



Power and Responsibility in Biblical Interpretation: Reading the Book of Job with Edward Said (BibleWorld)

By Alissa Jones Nelson

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'Power and Responsibility in Biblical Interpretation' addresses the interpretive challenges now facing much biblical interpretation. Incorporating the methodologies of poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and liberation theology, the study presents a possible methodology which integrates scholarly and vernacular hermeneutics. The approach is based on the theories of Edward Said, adapting his concept of contrapuntal reading to the interpretation of 'Job'. The book sets this study in the broader context of a survey of current work in the field. The analysis of 'Job' examines the possibilities for dialogue between those interpretations that view suffering as a key theme in the book and those that do not. Interpretations of the 'Book of Job' are then compared to the psychology of suffering as experienced in various contexts today. The conclusion argues for pedagogical reform based upon the ethical and interpretive insights of contrapuntal hermeneutics.

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Editorial Review

Review

'This book is a breath of fresh air. Nelson does the important work of contrapuntally engaging the many vernacular and academic readings of the book of Job in the two-thirds world. It is an immensely valuable resource for understanding how the suffering of Job speaks to oppression and suffering in a global context.' - Erin Runions, Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Pomona College, Claremont, California

'A fascinating and illuminating account of how Said's idea of contrapuntal reading works with biblical texts. Combining rigorous theoretical analysis with striking practical examples, the book offers innovative strategies where mainstream and marginal reading practices can work productively in globalized interpretative contexts. This timely and challenging work will certainly change the way one thinks about biblical interpretation.' --R.S.Sugirtharajah, University of Birmingham, UK

'Power and Responsibility in Biblical Interpretation offers us Said's contrapuntal mode of re-reading as a resource with which to include dissenting voices in the dominant discourses with the aim of decentring the dominant and it shows us what this mode of reading might accomplish.' --Gerald West, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Power and Responsibility in Biblical Interpretation is, for various reasons, a valuable book. First of all, it offers a good introduction to the work of Edward Said and the notion of contrapuntal hermeneutics, as well as to the functioning of this approach. I could well imagine that students from a variety of disciplines -- transcending biblical studies as such -- could benefit from reading this study in the context of their explorations in critical theory and hermeneutics. Also, the book is valuable because it brings together and takes seriously a very broad range of interpretations of one key biblical text, which raises the reader's awareness of the broad reception of Scripture and the productivity of canonical texts. --Peter-Ben Smit, *Review of Biblical Literature* (2014)

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About the Author

Alissa Jones Nelson completed her doctorate at the University of St Andrews in 2009. Her recent publications focus on the intersections of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and contemporary socio-political issues such as globalization, pedagogy and sexuality as well as the use of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in popular culture.

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