

Lytta Basset
Holy Anger: Jacob, Job, Jesus
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*There is within us both the aggression of the wolf and the lamb's thirst
for gentleness.*

This is neither good nor bad, it just is...

This book applies a contemporary psychological approach to the ancient texts of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, focusing on the anger of three great characters : Jacob, Job and Jesus. The author's premise is thus: it is very likely that anger is part of a living faith.

I found this a dense read requiring a certain commitment! Every page is packed with detail and with much analysis of the possible and varied meanings of Hebrew names for people and places which enrich the understanding of the Biblical texts.

This is a book for those fascinated and perhaps troubled by the somewhat ambiguous presentation of anger found in the scriptures and a certain Christian pious-ness that discourages the expression of anger. Reflecting on the stories of these three giant biblical personalities, Basset posits God as the unrecognised and mysterious OTHER, often playing an adversarial role, assailing us in a struggle to reveal our own truth as both persecutors and victims. Holy anger, she writes, is healthy anger that opens the search for authenticity.

From a psychological perspective anger is neither good nor bad. What we choose to do with it may be. Basset highlights the damage that is done when a certain interpretation of Christianity fosters the plastic smile no matter the aggravation:

Be angry but do not sin, the - everybody is beautiful, everybody is nice, the sun is about to set so let's forget all about it - syndrome.

How can we even imagine, writes Basset, that we can work through our anger in under 24 hours? She suggests rather that we use the energy of anger to reinvest the relationship with its own truth.

This book is an invitation to lift the ban on anger and to confront the question of why this interdiction exists in the first place. Where did the censorship come from? This book endeavours to help us see anger in a new light, as something we would welcome with greater benevolence and as that which God wants it to be: an extraordinary path of life.

Catherine Joy CSF