



The Language of Symbolism: Biblical Theology, Semantics, and Exegesis

Pierre Grelot

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How does one describe God who is utterly "other"? Neither the concrete definitions of science nor the abstractions of philosophy can provide the words needed. Rather, the words the Bible uses to describe God spring from the mysteries of the human condition: figurative language, relationship language, even the language of imagination and mythology. Pierre Grelot examines the language of symbolism in the Bible, categorizing, explaining, and illuminating the Scriptural use of language to reveal God. The symbolic language used in the two Testaments of the Bible can suggest supernatural realities without having to define them. And the Bible is soaked in the supernatural: from the parting of the Red Sea and the guidance of God's chosen people through the wilderness, to the virgin birth, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In order to understand the Bible, it is not enough to understand dates, places, authors, and literary genre; we must also understand its language. This Bible's symbolic language is theological, but it is very distinctive from the theological language of Greco-Roman, medieval, or modern culture. Nevertheless, it is the Bible's symbolic language that is most expressive and best able to engage the cultures where the Christian faith is growing most rapidly today, such as those in Asia and in Africa. Indeed, such symbolic language may now also be well-suited to engaging Western societies, where a rationalist culture has dulled religious sensibilities. In proposing a way to classify the Bible's symbols, Grelot shows how its language works to make perceptible that which, in the purpose of God, cannot otherwise be explained.



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