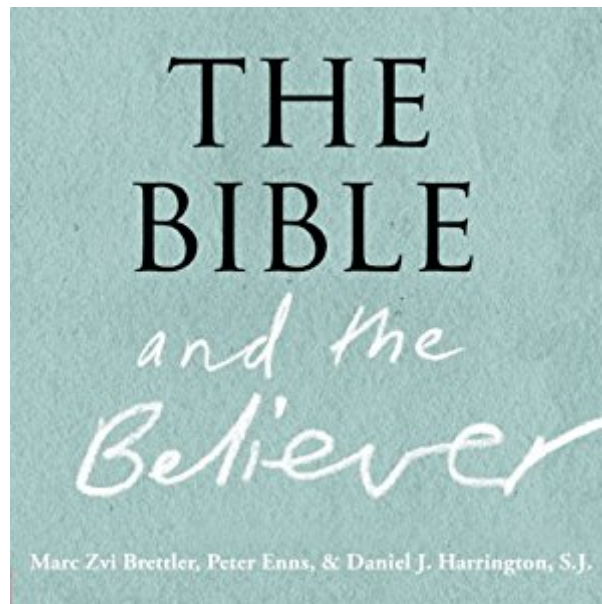


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The Bible And The Believer: How To Read The Bible Critically And Religiously



Synopsis

Can the Bible be approached both as sacred scripture and as a historical and literary text? For many people, it must be one or the other. How can we read the Bible both ways? *The Bible and the Believer* brings together three distinguished biblical scholars--one Jewish, one Catholic, and one Protestant--to illustrate how to read the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament critically and religiously. Marc Zvi Brettler, Peter Enns, and Daniel J. Harrington tackle a dilemma that not only haunts biblical scholarship today, but also disturbs students and others exposed to biblical criticism for the first time, either in university courses or through their own reading. Failure to resolve these conflicting interpretive strategies often results in rejection of either the critical approach or the religious approach--or both. But the authors demonstrate how biblical criticism--the process of establishing the original contextual meaning of biblical texts with the tools of literary and historical analysis--need not undermine religious interpretations of the Bible, but can in fact enhance them. They show how awareness of new archeological evidence, cultural context, literary form, and other tools of historical criticism can provide the necessary preparation for a sound religious reading. And they argue that the challenges such study raises for religious belief should be brought into conversation with religious tradition rather than deemed grounds for dismissing either that tradition or biblical criticism. Guiding readers through the history of biblical exegesis within the Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant faith traditions, *The Bible and the Believer* bridges an age-old gap between critical and religious approaches to the Old Testament.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book has the same format as the 3/4/5 Views books. After an Introduction, the three authors (Jewish, Roman Catholic & Protestant biblical scholars) present a description their faith's views of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in a 30- to 40-page essay, including an example of biblical criticism in practice. Each essay is followed by brief comments by the other two scholars and a Further Reading section. Jewish biblical scholar Marc Zvi Brettler presents the Jewish view that the interpretation rather than the biblical text itself is primary. He then describes the many facets of Jewish interpretation over the centuries. The difficult historical problems in the Torah are "not a core problem for Judaism because for Jews the Bible is not primarily a book of history to be interpreted literally." In addition, "according to Judaism, biblical books were canonized because they were authoritative, not because they were perceived as being divinely inspired." Roman Catholic biblical scholar Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. points out that Catholics "view the Bible as primarily a witness to a person, Jesus of Nazareth." "Catholics believe the Bible was written by human authors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the word of God in human language". Catholic theologians tend to hold the view that the Vatican Council taught the "limited inerrancy" (only what pertains to salvation is inerrant) of Scripture. Catholic interpretation of Scripture is more centralized in the Magisterium (the Teaching Office of the Church). Protestant biblical scholar Peter Enns points out that "in Protestantism the Bible is pressed into the role of supreme religious authority in a way that Scripture may have trouble supporting.

This fine volume will be very helpful to anyone interested in how believers who look to the Old Testament for fundamental guidance in their religious/spiritual journey can still do so, even in the light of serious challenges to biblical interpretation presented by more than one hundred years of increasingly convincing critical analysis of scripture. It may even be a lifeline for believers who feel their faith wavering because of what is seen as an effective critical assault on the veracity of scripture in general and the Old Testament in particular. The authors represent three broad groups of believers - Jewish (Marc Zvi Brettler), Catholic (Daniel J. Harrington S.J.) and Protestant (Peter Enns). Each one has the experience and academic standing to ably represent their community, and each one provides convincing evidence that they too are believers, within their particular tradition. This then, ultimately, is a series of essays on the impact of and some healthy responses to biblical criticism for believers by believers. From literary, interpretative and faith affirming viewpoints, it is

fascinating to explore the differences and similarities embodied in the three traditions. The impacts of more than a century of critical study of scripture have been significant, and the ways of dealing with these challenges, while remaining faithful, are varied across the three traditions. Also, for each tradition, the nature of the impacts are significantly different to begin with, something not always obvious until you have each tradition's approach to scripture clearly explained. In fact, the fine explanations of these approaches offer fascinating insights in their own right, especially for those who enjoy comparative studies.

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