



Interpreting the Bible and the Constitution (John W. Kluge Center Books)

Jaroslav Pelikan

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Both the Bible and the Constitution have the status of "Great Code," but each of these important texts is controversial as well as enigmatic. They are asked to speak to situations that their authors could not have anticipated on their own. In this book, one of our greatest religious historians brings his vast knowledge of the history of biblical interpretation to bear on the question of constitutional interpretation. Jaroslav Pelikan compares the methods by which the official interpreters of the Bible and the Constitution—the Christian Church and the Supreme Court, respectively—have approached the necessity of interpreting, and reinterpreting, their important texts. In spite of obvious differences, both texts require close, word-by-word exegesis, an awareness of opinions that have gone before, and a willingness to ask new questions of old codes, Pelikan observes. He probes for answers to the question of what makes something authentically "constitutional" or "biblical," and he demonstrates how an understanding of either biblical interpretation or constitutional interpretation can illuminate the other in important ways.

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