

The True Meaning of the Gospel of Christ

Dr. Martin Accad*

It is an honor for me to present this Arabic translation of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The translation includes the story of the Lord Christ and his teachings, and the deeds of the apostles which narrate the origin of the community of the followers of the Lord Christ and their activities in proclaiming the message, beginning from the land of Palestine to the ends of what at that time was known of the earth.

I was raised in a home where the Bible was the foundation. The language of the Bible was not in itself the aim, rather the Bible was God's communication through which we could know the depth of the Divine Being and how we might live a spiritual life, and that a love for what we see in our daily lives was an expression of the love of God, which is an invitation to every person to know the true God in all the languages of the world. For it is the right of the creature to ask the Creator to speak to him in his language and culture, expressing His will for him in every time and place.

My grandfather, and my father after him, dedicated their lives to spreading the Word of God in the Middle East and the Gulf through heading up the Bible Society of Lebanon for more than sixty years.

I learned from my grandfather Fouad Accad that the Bible cannot be monopolized by any people, group, or church. Rather the Bible is the property of people everywhere, because the universe and all that are in it are God's. I also learned from him that God is not found exclusively inside the walls of a church, temple, or even language itself, for love is the language of God (God is love), this love existing outside of the frameworks of language, time and space. And the Word of God is not ossified, but is made manifest in the Word (Christ) and the universe, meaning in life. So any word that does not bear the power of the living Spirit of God is deadly, "for the Spirit gives life but the letter kills". This is what we will discover and experience through our reading of this book.

I learned from my father Lucien Accad that language is a means of communication and not an end in itself. During our family spiritual devotions, we would interact with the Word of God in several languages to reach the depth of divine thought. Not once did I find my father to be fanatical about a particular translation of the Bible, whether Arabic or in another language. Rather, he was passionate about all of them, for his goal was to see the Word of God in language that people could understand. In his preaching at church, he was careful not to establish a particular translation of the Bible in peoples' minds. On the contrary, he intentionally used any new translation which could open the meaning of the text in a new way and revitalize and renew the ability of the community to follow the divine plan.

I remember how excited my father was about using the translation of the Lebanese poet Maurice Awwad, in Lebanese dialect, *Ijjat as-saa'a yaa bayyi*, because he felt that it could communicate with emotion in the closest way to the human heart. A new translation of the Gospel was published in 2008

under the title: The True Meaning of the Gospel of Christ. I remember how happy and excited my father was and how he looked forward to reading it when he was given a copy of it. He spent the entire night reading this translation with tears of joy, being gripped by the text and the articles accompanying it, the language, the style, and how it conveyed the meaning with complete honesty. This book was like a baby whose birth he had awaited his entire life, and he greatly regretted that his father Fouad, my grandfather, had not been able to see a book like this.

I believe that this book is the fruit of the prayers of my grandfather and my father. They planted it and then it sprang up. I greatly rejoice and delight to see the Word of God in natural Arabic language that is accessible to Arab readers everywhere. This translation answers many questions posed today by Arab readers.

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