an for nuggets of the Word” (p. 132).

Moreland’s project, although certainly successful, would have benefited from a survey of the various accounts of prophecy in the Islamic tradition, such as that of Ibn Sīnā, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-‘Arabī, or Mullā Ṣadrā, even if only as an appendix. Although she addresses the potential issue of Muslims not accepting the definition of prophecy and prophethood as outlined in her work, showing the internal diversity and debates regarding these questions *in* the Islamic tradition would open up greater avenues for discussion and potential agreement across traditions.

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