READING THE BIBLE IN ISLAMIC CONTEXT

QUR'ANIC CONVERSATIONS

Edited by
Daniel J. Crowther, Shirin Shafaie,
Ida Glaser and Shabbir Akhtar

Reading the Bible in Islamic Context

In the current political and social climate, there is increasing demand for a deeper understanding of Muslims, the Qur'an and Islam, as well as a keen demand among Muslim scholars to explore ways of engaging with Christians theologically, culturally and socially.

This book explores the ways in which an awareness of Islam and the Qur'an can change the way in which the Bible is read. The contributors come from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds, bring various levels of commitment to the Qur'an and the Bible as Scripture, and often have significantly different perspectives. The first section of the book contains chapters that compare the report of an event in the Bible with a report of the same event in the Qur'an. The second section addresses Muslim readings of the Bible and biblical tradition and looks at how Muslims might regard the Bible – Can they recognise it as Scripture? If so, what does that mean, and how does it relate to the Qur'an as Scripture? Similarly, how might Christian readers regard the Qur'an? The final section explores different analogies for understanding the Bible in relation to the Qur'an. The book concludes with a reflection upon the particular challenges that await Muslim scholars who seek to respond to Jewish and Christian understandings of the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

A pioneering venture into intertextual reading, this book has important implications for relationships between Christians and Muslims. It will be of significant value to scholars of both Biblical and Qur'anic Studies, as well as any Muslim seeking to deepen their understanding of the Bible, and any Christian looking to transform the way in which they read the Bible.

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Routledge Reading the Bible in Islamic Context Series

Series Editors: Ida Glaser and Shabbir Akhtar

This series represents an urgent theological initiative for the third millennium: purposeful interpretation of the Bible in contexts provided by Islam, especially the Qur'an. Biblical interpretation has affected the development of Western society and continues to be a key determinant of Christian and Jewish action worldwide; and Muslim views of the Bible and of how Jews and Christians interpret it are key determinants of Muslim views of non-Muslims. We therefore expect the series to produce novel perspectives on the continuing religious, political and ideological rivalries which divide the contemporary world as well as fresh insights into biblical texts.

The opening volume features scholarly work from a conference held in Oxford in September 2015 to explore the parameters of this innovative venture. Subsequent monographs explore a range of methodologies and deal with historical and cultural, as well as intertextual, dimensions of the interpretative task. Topics range from an Islamic commentary on a key New Testament epistle, through Christian readings of biblical themes 'in conversation with' the Qur'an and its interpretations, to historical studies of Muslim engagement with the Bible.

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Foreword

You have in your hands an exciting new work which richly rewards the reader. But please do not read this book if you are looking for a simple guide to what to think. This work invites you to reflect on a range of complex and sometimes sensitive issues. It is a pioneering attempt to engage a variety of voices on the question of reading the Bible in Islamic context. There is a great deal of theological work on the Bible in a variety of contexts, but rarely with Islam and Muslims as the context in view. There is also much work on Islam and Muslims, but only occasionally with the Bible in view. This book represents a series of detailed experiments conducted to help to change that situation. It was born from a conference held in Oxford in September 2015, which I attended, and where I had the privilege to meet an amazing array of people, from a wide range of different nationalities and backgrounds. The energy and enthusiasm of those presenting work at the conference was clear for all to see as they explored this new and exciting ground.

You will find in these pages a variety of approaches, including comparisons and contrasts, an attempt to combine different narratives, and reflections on what any differences and similarities mean. All of these approaches are anchored in specific examples, not based on broad generalisations. Questions will be raised, such as whether David sinned (an issue with implications for Muslim views of prophets), why the biblical Ruth might be parallel to the qur'anic Queen of Sheba, and why the Bible presents a culture shock to most Muslim readers.

Mutual understanding, of course, does not require mutual agreement. Likewise, readers are unlikely to agree with every contribution, but each chapter will stimulate further thought on what is involved in reading the Bible in the context of Muslim scripture, faith and people. Of course, it is not always comfortable to be involved in such exploration, either for the writer or for those around them. The final reflection explores this tension between exploration of unfamiliar terrain and the attachment of believers to their own convictions.

I have spent over twenty years in the formal study and teaching of Islam and Christian–Muslim relations. This has involved exploring how a faith which is not my own – in this case Islam – relates to, differs from and intersects with, my own Christian beliefs. So I am excited to see such a new and valuable contribution which does something different. While many works explore the Bible and the Qur'an in order to shed light on the Qur'an, and others mine the rich resources of

historical encounters, this book seeks to look at the Bible with Muslim contexts squarely in view. Why does this matter? While understanding one scripture and its history of interpretation can be a daunting task, to try to understand two is yet more of a challenge. Yet it is a challenge only growing in importance as people live alongside one another and share their beliefs, their physical territory and their views with one another. This book is a really important step in the development of biblical interpretation, and in opening up an entirely new way of approaching the subject, it provides a stimulus to others to follow where it leads – and beyond. I am delighted to recommend it to you.

Martin Whittingham
Regents Park College, May 2017

Synopsis

This book aims to explore the ways in which an awareness of Islam and the Qur'an can change the way in which the Bible is read.

Introduction

The first chapter in this collection, by **Ida Glaser,** functions as an introduction to the whole volume. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of reading the Bible in the context of Islam and David Tracey's model of conversation, recognition and analogy as a way of understanding them. Glaser then summarises the argument of each of the chapters and relates them to each other according to this model. The chapters in this volume are presented in three sections according to the model proposed by Glaser:

Part I: Intertextual conversations

This first section contains five chapters that compare the report of an event in the Bible with a report of the same event in the Qur'an. In the first of these, **George Bristow** compares an evangelical Christian reading of Genesis 12–16 with a Turkish Muslim reading of a number of Abraham narratives in the Qur'an. In the second, **Shirin Shafaie** employs a narrative analysis of voice and characterisation to explore how the focus and interests of the Joseph narrative of Genesis 37–50 are quite distinct from those of Surah Yusuf. In the third, **Ali Makhlabi** and **Larry Ciccarelli** form a Muslim–Christian partnership to review how the doctrine of ʿiṣma (the sinless nature of the prophets) has impacted the way in which Muslims have approached the story of David and the ewe lamb. In the fourth, **Carol Walker** employs rhetorical analysis to understand how the story of King David and the ewe lamb functions within its biblical setting of the Books of Samuel and then how the different telling of this story functions in its qur'anic setting in Surah Ṣād. The fifth and final chapter of this section by **Mohammad Ghandehari** and **Mohsen Feyzbakhsh** argues that many of the *lacunae* in the accounts of Aaron and the golden calf that are found in Exodus 32, Surah 7 and Surah 20 can be resolved when the three accounts are read in relation to each other.

Part II: Questions about texts

The second section contains five chapters that address Muslim readings of the Bible and biblical tradition. First, **Wan Mohd Fazrul Azdi Wan Razali**, **Ahmad Yunus Mohd Noor** and **Jaffary Awang** recount the historical development of a Muslim method of reading the Bible. In this approach, the Qur'an is used as a means to evaluate the places in which the biblical text provides a genuine revelation, the places in which it provides an uncertain guide to truth and the places in which it, in its present corrupt form, opposes the truth. Second, **Nazirudin Mohd Nasir** examines this Muslim approach to the Bible as exemplified by the nineteenth-century Muslim Indian scholar Hamiduddin Farahi in his analysis of the Hebrew text of Genesis 22 and expresses some reservations in regard to it as a method of understanding the text of the Bible. Third, **Daniel Crowther** observes how seven different features of the form and the content of the Bible scandalise Muslim readers. In each case, Crowther finds that the feature that causes the scandal illuminates the very different identity and function of the Bible as scripture vis-à-vis the Qur'an. Fourth, **Martin O'Kane** and **Talha Bhamji** survey different Muslim treatments of Abraham's sacrifice of his son on Mount Moriah. O'Kane and Bhamji argue that, although the relationship between the text of the Bible and the text of the Qur'an is uncertain, both the qur'anic text and subsequent Muslim traditions are an important chapter in the reception history of the text of Genesis 22. Fifth and finally, **Ali Aghaei** considers the evolution of the Islamic tradition relating to the cow of the sons of Israel as found in Q2:67–74. Through a detailed analysis of nine different traditions reported in al-Ṭabarī, Aghaei observes how Muslim tradition developed in interaction with the biblical text and biblical tradition.

Part III: Analogical explorations

The chapters in the third section explore different analogies to understand the Bible in relation to the Qur'an. **Dwight Swanson** compares and contrasts the cultic concepts of purity and impurity as found in, first, the Hebrew Bible, second, the New Testament and, third, the Qur'an. **Georgina Jardim** observes that whilst the account of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in the Qur'an follows a different trajectory to the account in the Bible, the biblical account of Ruth the Moabitess shares a similar theme (the female outsider) and a similar outcome (a declaration of faith and allegiance). **Michael Lodahl** finds that the new perspective on Paul (as a rabbinic follower of Christ) provides us with a fresh opportunity to compare biblical and qur'anic opinion in regard to creation, idolatry and human nature. **Andy Warren-Rothlin** finds a close analogy in the way in which human metaphors and human figures of speech are used in both the Bible and the Qur'an to describe divine realities. Warren then compares and contrasts the different ways in which different translators have handled these different 'anthropotheisms.' And finally, **Daniel Madigan** uses a Jewish reading of the Gospel of John to reconsider the Christian understanding of the divinity and pre-existence of Jesus. By means of this reconsideration, Madigan reviews afresh the points of contact between

Christian conceptions of Jesus Christ as the Word of God and Muslim conceptions of the Qur'an as the pre-existent Word of God.

Concluding reflection

The last chapter of the collection by **Shabbir Akhtar** reflects upon the particular challenges that await Muslim scholars who seek to respond to Jewish and Christian understandings of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. In his opinion, Muslims must choose between three approaches: a Muslim method of understanding the Bible through the Qur'an (as laid out by Razali *et al.*), a God-focused form of agnosticism, or a suspension of belief for the purposes of academic study. According to Akhtar, each one of these three approaches comes with its own share of problems and challenges, and there is no easy, or obvious, choice.

Daniel J. Crowther
CMCS Oxford, May 2017

Transliteration note

Six alphabets appeared in the first draft of the chapters submitted for this volume: Arabic, Cyrillic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Syriac. At an early stage of the editing process, it was decided that few readers (or, indeed, few editors) would be comfortable reading a text with all six of these alphabets. Consequently, the decision (not without pain) was made to transliterate all the Arabic, Cyrillic, Hebrew, Greek and Syriac words into Latin alphabetical forms. The outworking of this decision created two challenges.

First, a number of Arabic words have established various anglicised forms (for example, Koran, Qur'an, Qur'ān), whilst others are in the process of being established (for example, fatwa). It seemed counter-intuitive not to recognise this mixing of culture and language, but somewhat arbitrary to rule upon it. As a result, we (arbitrarily) have determined the following forms to be anglicised words: *Ayah, fatwa, hadith, Mecca, Medina, Muhammad, Surah, Shia* and *Sunni.* The arbitrary nature of this is underlined by the fact that we decided to avoid the plural form Ayahs (in favour of *āyāt*), but to accept both plural forms Surahs and *suwar* (as per context) and to always prefer the plural hadiths (over *aḥādīth*). A further complication concerned regional differences in the anglicisation of Arabic words: especially whether they are capitalised and whether *tā' marbūṭa* is accorded an *h*. In these issues, we have determined to respect each author's traditions, but where there are none, transliterations into Arabic avoid capital letters and do not use a *h* for *tā' marbūṭa.*

Second, the transliteration of multiple languages into simple Latin alphabetical forms inevitably results in one-letter symbol indicating one sound in one language and another in another language. In order to minimise the confusion, we have presented the Arabic transliterations of five letters with a dot below the transliterated letter and avoided sub-linear dots in the lettering of our Hebrew transliterations. The relatively rare occurrences of Aramaic and Syriac have been transliterated in accord with their synonyms in the Hebrew alphabet. The Cyrillic and Greek transliterations are, we hope, self-evident.

Transliteration tables

ARABIC			HEBREW				
alif	ا		*alêf*	א		*'*	
bā'	ب	*b*	*bēth*	ב	בּ	*b*	*v*
tā'	ت	*t*	*gimêl*	ג	גּ	*g*	*gh*
thā'	ث	*th*	*dālêth*	ד	דּ	*d*	
jīm	ج	*j*	*hē*	ה		*h*	
ḥā'	ح	*ḥ*	*wāw*	ו		*w*	
khā'	خ	*kh*	*zayin*	ז		*z*	
dāl	د	*d*	*chēth*	ח		*ch*	
dhāl	ذ	*dh*	*tēth*	ט		*t*	
rā'	ر	*r*	*yodh*	י		*y*	
zāy	ز	*z*	*cāf*	כ	ך	*k*	*kh*
sīn	س	*s*	*lāmêdh*	ל		*l*	
shīn	ش	*sh*	*mēm*	מ		*m*	
ṣād	ص	*ṣ*	*nun*	נ		*n*	
ḍād	ض	*ḍ*	*sāmêch*	ס		*s*	
ṭā'	ط	*ṭ*	*'ayin*	ע		*'*	
ẓā'	ظ	*ẓ*	*pē*	פ	ף	*p*	*f*
'ayn	ع	*'*	*tsadê*	צ		*ts*	
ghayn	غ	*gh*	*qof*	ק		*q*	
fā'	ف	*f*	*rēsh*	ר		*r*	
qāf	ق	*q*	*sin*	שׂ		*s*	*sh*
			shin	שׁ			
kāf	ك	*k*	*tāw*	ת	תּ	*t*	*th*
lām	ل	*l*					
mīm	م	*m*	*pattāch*	*chataf pattāch*		*a*	
nūn	ن	*n*	*sêggol*	*chataf sêggol*		*ê*	
hā'	ه	*h*	*tsērē*			*ē*	
wāw	و	*w*	*qāmats*			*ā*	
yā'	ي	*y*	sounded *shewā*			*e*	
			cholām	*qāmats qātan*		*o*	
				chataf qāmats		*o*	
			shuruq	*qubbuts*		*u*	

Introduction

1 Biblical interpretation in Islamic context

Particular experiments, general tasks and signposts for the future

Ida Glaser

This volume represents a step in a pioneering venture: we are trying to find out what is involved in serious engagement of the Bible with Islamic thought and with Muslim people, and thence to learn to interpret the Bible 'in conversation with' Islam. It is a venture in which Muslims and Christians travel side by side,[1] although with different perspectives and different agendas. For both Muslims and Christians, this is much more than an academic venture: it has consequences for life and faith.

- For Christians, faithful reading of the Bible is essential to faithful living in any context. There can be no obedience to Scripture without reflection on how it relates to the situation of the readers. That necessarily involves reflection on the world in which the readers live; and Muslim people are part of that world.
- Muslim readings of the Bible are of necessity 'in Islamic context'. The Muslim scholars writing in this volume suggest a range of motivations for reading the Bible: it can aid the interpretation of the Qur'an; it can be a source of godly wisdom; and it can help in the development of interfaith relations and intercultural understanding in today's world.

This introductory chapter represents a Christian's analysis: in writing it, I have been thinking about how the various contributions relate to the hermeneutical adventure that I envisioned and on which we have been working together; and I finish the chapter with some thoughts relating to my own concern about faithful Christian reading of the Bible. The final chapter represents a Muslim's reflections: Shabbir Akhtar, my colleague and co-series editor, considers what might be involved in faithful Muslim reading of the Bible in the light of his own reading journey.

There can be no single method for encompassing all the complexities of the Bible and of Islamic contexts. The *Biblical Interpretation in Islamic Context* project has been influenced by F. X. Clooney's insistence that the enterprise of reading a Christian text in the context of any other faith and its texts should proceed through 'studiously and stubbornly particular' experiments.[2] That is, general methodologies are not to be produced at the outset in order to read the texts: rather, they

are to be discerned through trying out different ways of reading particular texts in the context of other particular texts within their own contexts. The project can, then, be seen as encouraging 'particular experiments'. By observing the whole range, we can discern emerging patterns.

This book represents an important part of the process. We produced it by hosting a conference (in Oxford, September 2015) that invited papers relevant to 'biblical interpretation in Islamic context'. The editorial team then worked with selected authors and with each other to develop the papers (that is, chapters). In keeping with the experimental approach, we aim not to impose methodology on contributors, but to allow methodology to emerge from a range of particular readings. We trust that the results will stimulate yet more particular experiments, and hence lead to deeper and wider establishment of the venture.

This chapter offers a brief exploration of the question of what might be involved in reading the Bible in Islamic context, a look at the contributors and their tools, and then a consideration of the tasks that they have set themselves and the insights and issues that have resulted. The 'tasks' – that I have called 'intertextual conversations', 'questions about the texts' and 'analogical explorations' – give the basis for the organisation of the volume.

'Islamic context': what might it mean?

What do we mean by 'biblical interpretation in Islamic context'? Such is the variety of Muslim people that we might even ask whether it makes sense to speak of Islam as 'a context'. If we define Islam as 'what Muslims believe' or 'how Muslims live', it might be better to speak of a variety of 'Islams'. So, then, what might we mean by 'Islamic context', and in what ways might 'the context of Islam' be a special case in contextualised reading?

The most obvious answer is that 'Islamic contexts' are characterised by the importance of the Qur'an within them. It is the Qur'an's relationship to the Bible that makes Islamic contexts a unique challenge and opportunity for the biblical interpreter. It is not, then, surprising that nearly all the papers submitted to our conference focussed on reading the Bible alongside the Qur'an, and this is reflected in the subtitle of the present volume.

An important corollary is that the hermeneutical question is not just how one might read the Bible: it is also how one might read the Qur'an. A variety of ways of reading the one can be combined with a variety of ways of reading the other, and this multiplies possibilities. Further, Muslims and Christians are likely to bring different considerations to the interpretation of the two texts. The reading of the Scripture of another tradition, and of a Scripture that is often seen as in competition with one's own Scripture, is an important underlying issue to our whole venture that it is dealt with in Shabbir Akhtar's contribution (Chapter 17).

Arguably, the uniqueness of Islamic contexts for Bible reading lies in the fact that the Qur'an, unlike the scriptures of other world religions, includes extensive material related to the Bible. It refers to the Torah, the Psalms, the Prophets and the Gospels, and includes treatments of characters and themes that are found in

the Bible. It also includes material that relates to Jews and to Christians, who are characterised as 'People of the Book'; and 'The Book' is likely to be an allusion to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.[3] It sees itself as a continuation from biblical revelation, but it is a different kind of book than any biblical book.[4]

There are, then, several considerations that are expected to characterise the venture:

- **Consideration of the similarities and differences between biblical and qur'anic ideas of revelation and of the nature of Scripture.** For example, the Qur'an's view of itself as direct divine dictation highlights, by comparison, the varied human voices of the Bible. Biblical interpretation in Islamic context is likely, then, to provoke reflection on the nature and origin of the biblical text in question. Further, the range of Christian views of what the Bible is, may be put into conversation both with Islamic views of what the Bible ought to be, and with Islamic responses to the actual phenomena of the Bible.
- **Consideration of the Qur'an's treatment of characters and stories that are found in the Bible.** Most of the increasing literature on comparative reading of the Bible and the Qur'an is more concerned with understanding the Qur'an than with interpreting the Bible.[5] Some literature takes this further, asking what the comparative reading does for mutual understanding as, for example, believers read their scriptures together after the manner of 'Scriptural Reasoning'. It is acknowledged that such reading challenges Jewish and Christian readers of the Bible and can open fresh understandings of their own texts: in this volume and in the series which it inaugurates, we are seeking to focus on those fresh understandings. Of every comparative reading, we ask, 'How might this affect biblical interpretation – by Muslims as well as by other readers?'
- **Consideration of qur'anic themes.** There are common themes that have different places within the two Scriptures, apparently common themes that have different meanings, and unique features of each. Any of these may provoke the Bible reader into paying attention to neglected aspects of the text. For example, both the Qur'an and the Bible deal with laws about inheritance. In the Qur'an, they are precise and are used in current legal decisions.[6] In the Bible, they are seldom read, the legal details being generally seen as inapplicable, perhaps on the basis of Jesus' discussion about inheritance in Luke 12:13–21. In Islamic contexts, not least in the case of conversion between faiths, it may be important to re-visit the biblical material.
- **Consideration of the range of Muslim readings of the Qur'an.** Non-Muslim focus on comparative and historical studies of the Qur'an may neglect engagement with *tafsīr* or other Muslim discourse. For a reading of the Bible to be in 'conversation' not only with texts but also with persons, we require engagement at least with the qur'anic interpretation of the particular dialogue partners. For a thorough reading, engagement with the wider tradition of interpretation is needed.

To complicate matters, *there is a long history of Muslims and Christians using the Bible in relation to one another*, and we are all writing at particular points in time and in contexts affected by that history. An 'Islamic context' is not only characterised by the centrality of the Qur'an, but also by the centrality of Muhammad. The historical reason for the inclusion of so much material about Jews and Christians in the Qur'an is that Muhammad had many encounters with them. Most of these were friendly, but some were not. There were some difficult and even violent incidents relating to the Jews; and there were some polemical discussions with Christians. Further, the Qur'an arguably reflects something of the fusion between Christianity and power in the Byzantine Empire, as well as with the monastic Christianity of desert areas. This is the context for the Qur'an's own interaction with the Bible. On the one hand, it sees itself as confirming and perfecting the previous scriptures, and it refers extensively to them. On the other hand, it accuses Jews and Christians of misunderstanding, disobeying and miscommunicating their books.

It is not, then, surprising, that *there is a long history of Muslim writings about the Bible*. Many of these are polemical, attacking either the biblical text or Christian and Jewish interpretations of it.[7] However, there are also more positive works, which use biblical material to assist commentary on the Qur'an,[8] or which see the Bible as a source for material that affirms Islam and predicts the coming of Muhammad.[9] There are very few that seek to understand the Bible as it is understood by Christians or by Jews.[10]

The Bible has also been important to Christian thinking about Islam and about Muslims since the seventh century: some of the earliest Christian reflections on the Arab conquests seek a biblical framework – typically, through an understanding of the Arabs as descendants of Ishmael or through identifying Muslim conquerors with apocalyptic powers.[11] There are readings that shock twenty-first-century Christians, not least the use of the Cross during the period of the Crusades.[12] There are also readings that offer rich resources, such as those represented by the history of translation of the Bible into Arabic.[13] For both Christian and Muslim readers, historical study can both indicate the reasons for received interpretations and applications of the texts and challenge those interpretations and applications. Our points in time and our perceptions of our histories affect the choices and approaches in our particular reading experiments.

The experiments

We are now ready to examine the other chapters themselves. We have described our venture in terms of a series of 'experiments' from which patterns can emerge that will facilitate further study: we continue the analogy by beginning with a section that might be titled 'apparatus'. The 'apparatus' for reading is the readers and the skills and academic disciplines which they bring to their tasks.

Who is reading? People and their tools

It is often observed that knowledge has dimensions that depend on the knower;[14] and the interpretation of texts is dependent on the readers as well as on the texts

themselves. Our conference attracted a range of people, each bringing one or more traditions of reading texts to their reading experiments. Each writes in their own context and on the basis of their own experience.

Most obviously, there are writers from Muslim and from Christian backgrounds, who bring various levels of commitment to the Qur'an and the Bible as Scripture, who have various understandings of the natures of their texts, and who represent various traditions of interpreting them. It is also obvious that some are male and some are female, and that they represent a variety of social and geographical contexts. To complicate matters, there are chapters that have more than one author – in two cases, a Muslim and a Christian writing together. Such aspects of the writers' identities affect their interests and their purposes in writing, as well as their approaches to both the Bible and the Qur'an.

Equally important is another aspect of reader variety: our authors have been trained in a variety of academic disciplines. All are currently working in areas relating to scriptural interpretation, and the reader will readily discern consequent approaches in their chapters. For example, O'Kane uses the methods and approaches of the reception history of the Bible, and Wan Razali, Mohd Noor and Awang use tools drawn from classical Islamic thought.

Further, many of our contributors were trained in another academic discipline before entering formal scriptural studies. We will not pause to speculate on how prior experience of moving across disciplines might form a basis for the cross-disciplinary venture of biblical interpretation in Islamic context. Rather, we will note that people bring some of the tools from their previous disciplines into our venture. In some cases, the tools are explicit. For example, Shirin Shafaie brings the tools of narrative analysis used in her doctoral research on war narratives, and Andy Warren-Rothlin brings linguistic tools from his discipline of translation studies. In other cases, the tools are not discussed, but we can easily discern their influence. For example, Shabbir Akhtar brings analytical tools from his philosophical training, and I, as a physicist, not only see our whole enterprise in terms of a series of experiments, but have also structured this chapter accordingly.

Tasks, questions and the organisation of this volume

The analysis above implies that there are many tasks before the scholar who wishes to take the Qur'an into account as they read the Bible. Many of our contributors focussed on the task of reading part of the Bible alongside its qur'anic parallel. Several focussed on the more methodological question of how Muslims might approach the Bible, or of how the Qur'an might be related to the history of biblical interpretation. Others developed discussions around themes of interest on the Muslim–Christian interface. We have organised this book around such tasks.

The organisation has been influenced by an analytical framework of 'conversation, recognition, analogy', which has been the basis for my own work.[15] The formulation reflects David Tracy's thought about the reading of classic texts.[16] Tracy

sees the reading progressing through a 'conversation' between the classic and the reader's world, 'recognition' of relevant commonalities in those two worlds, and then the development of 'analogy' that builds on the commonalities with full awareness of the difference between the two worlds.

In the case of biblical interpretation in Islamic context, the 'classic' to be read is the Bible, and the 'conversation, recognition, analogy' proceeds not only between the classic and the reader, but also between the world of the Bible and the world of Islam, not least the world of the Qur'an. This complicates matters. In particular, 'conversations' between the Bible and the Qur'an rapidly indicate difference between the natures of the texts, so the question of how far and in what way the reader can 'recognise' both books arises. This is the context of difference within which analogies between the books can be developed, and then put into further 'conversation' with the worlds of the readers.

So, then,

- Part I comprises 'conversations' that our authors have set up between biblical and qur'anic texts. The chapters explore commonalities and differences in various ways, and an implicit process of 'recognition' and 'analogy' can often be discerned.
- Part II focusses on questions about the nature of the texts that arise out of the intertextual conversations. We might say that these are questions about 'recognition' that are peculiar to Islamic contexts. First, how should Muslims regard the Bible? Can they recognise it as Scripture? If so, what does that mean, and how does it relate to the Qur'an as Scripture? Second, how might Christian readers regard the Qur'an? Can they recognise it, and the interpretative tradition to which it gives rise, as in some way continuous with the Bible and with Jewish and Christian discourse?
- Part III includes chapters that explore themes that we might call 'analogies' – concepts such as Word, Sign, Idolatry, Unity and Purity which are shared themes in the Qur'an and the Bible, but appear in different contexts and are understood in different ways.

Not all the chapters fit neatly into this framework, and several deal, at least implicitly, with all the above tasks. The following analysis aims to use insights from the chapters to develop signposts for the ongoing journey into biblical interpretation in Islamic context.

Part I: Intertextual conversations

- 'Abraham in narrative worldviews: reflections on doing comparative theology through Christian–Muslim conversation in Turkey' by *George Bristow*
- 'Toward inter-theological hermeneutics: a case study in reading between the Joseph stories' by *Shirin Shafaie*
- 'The "sin" of David in the light of Islamic thought' by *Ali Makhlabi and Larry Ciccarelli*

- 'David and the single ewe lamb: tracking conversation between two texts (2 Samuel 12:3 and Q38:23) when they are read in their canonical contexts' by *Carol M. Walker*
- 'Facing mirrors: the intertwined golden calf story' by *Mohammad Ghandehari and Mohsen Feyzbakhsh*

The intertextual 'conversations' in these five chapters offer insights into the Qur'an as well as into the biblical texts studied: they all also contribute to our whole venture by raising important questions about content and theology, about method, about the nature of Scripture, and about the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible.

There are two chapters by Christian authors, two by Muslim authors, and one that is a Muslim–Christian collaboration. Each has its own methodological approach: it is interesting to observe that the chapters with Muslim authors focus sharply on the particular narratives compared, while the chapters with Christian authors consider the narratives within their wider canonical contexts. Each chapter recognises both similarity and difference between the biblical and qur'anic material chosen, but they have different ways of dealing with this.

The first two chapters use contrasting strategies to identify significant difference in narratives which are often seen as common ground between Muslims and Christians: those of Abraham and of Joseph. The first looks at the narratives as embedded in the total worldviews of the Qur'an and the Bible, and the second perceives the wider theological agendas through close analysis of the particular texts.

George Bristow presents his comparative narrative analysis of the Abraham stories in the context of an analysis of the worldviews of the Bible (as perceived through his own evangelical tradition) and of the Qur'an (as perceived by the Turkish Muslims with whom he is in conversation). He sees the overall contrast of the Qur'an's prophetic history and the Bible's redemption history echoed in the shared parts of the Abrahamic narrative, as well as in the selections made by the Qur'an from the story of Abraham. His method enables him to put the whole of the biblical Abraham narrative into conversation with the whole of the qur'anic Abraham narrative, including the pericopes that are unique to each as well as the few that are shared. His reading highlights difference in what is often regarded as a common starting point for interfaith relations, and thus questions the value of the category 'Abrahamic Religion' as a common denominator. However, he reports having found unexpected harmony as well as unexpected dissonance, and concludes that the understanding of difference through the comparative reading of the narratives is as important for interfaith relationships as is the recognition of commonalities.

Shirin Shafaie looks at the narrative strategy within the biblical and qur'anic tellings of the apparently similar story of Joseph and demonstrates that the two tellings have different purposes and theological functions. She identifies two related issues that will recur in other chapters: first, Genesis and the Qur'an have different views of the nature of prophecy and, second, Islamic tradition has read the qur'anic accounts through the lens of the doctrine of *'iṣma*. *'Iṣma*, often translated

as 'infallibility', means that prophets are preserved from sin. They are not perfect, in that they can make mistakes, but they would never rebel against God. How far, we might ask, do the different views of prophecy echo the differences in biblical and qur'anic worldviews proposed by Bristow? Instead, Shafaie chooses to examine the concept of *'iṣma* and to ask how far it is true to the qur'anic narratives. She concludes that received interpretations might not be faithful to the texts, which enables her to read the texts as cooperating rather than conflicting, their different perspectives giving a multidimensional view of Joseph and his story.

One of the places where the question of *'iṣma* emerges most acutely is in the context of the biblical accounts of David, which are often cited in Islamic polemic as proof of biblical corruption. **Larry Ciccarelli and Ali Makhlabi** build on a longstanding Muslim–Christian collaboration to examine the perceived problem: that of the sinfulness of David, as God's chosen prophet and leader, in his treatment of Bathsheba and her husband. Their approach is to study how Muslim commentators have dealt with the problem, noting that Muslim concerns about the sinfulness of such an important character as David are, to some extent, shared by Jewish commentators. They identify a range of treatments, some of which are re-interpretations of the biblical version rather than rejections of it. They also note an interesting difference between Sunni and Shia commentators, seeing a political determinant in the latters' greater insistence on *'iṣma*: Shias believe that their imams (leaders) as well as the prophets are infallible, so are the more concerned that the great leader of Israel should have been sinless. Ciccarelli and Makhlabi see their collaboration as fruitful for both Muslim and Christian readers of the Bible, as it challenges the presuppositions of both in a way that opens the text afresh to both.

While Ciccarelli and Makhlabi look at their chosen David narrative in the context of later discussion of a particular problem in it, **Carol Walker** places her study of part of that same narrative in the context of a wider study of the structures of the biblical books of Samuel and of Surah *Ṣād* (Q38) in which it appears. She sees the biblical parable of the ewe lamb as a highly significant part of Samuel's dealing with issues of power, humility, covenant and social justice: in contrast, it appears in Surah *Ṣād* as one of a series of examples of people who turn to God in repentance and receive forgiveness. While the narratives have different purposes in their contexts, she recognises that David's repentance and forgiveness follow the parable in the Bible and that the themes of Samuel are, if sometimes in different ways, also qur'anic concerns. She recognises other shared themes which she relates to contemporary issues: that of the temptations faced by political leaders and the importance of leaders being under, and not above, the law.

The various 'intertextual conversations' thus far indicate a measure of 'recognition' of how the worlds of the text might match with the various worlds of the readers as well as of how the biblical and qur'anic texts might match. **Mohammad Ghandehari and Mohsen Feyzbakhsh** offer a different sort of experiment. Rather than comparing the biblical and qur'anic accounts of the 'golden calf', they read the two stories as complementary. The differences between the stories are not,

then, problems, but indicate complementary sources of information that need to be integrated. They achieve this through considering Jewish discussion of the issues which are also noted by Christian commentators: the related problems of Aaron as the high priest being also the person who led Israel into major idolatry, and of the leniency of his punishment. The Qur'an is seen as resolving the problems, but in a way that requires reference to the biblical account for a full understanding.

Ghandehari and Feyzbakhsh follow a trajectory that contrasts sharply with Bristow, with whose chapter we began this part. Where Bristow's study points towards irreconcilable differences between the Abrahamic faiths, they see their method as a way of 'reconciling Abrahamic Scriptures'. Together, they raise the sorts of questions about Muslim and Christian understandings of texts that will be explored in Part II.

- Ghandehari and Feyzbakhsh are Muslims, and Bristow is an evangelical Christian. Their contrasting approaches are consonant with a tendency that can be observed throughout this book for Muslim authors to handle apparent differences as problems to be solved or as ways of adding to their understanding of the Qur'an, while Christian authors tend to accept difference as indicating irreducible differences between the biblical and the qur'anic worlds. How far, we might ask, is this related to the fact that, while the Qur'an requires Muslims to accept the Torah (at least in its original form) to be God-given, there is no biblical requirement for Christians to have any particular expectation of the Qur'an?
- Ghandehari and Feyzbakhsh's questions are not Bristow's questions. The latter is interested in how the narratives fit into and reflect the grand narratives of the scriptures in which they are situated. The former are interested in understanding the detailed events referred to within the particular narratives, and do not refer to their contexts and purposes. How far, we might ask, does this reflect the differing functions of narratives within the Bible and the Qur'an, and the consequent different ways in which such narratives have been handled in their respective traditions?

Bristow's chapter provokes further questions that point towards Part III. It is the only one so far that deals in any way with the New Testament. The differing details in the biblical and qur'anic narratives are seen as pointing towards different resolutions of tensions in the Genesis texts in the Qur'an and the New Testament, and therefore towards fundamentally different worldviews. How far, we might ask, do the other Christians implicitly read the Old Testament from the perspective of a New Testament worldview? What might be learnt by comparing how the New Testament and the Qur'an respectively deal with other questions raised by other Old Testament texts? And how far are the tensions dealt with in both the New Testament and the Qur'an those raised in prior Jewish discussions? In short, the questions are not just about the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible, but about the relationships between the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Qur'an.

Part II: Questions about the texts

- 'The fourth source: *Isrā'iliyyāt* and the use of the Bible in Muslim scholar-ship' by *Wan Mohd Fazrul Azdi Wan Razali, Ahmad Yunus Mohd Noor and Jaffary Awang*
- 'Constrained by scriptural polemics: Hamiduddin Farahi on the *Akedah*' by *Nazirudin Mohd Nasir*
- 'The culture shock of the Bible' by *Daniel J. Crowther*
- 'Islamic tradition and the reception history of the Bible' by *Martin O'Kane and Talha Bhamji*
- 'The morphology of the narrative exegesis of the Qur'an: The case of the cow of the Banū Isrāʾīl (Q2:67–74)' by *S. Ali Aghaei*

On the one hand, the Qur'an claims continuity with biblical revelation: on the other hand, the biblical books are significantly different from the Qur'an in their form, variety and content. This raises acute questions for Muslim readers as to how far can they recognise the extant biblical books as those referred to in the Qur'an, and hence how far and in what ways they can learn from the Bible. For the Christian reader, there is the corresponding challenge of asking how far and in what ways the Qur'an and Islamic tradition can be recognised as continuous with the Bible; and hence how far and in what ways they can be useful in biblical interpretation. The chapters in this part are relevant to these questions.

We begin with a discussion from within the worldview of Sunni Islam of the *Shāfiʿī* school of law which raises important and widespread questions about how far Muslims should read the Bible. **Wan Mohd Fazrul Wan Razali, Ahmad Yunus Mohd Noor and Jaffary Awang** use the classical category of *Isrā'iliyyāt* – Jewish and Christian material, which includes the Bible. Their main conceptual tool is *wiḥdah al-dīn*, the unity of all genuine religion. This is not, they point out, a pluralistic idea, and neither does it suggest that Islam is in any way derived from other faiths. Rather, it is the view that all prophets brought the same religion: Islam. This is an Islamic lens through which the Bible is to be read; and it implies that the Bible is expected to have the same message, if not necessarily the same form, as the Qur'an. Wan Razali, Mohd Noor and Awang do not attempt to apply their findings to any actual readings of the Bible, but what is implicit in their chapter is the fact that there is a disjunction between this expectation and what the Bible actually is. Their sources indicate that there are parts of the Bible that can be accepted, parts that must be rejected, and parts that are neutral in that the Qur'an neither affirms nor refutes them. The question for Muslim scholars is how they discern what should be recognised and what should be rejected.

On such a basis, readers are likely to approach the Bible with a spectrum of agendas, from enhancing understanding of the Qur'an to refuting the Bible. The question for our 'biblical interpretation in Islamic context' venture is how far there is space between these two ends for Muslims seriously to read the Bible in its own right, and to appreciate it as Christian and Jewish Scripture. Or might there be an alternative spectrum?

Nazirudin Mohd Nasir's chapter opens a discussion on these questions as he interrogates a particular nineteenth-century treatment of the Akedah sacrifice of Genesis 22 and Q37:99–111: that of Hamiduddin Farahi. Farahi differs from most of his predecessors in that he deals directly with the Bible and can read Hebrew. Mohd Nasir notes that, while Farahi uses some of the same methods in interpreting the Bible as he does in interpreting the Qur'an, his agenda is polemical. He is using the Qur'an as his hermeneutical key to the Bible, with the purpose of finding *taḥrīf* – corruption of the biblical texts.

Mohd Nasir questions this agenda on the basis of two contexts for reading: the wider textual context of Q37: 99–111 within the Qur'an, and the social and political context of the reader. In the former context, he points out that the qur'anic text is, in fact, open to interpretation that does not conflict with the Bible and, indeed, that some early Muslim readings were actually in agreement with the Bible and used the Bible in order to augment the brief qur'anic narrative. Further, he argues that this particular text should discourage Muslims from polemics. All this opens the possibility of serious reading of the Bible with spiritual as well as informational gain. Whether and how this is done, however, depends on how open the social context is to interfaith relations and to new ideas.[17]

Danny Crowther proposes a refreshing model for dealing with acute difference: he re-formulates the problem in terms of culture. He offers an analysis of the disjunction between Muslim expectations of scripture and the phenomena of the Bible – in particular, its human voice, variety of genre, textual and canonical history in addition to the sinfulness of prophets explored in the above discussions about *'iṣma*. The Muslim experience of this he describes as 'culture shock', and he suggests that models of moving across cultures might help Muslim readers to engage seriously with the Bible. His argument is that the observations Muslims make about the form and content of the Bible reveal how different it is to the Qur'an. Attention to their questions can help Christians better understand the way in which the Bible functions as the Word of God.

This is an example of finding a way forward through a seeming impasse by asking a new question, a pattern which will be seen in several of the chapters in Part III. In this case, the question moves from how far the Bible can be recognised as a Scripture within the concept of *wiḥdah al-dīn* (unity of faith) to the question of how a Muslim reader might learn to appreciate the world of the Bible. I will pick up the important corollary, the question of how Christians understand the Bible in conversation with Muslim 'culture shock', in the final part of this chapter.

The next two chapters are case studies that consider the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an and subsequent Islamic tradition. Both argue that the Qur'an and its traditional interpretation can be viewed through the lens of reception history of the Bible.

Martin O'Kane and Talha Bhamji argue that Islamic traditions not only can but also should be seen as part of the reception history of the Bible. Indeed, they suggest, reception history is incomplete without consideration of Islamic sources. They recognise that this will not be straightforward, in that the traditions seldom deal directly with the Bible, and some include polemical refutations of parts of the

Bible. However, they find plenty of material in both the Qur'an and later Islamic discussion that enters and extends Jewish and Christian discussion of the actual texts. Their exploration of Ishmael and Esau in Jewish, Christian and Islamic tradition indicates a commonality of concerns that are addressed and resolved in different ways according not only to religious beliefs but also to ethnic and political contexts.

Ali Aghaei demonstrate**s** the reception and elaboration of Islamic tradition that relates to the Bible through a detailed case study of the development of Islamic exegesis of the Qur'an. He chooses one of the Qur'an's most perplexing allusions to the Bible: the 'Cow of *Banū Isrāʾīl*' in Q2:67–74. This appears not to refer to any single biblical text, but rather to allude to two different texts (Numbers 19:1–19, where a cow is burnt and its ashes are used for purity, and Deuteronomy 21:1–9, where a cow is killed in order to deal with bloodguilt in the case of an unsolved murder). The developing early discussions appear to get progressively further from those texts; but the investigation indicates that some of them reflect Jewish discourse related to an application of the legal prescription in Deuteronomy 21 and, from the tenth century onwards, there are examples of direct references to the biblical passage. Ali demonstrates that Islamic understandings of Surah 2:67–74 are dependent on the *Isrāʾiliyyāt* and concludes that they should be treated as part of the reception history of the Bible.

Part III: Analogical exlorations

- 'The place of purity in faith' by *Dwight Swanson*
- 'Biblical Ruth as a qur'anic Queen of Sheba: scriptural narratives of foreigner assent' by *Georgina L. Jardim*
- 'Reading Paul on idolatry (Romans 1:18–32) alongside the Qur'an: a theology of divine signs' by *Michael Lodahl*
- 'Indirection in biblical and qur'anic discourses, and in Bible translation in Islamic contexts' by *Andy Warren-Rothlin*
- 'The Gospel of John as a structure for Muslim–Christian understanding' by *Daniel A. Madigan*

All the chapters in this book note similarities between the Qur'an and the Bible, and all recognise that these similarities occur in different scriptural, historical and theological contexts. A fruitful way of handling this similarity-in-difference is the category of 'analogy'. An analogy chooses a similarity, but in a way that reminds the reader that things that appear similar are not necessarily the same and that they may function differently in their different contexts. There is always some choice in identifying analogies: the choices are not so much 'right' or 'wrong' as more or less fruitful.

We begin with the chapter that explores a deliberately chosen analogical theme: **Dwight Swanson**'s chapter on purity. In terms of our 'analogical' model, we can see Swanson as setting out the three overlapping circles of Torah, Gospel and Qur'an on the subject. His approach is to see 'purity' in the context of the overall

narratives of the relevant texts, which means that the model can offer analogical insights into the relationship between the scriptures as well as into the particular ideas of purity which they contain.

Having set out the system, and started to explore what is in the overlaps and what is unique to each scripture, Swanson raises an agenda for further study. This includes historical questions about the relationships between the three scriptures, questions about biblical and qur'anic treatments of key themes and words (such as 'covenant' and 'holiness'), and questions about how Jews, Christians and Muslims have developed practices in response to the texts. All this leads to challenges for Christian readers of the Bible: have Western Christians in particular missed important aspects of their scriptures?

In **Georgina Jardim's** chapter, analogy between a biblical and a qur'anic character emerges unexpectedly from an intertextual conversation about an obviously shared character. It demonstrates that fruitful analogies might not be those found in the most obviously parallel texts.

The initial intertextual conversation was about the Queen of Sheba, and it was developed in the context of a 'Holy Book Club' where Christian and Muslim women meet to read the Qur'an and the Bible using a 'Scriptural Reasoning' model. It indicated a crucial difference between the two accounts: the Qur'an emphasises the foreign queen's conversion from paganism to the One God, while the Bible leaves the question of her conversion open. This led Jardim to ask where and how the Bible might deal with the conversion of a foreign woman. That is, she sought a biblical analogy to this aspect of the Queen of Sheba as portrayed in the Qur'an. She turned to Ruth, and offers us a fascinating re-reading of Ruth with the questions raised by the initial Queen of Sheba conversation in mind. Taking Ruth as a biblical analogy to the qur'anic Queen of Sheba produced fruitful and contextually relevant insights.

The above two analogies emerged from comparative intertextual conversations. In our next three chapters, concepts that can be described as 'analogical' are used to discuss key theological questions that often emerge in discussions between Christians and Muslims. The questions have to do with human propensity to sin, with the transcendence of God, and with the nature of revelation. The theological differences between Muslims and Christians on these issues underlie difference on the nature of scripture, and they will inform my Christian reflection in the last part of this chapter.

Michael Lodahl offers a reading of Romans 1 that deals with the question of the human propensity to sin: a perennial area of disagreement between Muslims and Christians which underlies, on the one hand, questions about how sin can be dealt with and, on the other hand, questions about the doctrine of *'iṣma* that features so strongly in this volume. Typically, a Muslim says that humans are born in a state of *fiṭra*, that is, in a state of innocence in which Islam is natural to them, and a Western Christian will say that, since Adam, humans have been born 'fallen', that is, not in the original state in which God made humanity. This is why, Christians say, not even prophets can be sinless, and guidance cannot be sufficient.

Lodahl's approach points a way forward that can shed fresh light both on this stale-mated debate and on biblical texts: he identifies a fresh question, which can be shared by Muslims and Christians, and he chooses an analogical concept that enables a fresh reading of the texts with that question in mind. Central to the process is dealing with a passage in its own historical as well as textual context, and thus of dealing with its purpose as well as with its content.

He begins by asking what questions lie behind Romans 1. This leads to the question of the possibility of the knowledge of the One God outside the covenant (that is, through creation): the major question about human nature is, then, why people should prefer idolatry to the worship of that God. The next step is to identify a qur'anic analogy as a hermeneutical key: God's signs in creation as evidence of the Creator. This frequent qur'anic idea, he suggests, 'resonates' with Paul's assertion about the knowability of God in Romans 2:19–20. Romans and the Qur'an agree that many human beings choose to ignore the evidence of the signs and that the result is service of the creatures rather than the Creator. The shared question is, then, 'Why do people reject God's signs?' It opens a reading of Romans and a discussion about human nature that might challenge Muslims, Christians and Jews alike.

Questions relating to divine transcendence arise in **Andy Warren-Rothlin's** context of Bible translation, as he explores anthropotheism (describing God in human terms) and apophasis (describing God through negative statements): there is an underlying question of how human language relates to the divine being. The presenting questions for both Muslims and Christians are, first, how far anthropotheism might compromise the difference between Creator and creature and, second, how far human language can describe God. The history of Muslim ways of dealing with such questions sharpens the issues for Bible translators in Islamic contexts.

Warren-Rothlin notes Muslim commentators' concern to ensure that qur'anic anthropomorphisms do not detract from God's transcendent otherness. Parallel concerns are traced in the history of Jewish and, to a lesser extent, Christian dealings with the Bible. He concludes that, on the one hand, most scholars today would see anthropotheisms as linguistic phenomena, merely raising potential communication problems. On the other hand, there have been times when anthropotheisms have been theologically interpreted. In the case of apophasis, he suggests that translation choices may be made that take deliberate account of Islamic language that so often describes God in negative rather than in positive terms. What he calls the 'intertwining' of theology and translation is evident.

However, it is also evident that there are some differences in the Bible's and the Qur'an's uses of human language to describe God: the apparently common concerns could, I suggest, fruitfully be seen in terms of analogy rather than simple similarity. The issues are different for Muslims and for Christians, because their understandings of how God relates to humans and to language are different.

This brings us to the theological heart of debates between Christians and Muslims: the relationship between God and God's Word. What is 'God's Word', and how can we understand God as having a Word without infringing divine transcendence? **Dan Madigan** addresses this issue through a reading of John's Gospel that offers the possibility of moving from standard debates towards mutual understanding. He develops the analogy between Jesus as God's Word and the Qur'an as God's Word. However, he leaves open the question that haunts this whole volume: how, then, do we understand the Bible?

Like Lodahl, Madigan opens up the text by identifying questions that are shared by Muslims and Christians, in this case how God's Self relates to God's Word, and how that Word enters the created world – in the Qur'an or in the Messiah. Madigan takes these questions to the prologue of John's Gospel and uses the results as a key to reading the rest of the Gospel, developing conversation with the world of the Qur'an and with Muslim readers throughout. This opens fresh understandings of the text for Christian as well as for Muslim readers: it is a pointer towards the fruitfulness of the conversation with Islamic context in developing Christian readings of biblical texts.

Madigan has no expectation that this will lead to Muslim–Christian agreement. Rather, his approach aims to help Muslims to understand Christian belief, and it results in clarifying difference as well as similarity. Like biblical and qur'anic concepts of purity, like the biblical Ruth and the qur'anic Queen of Sheba, like questions about sin and purity, and like scriptural anthropomorphisms, the concept of the Word has a different place within Islamic thinking than it has within Christian thinking: the concepts are not the same, but analogous. Returning to Danny Crowther's proposals, we might say that the method of recognising analogous concepts and questions offers a way of moving from initial 'culture shock' through engagement with the texts towards appreciation of the new culture, and even towards the possibility of learning from it and finding a sense of belonging.

Shabbir Akhtar's final chapter is an example of a Muslim reader who has so persevered through the 'culture shock' that he is able to study one of the most controversial books in the Bible for a Muslim reader: Galatians. Akhtar's careful putting of this letter into conversation with the Qur'an and Islamic thinking both develops mutual understanding and offers fresh insight to both Christian and Muslim readers.

What have I learnt? Signposts for the future

This final section offers something of my own reflection on where a Christian reader like myself might go from here. I hope that it will also offer some signposts for other readers on other interpretative journeys.

I will use a basic hermeneutical cycle of text, context and practice as a guide to future experiments. Since it is unlikely that readers will move around the circle in an orderly fashion, I have represented it as three sectors of a circle rather than as a circular or spiral series of events, as in Figure 1.1.
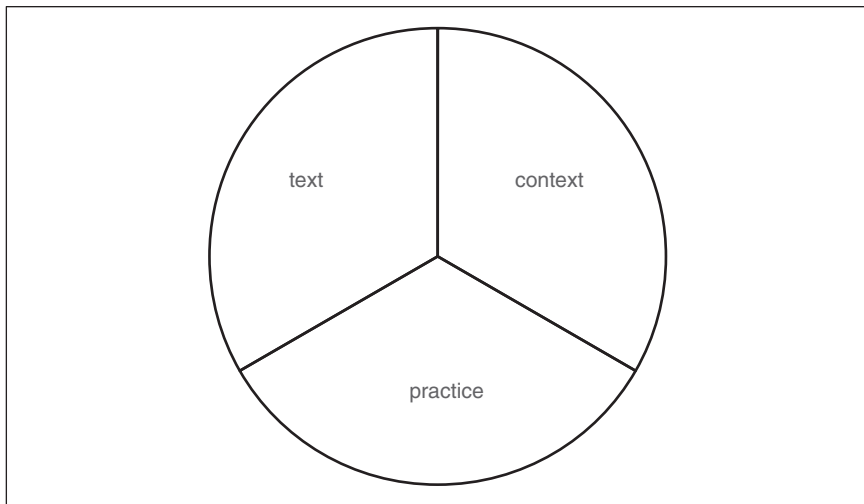
Figure 1.1 Basic hermeneutical map

I see the venture of reading as a set of interdependent tasks.

- **Text.** Most obviously, there is the task of reading the text itself. As our focus is the interpretation of the Bible, the biblical text is the 'text' in question. The task includes considering questions about the nature of the texts studied as well as their forms and contents and their relationships to the contexts in which they were written.
- **Context.** Reading is always done by particular people in particular contexts. The task here is to take deliberate and explicit account of the context. We have already observed the role of the Qur'an and its self-perception in relation to the Bible that makes Islamic contexts of special interest for biblical interpretation. So important is this that we could see reading 'in conversation with' the Qur'an as an explicit task, and inscribe it into the circle as a separate sector. However, since reading between the Bible and the Qur'an is an essential part of each stage, I prefer to let intertextual study permeate the system.
- **Practice**[18] is the deliberate putting into practice of what has been learnt from reading. This is of particular relevance in the reading of Scripture: those who use such a hermeneutical model see obedience to Scripture as essential to the proper understanding of Scripture. This is inherent to what is meant by 'Scripture'. For this venture, the task is potentially huge: it can include any aspect of Muslims and Christians living in a shared world, as well as the tasks of teaching our own communities, of communicating our faiths to each other, and of dealing with the many practical issues of day-to-day life.

Taking this analysis as a signpost for future readings, we might envisage journeys through the tasks that would begin with an initial reading of a biblical text, which would lead to the choice of Islamic texts for an intertextual 'conversation'. The contexts in which these texts are being read and in which they have been read in history will affect the intertextual work, so a next stage might be to consider these contexts. The reader or readers might then consider and execute practical applications, and finally return to read the text again. Such a path is represented in Figure 1.2.

We might take as example one of the texts addressed in our chapters. I have chosen the narrative about David, Bathsheba and Nathan in 2 Samuel 11 and 12, dealt with by Ciccarelli and Makhlabi in Chapter 4 and by Carol Walker in Chapter 5. Both of them begin by selecting for intertextual conversation the qur'anic account of the incident in Surah 38:17–26. However, both quickly have to deal with preliminary questions about the text. These arise in two different ways: Ciccarelli and Makhlabi address the basic question 'in conversation' with Islam of how far the text can be recognised as scripture, given that it appears to conflict with Islamic understandings of prophetic *'iṣma*. Walker is more interested in how the text functions within the larger text of the books of Samuel, and therefore in what kind of text it is. She opts explicitly for dealing with the literary and theological 'form' of the books. Both chapters deal with these questions through the intertextual conversation with the Qur'an and, in doing so, they consider something of their interpretative contexts – Sunni, Shia, Jewish and Christian – and their histories. We see already the interplays between text, intertext and context.
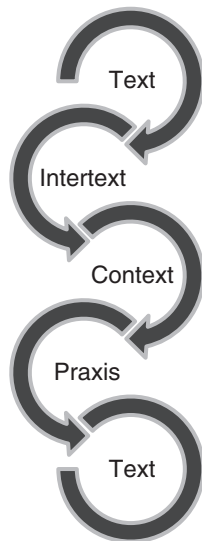

Figure 1.2 A path towards interpretation

Both chapters also indicate a concern for practice. Ciccarelli and Makhlabi's chapter is itself a result of the practice of Muslim–Christian collaboration in Bible translation, and they see their study as having potential for interfaith understanding. Walker takes her reflection in a different direction: she notes that the *'iṣma* debate related to this narrative led to a legal submission being made to a Pakistani court for the Bible to be banned; but her conclusion focusses on the practical implications of the whole thrust of the text. This is, she suggests, for the Qur'an as well as the Bible, a concern about the accountability of leadership.

Together, the two chapters take readers on a journey from a standard polemical discussion about prophetic *'iṣma* and the *taḥrīf* of the biblical text through recognition of shared concerns within the debate, re-reading of texts and commentaries within their contexts, and on to the recognition of a different shared concern. We can then return to the biblical text – and to another stage of the journey through intertext, context and practice – with a fresh perspective.

What, then, might be the next steps in the journey of interpreting 2 Samuel 11 and 12 in Islamic context? Here are some possible directions:

Text

The books of Samuel amply illustrate the 'culture shock' identified by Crowther. Ciccarelli and Makhlabi grapple with the 'scandal' of David's sin, but we might also note that the 'voice' of the story is that of a human writer, that the two books of Samuel were originally one and are now two, that they are differently situated in the Old Testament and in the Hebrew canon, that their authorship is unknown, that the standard Hebrew text (MT) has significant differences from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) and that aspects of their historicity have been challenged.[19]

What might Christian readers make of these challenges, what might be a route for Muslim through the 'culture shock' to an understanding of 2 Samuel, and what might the Christian reader learn from the interaction? I shall focus on the first and the last questions, and trust that this will help Muslim readers to consider the central question for themselves.

We consider the first question through two currently popular 'study Bibles',[20] which offer scholarly insights at an accessible, faith-based level. In their introduction to Samuel, neither mentions its human 'voice' – this is so common a feature of biblical writings that it is no surprise to the reader. Both note extensive scholarly discussions about authorship, date and genre; but these are treated as interesting puzzles that add to understanding rather than as scandalous problems. Both also acknowledge the textual questions, footnoting to indicate some major textual differences between the MT and the LXX, and the ESV giving some space to translation decisions. Again, this is treated as an instructive puzzle to be solved rather than as a scandalous undermining of the Scripture.

The only one of all Crowther's 'scandals' that is seen as potentially undermining 1 and 2 Samuel as Scripture is that of historical reliability. The primary way of dealing with apparent historical difficulties is through considering literary genres and structures:[21] questions of chronology are dealt with by considering how the

author has put together the different parts of the book, and the author's literary and theological intentions are accepted as features rather than problems. However, basic historical accuracy is implicitly affirmed through extensive explanation and illustration of the geography and culture mentioned in the text, and the denial of historicity is disallowed. In the specific case noted by Crowther – the question of whether it was Elchanan the Bethlehemite and not David who killed Goliath (2 Samuel 21:19), the ESV notes two solutions that make Elchanan and not David the killer, but comments, 'these interpretations would deny the truthfulness of 1 Samuel 17, and other solutions are preferable.' The solutions preferred are textual or linguistic – for example, that there is an omission of 'the brother of' in the MT and LXX as compared to 1 Chronicles 20:5,[22] or 'Goliath' is a general word for a giant rather than the proper name of an individual.[23]

In short, both of these study Bibles indicate awareness of most of Crowther's 'scandals', but the only one that appears to be perceived as problematic is that of historicity, and the commentators find ways of dealing with this by appreciating the texts with their human histories and by acknowledging the limitations of current knowledge of the ancient world. The human 'scandals' are not problems, but features which add to the way the text speaks into the life and faith of the believing community.

This is pointing to a key difference between the Qur'an and the Bible. It is not incidental that the biblical books are written in human voices and in different literary forms. Rather, they are consistent with the pattern observed by Madigan that it is Jesus, and not the Bible, that is viewed in the New Testament as God's eternal Word. At the centre of a Christian understanding of revelation is not a Book, but the Word-made-flesh. Similarly, the books of Samuel do not consciously present themselves as revelation: rather, they tell the story of a key stage of God's working through his chosen people.

What, then, is the Bible? We might take the clue from John 1:1–14, which includes mention of the prophet, John the Baptist. He is not, insists John, the Light, but he is a witness to the Light. One category for thinking about the New Testament writings is, then, that they are a form of inspired witness to the Word-made-flesh. By extension, a simple description of the Old Testament writings might be that they are Israel's inspired witness to her history of encounter with God, collected and passed down to teach generations of believers. And Israel is the people called by God as a light to the nations and as the community into which the Word was born. This is so different from the Qur'an's view of itself that we might question how far Christian and Muslim views of scripture can be seen as analogous, let alone similar.[24]

The inspired biblical witness is believed to be *both* humanly produced *and* divinely inspired: that this is the sort of Scripture that we have is indicative of the nature of humanity and of God. The questions about anthropotheism and apophasis explored by Warren-Rothlin arise in the context of translating language that is a human production as well as a divine communication; and this raises the question of how the human production of the text as well as the human language which it uses relates to divine transcendence. My own conclusion is that divine

transcendence is as free to choose human production as to choose human language and that the choice of using inspired human writers is entirely consistent with the human–divine relationship as expressed throughout the Bible.

Further, since my first reading of the Bible in 'conversation' with the Qur'an, I have realised that *the form is as much a part of a revelation as is the content.* That is, we can and should learn about the Creator and his creation from the way that the text has been produced and shaped, as well as from what it says. Walker works carefully with the literary form of the texts, and that is an important element; but the comparative reading is incomplete if we do not take into account the specific human process of production and canonisation of the biblical texts in contrast with Muslim beliefs about the origins of the Qur'an.

Viewed in this way, the so-called scandals become not problems, but essential features which need to be taken into account in exploration of the worlds of the text. 2 Samuel 11–12 is not a divinely told lesson about the accountability of rulers or the virtue of repentance/turning to God: it is a telling of the history of Israel's founder king that shows his accountability. The books of Samuel are not divine lessons about how God puts down the mighty and raises the lowly that are illustrated from Israel's history: they are Israel's account of its history that witnesses to God who works through putting down the mighty and elevating the lowly. Reflection on the purposes of the human writer – whether for or against the Davidic dynasty, and in comparison with Chronicles and Deuteronomy – does not undermine the books' authority, but enhances understanding of the texts.[25] With this in mind, we can continue into further intertextual reading.

Intertext

It is noteworthy that the one of Crowther's 'scandals' that is not considered as in any way problematic by the study Bible is just the one that is dealt with by Ciccarelli and Makhlabi: that of David's sinfulness. The Christian biblical commentators do not see the inclusion of this story as a difficulty, but as an essential feature of the text. Shabbir Akhtar recently asked a question that has helped me to see its importance: 'What would Christians see as scandalous about the Qur'an?' My answer was that Christians see the attempt to exonerate prophets from major sin – both qur'anic and merely Islamic – as scandalous. Further, the whole idea of *'iṣma* – that prophets are a special category of humanity – is scandalous. 2 Samuel's relentless shaming of David matters.

As Ciccarelli and Makhlabi demonstrate, the Qur'an implies that David did something wrong, but it maintains David's honour and gives only the slightest hint that this might have been a sexual matter. Had we started from 2 Samuel's focus on David's marriage to a woman seen accidentally when still the wife of another, we might have chosen for intertextual study not Surah 38, but the analogous story of Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab, the wife of Zayd, his adopted son (Q33:36–38). The story behind the qur'anic text is that Muhammad arranged the marriage between Zayd and Zaynab, but that, much later, he accidentally saw Zaynab partially dressed, and desired her. Zayd then divorced her, and Muhammad

married her.[26] Where Samuel stresses that David sinned, the Qur'an exonerates Muhammad from any blame and indeed sees his actions as God-ordained and praiseworthy.

Christians have expressed shocked scandal at this since the earliest Islamic times.[27] How could a scripture condone such a marriage, let alone present it as God's will? Would the story of Muhammad 'fall down' if he could be found to have committed such sin as is recorded of David, or even the lesser sin perceived by Christian readers in the Zaynab story? One direction for further intertextual reading would be to ask why Muhammad is portrayed in this way, with the related question of why so many Muslims insist on the *'iṣma* of the prophets when, as Shafaie shows in relation to the Joseph story, there is little qur'anic warrant for it.

Taking our clue from Georgina Jardim's chapter, another direction for further reading might be to ask whether there are other passages in the Qur'an or other Islamic sources that would pick up the themes of the ewe lamb parable. For example, if, as Walker argues, the texts are about the accountability of leaders, where does the Qur'an deal specifically with that question? This would take us into fresh intertextual discussions, with fresh questions about how our question is dealt with in Jewish, Christian and Islamic discussions of the texts, and their applications in today's world. Other themes might include divorce, family dynamics and polygamy. All these take us on into our current contexts and have practical implications.

Context and practice

Perhaps the most urgent challenges for the practice of both Muslims and Christians in current contexts are those which Walker identifies as the key lessons drawn by the Qur'an and affirms as major lessons in Samuel: they are to do with power and repentance. The books of Samuel are about Israel's transition to monarchy, exploring the whole, ambivalent, nature of kingly power and its relationship with God's kingship as expressed through prophets and priests. The 'sin of David' in Chapters 11 and 12 opens up questions about accountability, about honour and about restoration of a leader after gross misconduct.

It is interesting that the ewe lamb parable that so angers David (2 Samuel 12:1–6) is not in itself about the sins of adultery and murder which so shock Muslim readers: it is about abuse of power, of the poor by the rich, and this is the one aspect of the story that is picked up by the Qur'an. Reading back into 2 Samuel 11, we can see the relentless wielding of power as David sits back and instructs people. Does his need for explanation and his immediate repentance (2 Samuel 12:7–13) imply that he did not realise the extent to which he had yielded to the temptation to use his power for his own ends and his own honour? Certainly, the rest of 1 and 2 Samuel presents him as someone who hates injustice, who refuses to grasp the kingship when he can (1 Samuel 24 and 26) and who repudiates the murders which establish his throne (2 Samuel 3 and 4).

The story of David's tragic fall at the very pinnacle of his establishment as God's anointed king will challenge the practice of political as well as religious leaders in all our contexts. But the story in its biblical and qur'anic contexts also

raises acute questions about how the leaders and their people might deal with such falls. Here, we select but three of these, both of which should provoke further intertextual study.

First, *how far should the sin of the leader be exposed?* In 2 Samuel, all the palace servants clearly know about David's adultery, yet David seeks to defend his and Bathsheba's honour through his dealings with Uriah. By the end of the chapter, it seems that all has been dealt with, and everyone is content – except God, who then exposes everything.[28] The writer of 2 Samuel also exposes it.

In contrast, the Qur'an is so circumspect in its handling of the affair that the commentators can argue that, if there was a sin, it was a very minor one; and 1 Chronicles, with its focus on genealogy and the temple, covers it completely. There are intrafaith as well as interfaith discussions to be pursued here. The Qur'an provokes the question, 'How far should the honour not only of this particular prophet-leader but also of today's leaders be preserved?' perhaps leading to the question of how the honour of the leader might relate to the honour of the community. From 2 Samuel, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that justice may require a public calling to account of the leader; but this particular leader repented and was forgiven and restored. Perhaps the contrasting 1 Chronicles implies that, under some conditions, even such sin as David's can be left behind.

Second, *who might expose the leader's sin?* The encounter between David and Nathan is an important element of Samuel's exploration of the relationship between the human king and the rule of God. The latter is represented by the prophet Nathan; and we note that there is a careful and growing distinction between the role of the king and the roles of the prophets and priests as the books progress. It is part of the role of the prophet to confront the human king with the requirements of the Divine King, not least because the power gained by the human king may blind him to his breaking of those requirements.

In contrast, the Qur'an has not a prophet, but two mysterious, probably angelic, intruders conveying the parable to David. For me, as a Christian reader, this raises the question of whether this is because David is being treated as a prophet as well as a king, and therefore of the implications of combining the role of the leader with the role of the prophet, as is exemplified in the person of Muhammad. Does this imply that no-one but God, through His angels, is in a position to call such a leader to account? In the case of Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab, was anyone in the community in a position effectively to challenge Muhammad? Today, what are the dangers of a political leader assuming religious authority (or vice versa)? For Muslims and Christians, in different ways, this should take us back to our texts and to our traditions to discern who is responsible for challenging our leaders, and how.

Third, *what might be the conditions for the restoration of an erring ruler?* The Qur'an simply indicates that David repented and does not even hint that his sin might have been such that his kingdom should be forfeited. 2 Samuel tells us that he repented and that God removed his sin, but then relates at length the consequences of that sin. Yet, in contrast with the case of Saul, David does not lose his throne – it is threatened and briefly lost, but eventually restored. It is very clear that, as it was God who gave him the throne in the first place, so it was God

who restored it to him; but there were people involved at every stage of the king-making. When should we, today, reject a ruler, and when should we accept the rule of a repentant ruler? Again, our questions take us back to our texts.

Back to the text

I have proposed that the Christian reader should see the differences that might seem scandalous to the Muslim reader not as problems, but as features of the very nature of scripture. In returning to the text with all the above discussions in mind, I have been considering an alternative: the 'thought experiment' of cutting the 'scandal' from the books of Samuel. It could not work. The incident is a pivot in David's story: the brilliantly narrated turning point between his rise to power and the family disintegration that makes him (and the reader) ready to let go of the kingdom that God has given to him.[29]

It is also, therefore, the crux of the mystery of Samuel: why does God establish the kingdom through David, and not through Saul? How can the later assessment of 1 Chronicles judge Saul as 'breaking faith' (10:13) and David as ruling with justice and righteousness (18:14 cf. 2 Samuel 23:3), and omit the Bathsheba incident completely? How can we make sense of the three structuring songs,[30] that frame the 'How have the mighty fallen?' of 2 Samuel 1:19–27 not only with Hannah's 'the Lord will exalt the power of His Annointed' of 1 Samuel 2:1–10 but also with David's 'the Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness' of 2 Samuel 22:2–51?

The puzzle of the sinful king who is also a 'man after God's own heart' is intensified through reading 'in conversation with' the Islamic '*işma* doctrine, and the Qur'an's exoneration of Muhammad in the analogous relationship with Zaynab and Zayd. The comparison with the Qur'an's circumspect handling of David's sin highlights 2 Samuel's insistence on bringing into the open the very shame which David has sought to hide (12:12).

We cannot escape the conclusion that David's sin is crucial to Samuel's history of the rise of the Israelite monarchy, and to the establishment of the Davidic messianic dynasty. But why does God not reject such a sinful king, as He rejected Saul, and replace him with someone better? In the light of the whole biblical canon, I would suggest that the answer is, 'There could be no-one better.' The sin of David is in the pattern of the sin of Adam,[31] and no human being escapes that pattern. As God committed Himself to work with sinful humanity after the flood (Genesis 8:21), so He has to work with sinful human beings in choosing a nation and its leaders. It seems that the big difference between Saul and David is in how they responded to being challenged about their sin. Where Saul, like Adam, tries to justify his actions, cover his shame and clutch his kingdom, David repents and recognises that he deserves to lose everything.

We need to add to the discussion about the universal human tendency to sin in Lodahl's chapter the observation that there is, in the Bible, no '*işma*. There are not two categories of human being – the good and the bad. No prophet, priest or king is miraculously protected from falling into sin. It would not even be correct to describe Jesus, who was 'in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without

sin' (Hebrews 4:15, ESV), in terms of *'iṣma*. He was not a divinely protected human being, but the eternally holy Word-made-flesh.

So, in the turbulence of today's power struggles, we can expect the mighty – even the best of them – to fall. But, if their response to their shame is acknowledging their poverty of spirit, mourning over their sin, being meekly ready to let go of power rather than to cling to it; if they long for justice and learn to be merciful to their opponents; and if they accept undeserved persecutions, maybe the books of Samuel are telling us that it is then that God will purify their hearts, cleanse their hands from blood and, through them, bring the peaceful kingdom of the Anointed.[32]

Onward towards biblical interpretation in Islamic context

My journey is not finished, and neither is my reading of this volume. The exploration of 2 Samuel 11 and 12 provoked by Walker and Makhlabi and Ciccarelli and augmented through interaction with other chapters has taken me into the whole of the Samuel literature, and provoked fresh intertextual conversations and questions about the texts as well as further analogies for future exploration. I now want to go forward from this introduction to see what other chapters have to offer.

What insights might Bristow's worldview approach offer on the differences between biblical and qur'anic handling of the sins of leaders? What parallels might I find between the idolatry of the golden calf (explored by Ghandehari and Feyzbakhsh) at the height of Israel's encounter with God and the power abuse of David at the height of his reign? Are there parallels between the Muslim discussions of this sin of David and the discussions about the *Aqedah* sacrifice explored by Mohd Nasir? What might a reception history approach, such as is used by O'Kane and Bhamji, add to my understanding? Are there further pointers relating to murder and law as well as to the development of the story in Aghaei's chapter?

What about the puzzle of 2 Samuel using, in its summary of David's life, a song which claims purity and cleanness of hands (2 Samuel 22:21, 25, 27)? All believers are likely to face a similar puzzle in their own lives, as they are invited in the Psalter to make it their own song (Psalm 18). How might Muslim readers interact with this psalm? How might Swanson's analysis of purity questions feed the discussion? How might Shabbir Akhtar's insights into law and grace in Galatians contribute to our mutual concerns about forgiveness and restoration? What resources does Akhtar's chapter offer to enable Muslim readers to study 2 Samuel rather than to reject it?

And how, I wonder, will reading this volume augment the experiments in biblical interpretation yet to be carried out by its various readers?

Notes

1 It is, in principle, a venture also shared by Jews; but the current work involves only Christians and Muslims.
2 This is how he describes his own experiment in F. X. Clooney, *Theology after Vedanta: An experiment in comparative theology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 3–4.

3 It is not easy to discern just what 'Book' might be meant here. Relevant questions include those of what parts of the Bible might have been available in Arabic (see S. Griffiths, *The Bible in Arabic: The scriptures of the 'people of the book' in the language of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) and of the Jewish and Christian canons (see Crowther's paper, chapter 9). For a study of the qur'anic concept of 'Book', see D. Madigan, *The Qur'an's self-image: Writing and authority in Islam's scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

4 See also my 'Towards a mutual understanding of Christian and Islamic concepts of revelation', *Themelios*, vol. 7, no. 3, April 1982, 16–22; and 'Qur'anic challenges for the Bible reader', in *The enduring authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1013–1056.

5 Examples include Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and its Biblical subtext* (London: Routledge, 2010); M. Ipgrave (ed.), *Scriptures in Dialogue: Christians and Muslims studying the Bible and the Qur'an together: A record of the seminar 'Building Bridges'* Held at Doha, Qatar, 7–9 April 2003 (London: Church House, 2004) and subsequent volumes of the 'Building Bridges' conferences; D. Ford and C.C. Pecknold (eds.), *The promise of Scriptural Reasoning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); M. Higton and R. Muers, *The text in play: Experiments in reading scripture* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

6 Q4: 7–12.

7 The pattern was set by Ibn Hazm (994–1064), *Kitāb al-Fiṣal*. Very influential in the modern era is R. Kairanawi, *Izhar Ul-Haqq* (1864). Published in Arabic and then Urdu in India, 1864. English translation: London: Ta Ha, 4 volumes, 1989–90.

8 See discussions in Chapters 7, 9 and 11 of this book. A recent example is M. Mir, *Understanding the Islamic scripture: A study of selected passages from the Qur'an* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007).

9 The pattern was set by Ali ibn Sahl Rabban al-Ṭabarī (785–860), *The book of religion and empire*, trans. A. Mingana (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922).

10 See discussion in Chapter 17, this volume.

11 A well-known example on Muslims as Ishmaelites and Hagarenes is John of Damascus (died 749 CE) in *De haeresibus*, extract in N.A. Newman (eds.), *The early Christian–Muslim dialogue: A collection of documents from the first three Islamic centuries (632–900A.D.)* (Pennsylvania: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1999), 139–144. For an overview of early apocalyptic interpretation of the Islamic conquests, see R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: A survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997), Chapter 8.

12 As evidenced in, for example, C.T. Maier, *Crusade propaganda and ideology: Models sermons for the preaching of the cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

13 S. Griffiths, *The Bible in Arabic*.

14 A seminal thinker on this subject in recent times was M. Polanyi, *Personal knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

15 I first developed this in my doctoral thesis: *An experiment in contextual comparative hermeneutics* (Durham, 1995).

16 As developed in D. Tracy, *The analogical imagination: Christian theology and the culture of pluralism* (London: SCM, 1981). In reflecting on the power of analogy, he quotes Aristotle: 'to spot the similar in the dissimilar is the mark of poetic genius' (p. 410).

17 In the context of such discussions, the work of Ghandehari and Feyzbakhsh (Chapter 6) and Shafaie's work (Chapter 3) are interesting experiments in seeing the Bible and the Qur'an as complementary rather than conflicting sources.

18 I use 'practice' rather than 'praxis' to avoid a limited interpretation in terms of liberation theology.

19 See, as one of many examples, the introduction to A.A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (Word Biblical Commentary vol. 11) (Nashville, TN: Word Books, 1989).

20 *The ESB study Bible* (Wheating, IL: Crossway, 2001), notes on 1 and 2 Samuel by D.T. Tsumura, *The NIV study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 5th edition, 2011), notes on 1 and 2 Samuel by J. R. Vannoy. I shall not deal with details, but limit my observations to the ways in which the various 'scandals' are approached.

21 An influential study of the literary form of the section of 2 Samuel that includes the Bathsheba story is R. N. Whybray, *The succession narrative* (London: SCM, 1968).

22 This is the NIV preference, its note stressing that 1 Samuel 17 requires the interpretation that David killed Goliath.

23 The problems noted in Crowther's note 64 are dealt with by offering a range of simple solutions that would harmonise the texts in question.

24 There is much more to be said here, not least in asking how, if at all, the nature of the Bible might be understood in Islamic categories. I hope to address this in my forthcoming monograph in this Routledge series.

25 Note also the fruitfulness of asking about the purpose of the human writer in Lodahl's paper.

26 For a thorough comparison of the David/Bathsheba and Muhammad/Zaynab stories and their accompanying traditions, see Z. Maghen, 'Intertwined triangles: Remarks on the relationship between two prophetic scandals', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 33, 2007, 17–92.

27 The best known early example is John of Damascus (d.752 A.D.), in his famous passage on Islam in *De Haeresibus*.

28 Reading with E. R. Richards and B. J. O'Brien, *Misreading scripture with Western eyes* (Westmont: IVP, 2012), 120–127, who argue that David's whole interaction with Uriah is aimed at keeping/restoring David's honour and that, according to the mores of the time, no one but Yahweh would have objected to what David had done.

29 See R. Alter, *The David story: A translation with commentary* (London: Norton, 1999) and R. Barron, *2 Samuel* (Ada: Brazos Press, 2015) on 2 Samuel 11 and 12 for narrative analyses which highlights these features.

30 See Walker's paper, Chapter 5, for these three songs as key to the chiastic structure of 1 and 2 Samuel.

31 See R. Barron, *2 Samuel* on 2 Samuel 11 for a comparison.

32 This paragraph reads 1 and 2 Samuel in the light of the beatitudes – Matthew 5:2–10.

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