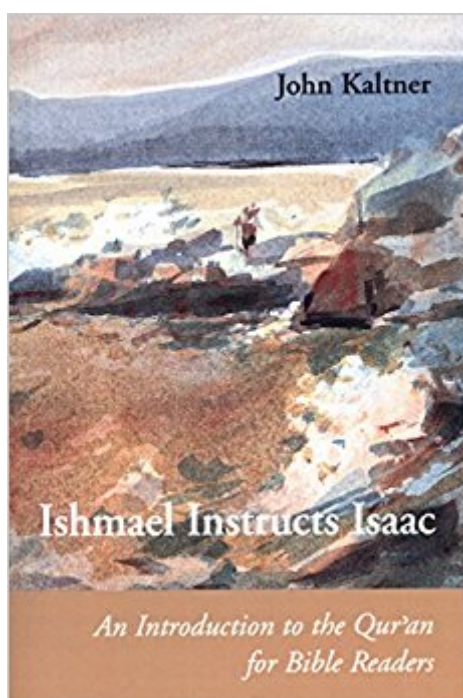


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Ishmael Instructs Isaac: An Introduction To The Qur'an For Bible Readers (Connections)



Synopsis

Jews, Christians, and Muslims trace their roots to Abraham and yet it is a shock to many Bible readers that some of the characters and stories in their sacred text are also found in the pages of Islam's sacred text, the Qur'an. By exploring the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an in *Ishmael Instructs Isaac*, John Kaltner challenges Bible readers to think about their sacred book in new, exciting ways. In doing so, he leads al to a better appreciation of Islam. After a brief overview of the text, themes, structure, and use of the Qur'an, Kaltner focuses on traditions that are shared with the Bible. He explains that the Bible and Qur'an contain many of the same themes, figures, and episodes. However, at times, there are significant differences in their descriptions of the same event or figure. By discussing such topics and figures as God, humanity, prophecy, creation, life after death, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mary, Kaltner examines the similarities and differences between the two texts. This comparative method allows readers to better appreciate both what is distinctive about Islam and what it shares with Judaism and Christianity. Jews and Christians view Isaac as the son of Abraham in whom the family line continued. Muslims, on the other hand, view Isaac's brother Ishmael as the rightful heir. This difference must not obscure what is held in common: a belief in the one God and a family - albeit distant - relationship. Written for undergraduate and seminary courses on Islam, the Qur'an, comparative religions, inter-religious dialogue, world scriptures, and biblical interpretation, *Ishmael Instructs Isaac* is also a useful resource for discussion groups in churches, synagogues, and mosques. Includes English translations of the Qur'anic texts discussed. John Kaltner, PhD, is assistant professor of religious studies at Rhodes College where he teaches courses in the Bible and Islam. He has worked in the Middle East with the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America.

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Customer Reviews

Rarely have Western scholars considered the Qur'an worthy of the kind of close reading which the Bible customarily receives. In taking the Qur'an at least as seriously as the Christian scriptures and by allowing it to inform our reading of the Bible, Dr. Kaltner has opened up new possibilities for interreligious dialogue. Warmly recommended for Christian readers, *Ishmael Instructs Isaac* is accessible enough to be a text for college-level courses, but insightful enough to be read with interest even by specialists. Gregory W. Dawes, Lecturer in Religious Studies, University of Otago

Ishmael Instructs Isaac is clearly and eloquently written. It inspires respect without whitewashing differences. Who knows? Reading it may help us work toward family reconciliation born of on mutual respect and understanding. Kathleen M. O'Connor, Professor of Old Testament, Columbia Theological Seminary

Kaltner's sensitive handling of the materials, his ability to offer a dispassionate analysis, and the fine literary sensibility he brings to bear on his subject alone are sufficient grounds for recommending his work. *Journal of Islamic Studies*

John Kaltner, PhD, is associate professor of religious studies at Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee. He is the author of *Ishmael Instructs Isaac: An Introduction to the Qur'an for Bible Readers of the Connections series* published by Liturgical Press.

school

I learned so very much from this book. I really appreciate the care, balance and thoughtfulness that went into it. I have used it in courses I have taught in synagogues that I serve and would recommend it to anyone wanting to explore the relationship between the Bible and the Koran.

This is an excellent volume for comparing stories that appear in both the Quran and the Bible. It will help Muslims to better understand the Bible and will help Christians better understand the Quran. Sectarians and Fundamentalists in both Christianity and Islam may not like this book. The rest of us who want to understand what the Bible and Quran really teach will study for comparisons and contrasts in the actual texts, and this will help each to come to a better understanding of the other's

scripture. A previous reviewer criticized the way the author compared the temptation of Adam and Eve by stating that it was a serpent rather than Satan that tempted Adam and Eve in the Genesis account. The problem with this criticism is that the author is describing what is actually in the scripture reading. The Book of Genesis was part of the Hebrew Torah before it was a Christian document. When comparing what is actually in the Biblical and/or Quranic passage, one sticks to what the passage actually reports rather than bringing in polemical interpretations. Now, if the author were writing a book on Christian apologetics, he could then bring Christian interpretation into the discussion. However, the author's goal was to compare Biblical and Quranic passages to point out similarities and differences, not to instruct on Christianity from a particular viewpoint. Personally, I am a bit disappointed that the previous review would rate the book solely on this one issue. Overall the book is well done. However, the chapter on Jesus Christ/Isa has some challenges because it appears that the author is struggling because of his orthodox Christian belief concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. However, this problem is not enough to bring the rating down from 5 stars to 4 stars. If the book could be rated with one digit after the decimal point, my rating would be 4.6 or 4.7. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to compare popular Bible stories with their Quranic counterparts, or to Christians and Muslims who want to learn about the other faith's scripture. This book will clear up many misconceptions Christians will have about the Quran and those Muslims may have about the Bible.

This is an excellent book, very interesting and informative, especially for those who are interested both in the Old Testament and the history of its interpretation as well as in the history of the relations btw Jews and Muslims/Arabs. I teach the Old Testament to college students and use this book in my class.

I began reading this book because I wanted to know more about the Koran. But because the presentation of the Christian understanding of the Christian Scriptures is so deficient, I began to wonder whether I was getting an adequate presentation of the Muslim understanding of the Koran. To give one example: in his discussion of the serpent in the Garden of Eden (p 34) Kaltner distinguishes between the Koranic idea that the fallen angel Satan tempted Adam and Eve, and the Biblical story which says 'serpent' in Gen 3:1. But Christians understand, and have always understood, the serpent to be Satan, as is made clear in Rev 20:2. So such a distinction is specious, based either on ignorance of Christian tradition, or on an atomizing hermeneutic which would provide the logic whereby we could claim that Muslims are actually polytheists because the

pronoun frequently used in the Koran for God is 'we.' Obviously, such reasoning is false. There may be true things said about the Koran that one can learn from this book, but I would not know it and would suspect the presentation of being very biased because of the treatment that the Christian Scriptures receive.

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