

# Cooperating Revelations? Qur'an, Bible and Intertextuality<sup>1</sup>

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The comparative analysis of texts from the Qur'an and the Bible is not a new endeavour. Yet a recent surge of western scholarly interest in this area seems to be evident. The fall of 2003 saw the publication of an excellent collection of essays, edited by John Reeves, entitled *Bible and Qur'an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*. Many of the scholars represented in that volume also participated in the inaugural session of the Qur'an and Biblical Literature Consultation of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta in November, 2003. At about the same time John Kaltner's book, *Inquiring of Joseph: Getting to Know a Biblical Character Through the Qur'an*, was published.

In this essay, I propose to explore this recent interest in comparing the Qur'an and the Bible, and to place it within the theoretical framework of intertextuality. The approaches of two scholars in particular will serve as illustrative examples. First is Reuven Firestone, whose *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*, published in 1990, was only the beginning of a series of publications on, among other things, the historical interaction of biblical and qur'anic materials. Second is the aforementioned John Kaltner, whose recent book on Joseph in the Qur'an and Bible continues, and fills a major gap in, his previous work *Ishmael Instructs Isaac: An Introduction to the Qur'an for Bible Readers*, published in 1999. As will be seen, each of these scholars represents a distinct approach in the field of comparative qur'anic and biblical studies.

As already mentioned, the comparison of what seem to be many features and narratives common to the Bible and the Qur'an is not new. In fact, such comparison began soon after the beginnings of Islam in the seventh century C.E., although it was not well developed until later.<sup>2</sup> Our concern, however, is with modern scholarly comparison, that is, the "critical but nonpolemical methods [that] began in earnest only in the nineteenth century," following a long history of especially Christian denigration and dismissal of the Qur'an (Firestone 2003, 6). On the one hand, non-Muslim western scholarly

approaches typically privileged origins and thus saw subsequent texts as necessarily derivative (i.e. debased). An early programmatic example is Abraham Geiger's *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judentum aufgenommen?* (What did Muhammad borrow from Judaism?), published in 1833, which posited that much of the Qur'an was directly borrowed (plagiarized?) from Jewish sources, while any differences from Jewish sources were due to error (Firestone 2003, 7–11).<sup>3</sup> The result, however, of taking to its logical conclusions this method of privileging a prior text, is an infinite regress to some sort of originary *Ur-text*.<sup>4</sup> The irony is that this is precisely the theological argument from the Muslim side; that is, that the Qur'an, although subsequent chronologically to the Bible, actually restores the primordial *Ur-text* upon which the Bible, at least in its uncorrupted form, is ultimately based (McAuliffe 2003, 108–9).

Conversely, the Muslim approach has typically been characterized by ambiguity: on the one hand, a rejection of the scriptures of the "People of the Book" as hopelessly corrupt, and, on the other hand, an interest in the Bible as prefiguring the prophet Muhammad and the rise of Islam. Among others, Jane McAuliffe (1996, 2003) has outlined this ambiguity in excellent detail.<sup>5</sup> Consequently there have been virtually no Muslim analyses that treat the Bible in its own right outside of this framework.<sup>6</sup>

Neither approach, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, has valued the text of the "other," whether the Bible or the Qur'an, as an integral document in and of itself. Marilyn Waldman tried to break this impasse in an influential article first published in 1985, in which she suggested a new approach based on the work on narrative of Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1980). Smith argued that, narratively, no telling of a story is more basic than others, and that therefore "originals" do not really exist. Hierarchical relationships between texts or variants are the products of the ideological interests of readers. Thus both the biblical and qur'anic versions of a common story can, if readers choose, be viewed as equally basic, complete and with their own integrity. Others, not wanting to abandon a more developmental diachronic approach, recognize that the stream of influence does not flow only from Judaism and Christianity to Islam, but also the other way around.<sup>7</sup> While not touching directly on the relationship of the Qur'an to the chronologically prior Bible, this recognition mutes notions of the

(inferior) derivativeness of later texts in favor of notions of compromise and symbiosis between traditions.<sup>8</sup>

All of this suggests to me that theories of intertextuality from literary studies might be useful in more helpfully explicating why and how and for what possible functions such similar and yet differing material appears in both the Qur'an and the Bible, without falling into the trap of positing, even implicitly, superiority or derivativeness to either text.<sup>9</sup> The theory of intertextuality insists that no text, whether the Bible or the Qur'an, can claim to exist on its own, that no text has secure borders, but is always already a tissue of quotations, allusions and echoes of other texts, literary texts as well as social and cultural contexts.<sup>10</sup> The word "intertextuality" has become the literary term of choice "for all the possible relations that can be established between texts" (Miscall 1992, 44). Such a wide generalized definition begs the question of its utility, a problem to which we will return. Suffice it to say, at this point, that the term "intertextuality" has been widely put into play since Julia Kristeva coined it in the 1960's. Among other fields, it has also entered the discourse of biblical studies, the natural place to look for suggestions and examples of how it may also be part of the discourse of qur'anic, and qur'anic/biblical, studies.

Herein lies the first problem. Many of the examples of the use of intertextuality in biblical studies refer to the discovery of linkages between various biblical texts within the Jewish or Christian canons, a specialized subset of intertextuality which we might term intracanonial intertextuality, that therefore does not directly apply to intertextual relations between different canons.<sup>11</sup> While the intertextual relationship of the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible might seem to be analogous to the intertextual relationships between the Qur'an and the Bible, the Christian canon in fact incorporates a version of the Hebrew Bible, whereas the Qur'an does not incorporate its precursors directly in this way.<sup>12</sup>

A second problem is that many of the uses of intertextuality in biblical studies are either merely using the word as a more trendy designation for the old discipline of source criticism, in which prior texts are privileged over subsequent texts, or are merely somewhat enlarging the old concept of influence to include not just the conscious borrowing of literary texts but also the often implicit influence of socio-historical contexts. In other words, in these uses of intertextuality,

the linear progression from earlier to later texts remains undisturbed and problematic.

A third problem is just the opposite: intertextuality becomes such a generalized concept—for example, “everything is a text that refers to every other text”—that it loses its utility as a tool of analysis. One cannot make “everything, all at once, everywhere . . . [the] object of interpretation” (Beal 1992, 28). While the *theory* of intertextuality maintains that texts interact with a multiplicity of other texts to produce a surplus of interpretational possibilities, the *practice* of intertextual analysis necessarily entails the use of a variety of “strategies of containment,” or decisions about what kinds of intertextual relationships are legitimate or singled out, in order to make actual interpretations possible.

Intertextual relationships can be constrained or categorized for this purpose in a variety of ways; I suggest a basic categorization that seems applicable to analyses of intertextual relations between the Qur’an and the Bible: on the one hand, intertextual linkages that center on the production of a text, or the author, and, on the other, those that center on the reception or consumption of a text, or the reader.<sup>13</sup> The first approach seeks to enter the past evoked by the text while the second tends to concentrate more on the experience of the text by readers in the present.<sup>14</sup>

To illustrate, let us proceed to a concrete and manageable comparative example, namely, the account of Abraham’s near sacrifice of his son. This story appears in Genesis 22 and in the thirty-seventh surah of the Qur’an. I will consider two comparative biblical-qur’anic analyses of this narrative: Reuven Firestone’s recent intertextual examination, published in 2000, as an example of an approach centered on the production of the text in the past, and John Kaltner’s intertextual examination, published in 1999,<sup>15</sup> as an example of an approach centered on the consumption of the text by readers today.

Firestone admits that his extensive work on this story, and others that are connected to Abraham, has been premised on the assumption of the historical precedence of the biblical over the qur’anic versions (Firestone 2000, 169). This has been the traditional norm of “western” scholarship. In his article of 2000, however, he experiments with a different approach, based on the insight that “comparative studies in literature tend to highlight particular aspects of a single work which might have remained hidden were it not for a striking parallel or con-

tradition in another work which provides the impetus for a closer look” (Firestone 2000, 170). Thus, he experiments with “the *possibility* that, despite its late redaction, the Qur’an[ic version of Abraham’s near-sacrifice of his son] may indeed retain ancient material [no longer part of the canonical biblical text] that was preserved in the isolated environment of the Arabian peninsula” (Firestone 2000, 170). If this is so, it may allow for the discovery of “surprising aspects of Genesis 22 that might have otherwise remained unobserved” (Firestone 2000, 170).

For Firestone (and, seemingly, for many early Muslim exegetes), the main issue in the comparison of the qur’anic and biblical accounts is the identity of the son who is the intended sacrifice.<sup>16</sup> The qur’anic version does not name the son, although over time the Muslim exegetical tradition leaned more and more towards identifying him as Ishmael, which is the Muslim consensus today. The biblical account, however, identifies the son as Isaac. Yet, if the biblical account is based on earlier pre-biblical versions of the story, it is possible that these earlier versions may also not have identified the son but may at the same time, like some of the Muslim exegetical tradition, have had Ishmael in mind as the intended sacrifice. The name Isaac in the present form of Genesis 22, for instance, appears in a superfluously repetitive and somewhat awkward manner, suggesting that it may be a later addition to an earlier form of the story. Furthermore, if the story is taken out of its present context in Genesis and located earlier in the Abraham narrative following immediately after the birth of Ishmael in Genesis 16, everything proceeds quite logically: Abraham is tested by being asked to sacrifice the son who is properly his first born,<sup>17</sup> he passes the test, and is rewarded by the birth of Isaac. If we imagine this as a possible pre-biblical version of the story (a complete speculation since no textual evidence exists for it, yet a useful thought experiment based on real possibilities), then why did the biblical account that we now have explicitly substitute Isaac for the Ishmael that was previously implied? Firestone’s answer: in order to transfer the merit of the sacrificial victim to an important, but biblically underdeveloped, ancestral figure for emerging Israelite identity. In the meantime, a version of the pre-biblical version of the story, lost to canonical Judaism and Christianity, survived in the Arabian peninsula and came to expression later in the Qur’an.<sup>18</sup>

Firestone thus locates the intertextual connection between the qur'anic and biblical accounts in the past history of the production of these accounts. John Kaltner, in his treatment of the same shared story, locates the intertextual connection in the present consumption of the two accounts by their readers. As already noted, the qur'anic account does not explicitly identify either Ishmael or Isaac as the intended victim. Despite the efforts of later qur'anic exegetes, it seems that the identity of the son is superfluous to the qur'anic version of the sacrifice—it is of no account to the goal or point of the story in its qur'anic context or telling. It is precisely this dynamic which John Kaltner picks up in his intertextual analysis of the story in the Bible and the Qur'an.

Kaltner notes that the Qur'an does not identify the intended victim because the two sons of Abraham do not play the same theological function in the Qur'an as they do in the biblical account. That is, while the Bible presents a sacred history in which a choice must be made as to which son will continue the covenantal relationship that leads to the creation of the people Israel, the Qur'an focuses on abstracted models of morality and piety. Thus, in the Qur'an, "both Ishmael and Isaac are esteemed equally . . . and each is held up as a model of faith for the reader, so it is inconsequential which one was almost killed by his father" (Kaltner 1999, 124). While reticent about the victim's identity, however, the Qur'an paradoxically brings the son into far greater narrative prominence in the story. Abraham is depicted as telling his son, who is described as mature and capable of rational thought,<sup>19</sup> in advance the vision commanding him to sacrifice his son; Abraham then asks for his son's opinion. The unnamed son responds by urging his father to comply with God's will, and the next verse depicts both father and son as submitting to the divine plan.<sup>20</sup> In other words, in contrast to the rather passive portrayal of the son in the biblical account, in the qur'anic account the son is an active participant. Kaltner concludes, therefore, that the test in the qur'anic account applies not just to the father, but also to the son, and that both pass with flying colors. In fact, Kaltner suggests that Abraham may have been wavering in his resolve to carry out the sacrifice, and that the son, in his answer to his father, made the initial "leap of faith that allowed both of them to respond as ideal Muslims" (Kaltner 1999, 126).<sup>21</sup>

Given this interpretation, Kaltner continues by asking what the qur'anic account can teach readers of the Bible about the biblical account. "The Qur'an's scene of the near-sacrifice invites us to reread the biblical account through Isaac's eyes in order to better understand what his role is in Genesis" (Kaltner 1999, 126).<sup>22</sup> Kaltner suggests that the qur'anic account helps the reader of the biblical account "to bring Isaac out of the shadows and underscores his vital function in Genesis 22" (Kaltner 1999, 127). That is, the brief conversation between Isaac and Abraham in the biblical account can also be seen, like the more extended conversation in the qur'anic account, as firming Abraham's resolve to obey God's command. Earlier in the biblical episode, Abraham tells his servants "we [that is, he and Isaac] will come back to you" (Gen 22:5). Could these words be interpreted as indicating that Abraham is vacillating at this point, or believes that he won't be able to go through with the sacrifice? If so, then the conversation with his son on the way to the place of sacrifice is, as in the Qur'an, the catalyst that firms his resolve: "his response to his son's question indicates a change within him and a movement toward trust and faith in God" (Kaltner 1999, 129).

Kaltner implies that none of this would necessarily have occurred to the reader of the biblical account if that reader had not reread the biblical account through the telling of the story in the Qur'an. This is an example of what Kaltner calls "cooperating revelations", in which the differences in the qur'anic version of a story "allow us to glean additional meaning and insight from the biblical text that we might normally miss" (1999, 49).<sup>23</sup> Reading the Bible and the Qur'an in tandem this way, a process that Kaltner names "intercanonical criticism," allows these revelations to draw the members of the Abrahamic family together instead of driving them apart.

John Kaltner and Reuven Firestone present distinct approaches to the analysis of the intertextuality of the Bible and Qur'an. Kaltner consciously avoids a historical approach that asks of the qur'anic material echoing the Bible "where did this come from?" and asks instead, "what does it mean?" (Kaltner 1999, 19). In other words, the intertextuality that Kaltner wishes to explore is that created by the modern reader of the Bible and the Qur'an, or, more specifically, the intertextuality created in the reading of these two texts by John Kaltner. This of course raises the problem of subjectivity: Kaltner has been criticized for sometimes proposing rather idiosyncratic readings

that seem to import Christian convictions into the Qur'anic text (Mir 2001). Furthermore, he makes little reference to the Muslim, Christian or Jewish exegetical traditions, seeming to prefer, as he says in his book on the Joseph story, "to keep the focus squarely on a comparative study of the two texts" (2003, xx).<sup>24</sup> The problem with this approach is that the very issue he identifies as central, that is, whether the son was a willing victim, was intensely discussed in Jewish post-biblical literature (see, for example, Kugel 1998, 304–7) and is also implied in Christian portrayals of the sacrifice of Isaac as a foreshadowing of the crucifixion of Jesus. In his eagerness to promote interreligious understanding and reconciliation, Kaltner is in danger of assuming that a pristine comparative study of the Qur'an and Bible, untouched by the various contexts in which it is done and by the various histories behind the texts, is possible. Finally, his emphasis on "cooperating revelations" leads implicitly to a harmonizing tendency. In contrast, those who write about intertextuality do not usually picture it as always such a cooperative process, but rather as one that implies "trouble and disturbance in textual relations" (Miscall 1992, 44). The scriptures of Islam, Christianity and Judaism have tended historically to be set against one another; cooperating revelations need to be balanced by, or grounded in, the reality of competing revelations.

In comparison, Firestone's approach, still firmly rooted in careful historical analysis and making full use of the exegetical and other traditions of Judaism and Islam, even while imaginatively speculating on what might have been, seems more attractive or defensible to a scholarly audience.<sup>25</sup> And yet, despite protestations to the contrary, a historical focus on the production of the text still squarely positions the Bible as a prior text, allowing notions of the Qur'an's belatedness and derivativeness as a subsequent text to sneak in.<sup>26</sup> Such is not satisfactory for a tandem reading of the Bible and Qur'an today by believers, for whom an intertextuality that is centered on the experience of the reception of the text, or an analysis of the intertextual relationships that are perceived in the act of reading the text today, is potentially more helpful.<sup>27</sup> And this, of course, is exactly what Kaltner does.

Nonetheless, Firestone, while methodologically differing from Kaltner, also has an agenda very similar to Kaltner's: that the Qur'an and the Bible, and their interpretive traditions, despite their similar response to similar needs, be recognized as irreducible one to the other. "All participate in the religious phenomenon of Scripturalism



while remaining unique expressions of that ongoing process” (1990b, 71). And, like Kaltner, Firestone claims that qur’anic scripture and exegetical tradition can help biblical readers see something in the biblical text, or, more precisely in Firestone’s case, *behind* the biblical text, that they might otherwise miss.<sup>28</sup>

It would seem, then, that both Kaltner and Firestone have a broader purpose in mind. Their aim is mutual respect between different religious traditions through the tandem reading of scriptural texts, whether from the intertextual perspective of the production or the consumption of the text. And yet, given this larger purpose, both exhibit to my mind a huge gap. Both deal, in the examples chosen for analysis, with a religiously sanctioned and revered story of a father’s intended violence against his own child, but neither explicitly raises the acute questions of violence, child abuse, and patriarchy that such a story raises, at least in today’s world.<sup>29</sup>

These issues are mentioned by Bruce Feiler, tellingly a journalist and not a professional biblical scholar, who writes in his popular book on Abraham:

Abraham, I was discovering, is not just a gentle man of peace. He’s as much a model for fanaticism as he is for moderation. He nurtured in his very behavior – in his conviction to break from his father, in his willingness to terrorize both of his sons – the intimate connection between faith and violence. And then, by elevating such conduct to the standard of piety, he stirred in his descendents a similar desire to lash out, to view pain as an arm of belief, and to use brutality to advance their vision of a divine-centered world. . . . No wonder the story of the binding is so central to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, I thought. It’s the part of Abraham’s life that cuts closest to our veins and poses the question we hope never to face: Would I kill for God?

For many of Abraham’s descendents, of course, the answer throughout history has been yes. (2002, 108, 110)

This is, perhaps, one of the most pressing questions of our time, and it is somewhat discomfiting that it is not even hinted at in the intertextual analyses examined here. It is perhaps around this ethical question of killing for God that the most fruitful discussion and analysis of the intertextuality of the stories of Abraham among Jews, Christians and Muslims can occur. While not touching directly on this central question, both Firestone and Kaltner are helpful guides in

getting started on this enterprise of reading the Bible and the Qur'an together.<sup>30</sup> In the end, however, all interpretation is interested, and I would urge that the ethics of our comparative interpretive activity and the results to which it may potentially lead be kept in mind.

That another canonized and religiously authoritative version of the story of Abraham offering up his son, or any other biblical story, exists, and that I know it exists, and that I have read it, irrevocably changes my reading of the story. I may resist the plurality of variants and interpretations, but, even if I pretend to ignore them, they continue to echo. Both Kaltner and Firestone (and the many other scholars working in this field) offer us ways to deal with this new situation, a product of an increasingly pluralist world for traditional readers of scripture. Other alternatives exist, some much less savory, involving a repression that only expresses itself in ugly ways elsewhere, and the approaches of both Firestone and Kaltner help us to avoid them.

## Notes

1. This essay was first presented at the inaugural session of the Qur'an and Biblical Literature Consultation of the Society of Biblical Literature in November, 2003. I am pleased to offer a revised version here in honour of Frederik Wisse and his contributions to biblical studies in Canada.
2. For a history of Christian interpretations of Islam and the Qur'an, see, inter alia, Norman Daniel's *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (1993). On the history of Muslim interpretations of the Bible, see, inter alia, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh's *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (1992).
3. See further references in Firestone's article, in footnote 11 in McAuliffe 1996, 154, and in footnote 9 in Robbins and Newby 2003, 25.
4. Compare Harold Bloom's concept of the anxiety of influence which he applies to the Christian appropriation of the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament (for example, 1984), but which could, *mutatis mutandis*, be applied to the Muslim appropriation of the Bible in the Qur'an. Although Bloom privileges the original genius of the Hebrew Bible, and more particularly of the Yahwist writer, even these writings can be shown to be influenced by, and to a certain extent dependent upon, other precursors among the literatures of the ancient Near East.
5. See also Andrew Rippin (1993).
6. The exception most often mentioned is Ahmad Khan's Urdu commentary on Genesis, written in the 1800's. A much earlier example might be the

*Ta'rikh* (History) of the ninth-century Muslim historian Ahmad al-Ya'qubi, who presents Jesus "in the light of the Gospel texts as the Christians of his day actually had them" (Griffith 2003, 160). There may be more recent examples such as Abdel Haleem (1999).

7. For example, the eighth century Jewish *Midrash Pirqé Rabbi Eliezer* contains Muslim traditions about Abraham and Ishmael (although it has also been argued that Jewish traditions lie behind the Muslim traditions!—see footnote 2 in Moreen 2000, 185). Vera Moreen (2000) calls Islamic materials taken up by Judaism *Is[h]ma'iliyat*, in counterpoint to *Isra'iliyat*, the Muslim term for Jewish materials taken into Islam.

8. Among many possible examples, the work of Wasserstrom (e.g. 1994, 2000) is especially exemplary.

9. The Qur'an would seem to be especially amenable to intertextual analysis because it consciously recognizes and points to its own intertextual relationship with Jewish and Christian scriptures: "it is one of the few texts that is aware that it represents the absorption, transformation, and subsequent reamalgamation of previous text". At the same time, this explicit recognition serves simultaneously to cover up or repress certain intertextual relationships that can, however, be reconstructed by reference to later exegetical traditions (see Hughes 2003).

10. One can immediately sense the problems that this would raise for the orthodox religious perception of the Bible or Qur'an as the self-subsisting Word of God.

11. Greenstein (2003) criticizes this tendency in his review of an intertextual study of Job that sticks to canonical intertexts without considering the rich extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition.

12. See footnote 3 above; note also Firestone's comment, in his discussion of Wansbrough's methodology, that there is a qualitative difference between the New Testament's *figural* appropriation of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an's *mimetic* appropriation of the Bible (2003, 20).

13. On this distinction, see Polaski (2001), as well as Greenstein (2003), who refers to B.D. Sommer's distinction between diachronic and synchronic intertextuality. Diachronic intertextuality includes quotation, plagiarism, allusion and parody. Synchronic intertextuality is one "in which the associations and attendant meanings are the product of the reader, regardless of any historical connection between a text and its intertext" (Greenstein 2003). Of course, the decision as to which intertextual linkages to make the focus of analyses is ultimately an ideological decision regarding the ownership of the means of production of meaning (Beal 1992).

14. The second approach may also attend to the consumption experience of readers of the past, showing that these categorizations are ultimately somewhat artificial. Binary approaches in general are artificial but in this case will be used for heuristic purposes.

15. See also his article of 2002, which is largely based on his book of 1999.

16. See for example, al-Tabari (Brinner 1987, 82–97), and Firestone 1989. But see also the other issues mentioned by Bashear (1990).

17. In the culture presupposed by the biblical text, the first-born was preeminent.

18. Another example of this interpretive approach is John Reeves's treatment of the Cain and Abel story in *Qur'an and Bible* (2003).

19. This is the common interpretation of the first phrase of verse 102: *falammā balagha ma'ahu al-ssa'ya*.

20. *Falammā assslamā*, using the dual.

21. It is precisely on this point that Mir faults Kaltner, arguing that Abraham's question merely indicates that he "tries to take his son into his confidence before carrying out the command" (2001, 67). In the same review, Mir accuses Kaltner of reading into the Qur'an ideas that are not in it, due in part to Kaltner's neglect of qur'anic exegetical resources.

22. Note that Kaltner respects the integrity of the two accounts, one not identifying the son and the other identifying him as Isaac. Thus, when rereading the biblical account, Isaac is the focus of analysis.

23. Another example of this approach is Isa Glaser's treatment of the creation accounts in Bible and Qur'an (1997, 1998).

24. In contrast, much recent comparative research by western scholars has not dealt directly with the Qur'an itself, but has focused more on Islamic exegetical traditions (*tafsir*) and related literature (e.g. *sira qisas al-anbiya'*, *ahādith*) in comparison with the Bible and its interpretive traditions, especially rabbinic materials. While materials such as *tafsir* are extremely helpful in reconstructing trajectories that the Qur'an seeks to erase (Hughes 2003), Kaltner wants to focus more single-mindedly (and perhaps somewhat misleadingly) on the direct reading of the Bible and Qur'an in tandem, which is the way laypeople tend to approach this subject (in blissful ignorance of all the contextual factors which influence their readings and comparisons).

25. Methods that focus on the response of the reader are still seen as suspect by many historically oriented scholars. See the attack on intertextual approaches to the New Testament on precisely this point by Hatina (1999).

26. One might note that both Christianity and Islam have had to deal with the accusation of derivativeness and belatedness due to their emergence from, and reliance on, prior scriptural traditions.

27. I have presented such tandem readings of biblical and qur'anic accounts to various audiences of lay people with invariably appreciative results.

28. As non-Muslims, both Kaltner and Firestone can only suggest the interpretive bonus of viewing the scripture of their communities (Christian and Jewish) through comparison with the Qur'an. One wonders whether Muslims will be willing to likewise look for the interpretive bonus in viewing the Qur'an through the Tanakh or Bible.

29. Neither do they raise the issue of the major family player missing from this story: the mother of the son who is the intended victim. Both Jewish and Muslim exegetical traditions reinsert the mother into this story, for instance by speculating that she dies of shock upon hearing what Abraham has attempted to do to her son, or by having the son express concern for his mother in his conversation with Abraham. For a Christian feminist approach that focuses on the mother missing from the story, see Tribble (1991).

30. There are, of course, other concerns and problems which I have not mentioned—I think for instance of the essential oral nature of the Qur'an, in its original Arabic form, for Muslim believers (see, for example Graham 1987 and Sells 1999) which makes a big difference in how it is received compared to the reception of the Bible, and which calls into question my unexamined use of the term "reader".

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