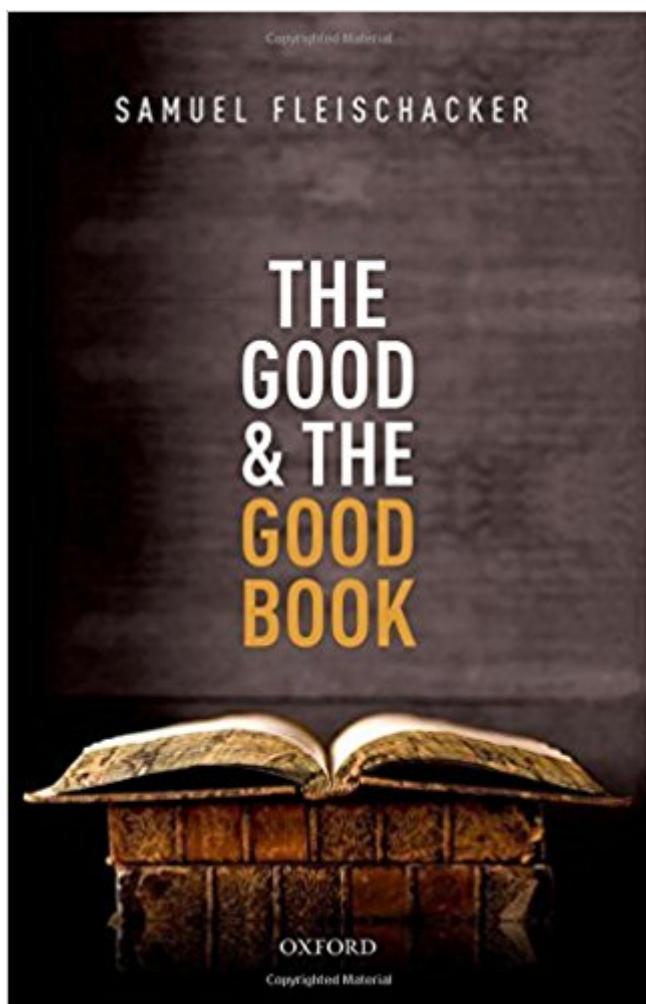


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The Good And The Good Book: Revelation As A Guide To Life



Synopsis

'It is written ...,' says the believer in a sacred text, and proceeds to justify all manner of terrifying things. Or so runs a popular caricature of religious faith today. Religions that center around a revelation--around a 'good book,' like the Torah or Gospels or Quran, which is seen as God's word--are widely regarded as irrational and dangerous: as based on outdated science and conducive to illiberal, inhumane moral attitudes. *The Good and the Good Book* defends revealed religion and shows how it can be reconciled with science and liberal morality. Samuel Fleischacker invites us to see revealed texts as aiming to teach neither scientific nor moral doctrines but a vision of what life is about overall. Purely naturalistic ways of thinking, he argues, cannot make much sense of our overall or ultimate good; revealed texts, by contrast, do precisely that. But these texts also need to be interpreted so as to accord with our independent understanding of morality. A delicate balance is required for this process of interpretation--between respecting the uncanny obscurity of our sacred texts and rendering them morally familiar. The book concludes with an account of how believers in one religion can respect believers in other religions, and secular people.

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Customer Reviews

"The Good and the Good Book shows just how illuminating the methods of academic philosophy can be when they are skillfully employed on topics philosophy is more popularly supposed to engage in--moral integrity, the purpose of human life, the practical relevance of sacred texts. Fleischacker manages, unusually, to combine a clear-sighted appreciation for the limits as well as

the power of reason, with a real feel for why religion matters to people." --Gordon Graham, Princeton Theological Seminary "The Good and the Good Book: Revelation as a Guide to Life is a constructive, reflective, and highly personal meditation on belief, religion, and the good life by a scholar and believer deeply engaged in modern philosophical and theological thought. Written almost like a spiritual memoir, Sam Fleischacker takes his reader through a series of theological challenges that face anyone invested in "revealed religion" who is equally concerned about tolerance and pluralism, and presents a case where revealed religion can survive its modern critique. The Good and the Good Book is a work of very accessible philosophical theology that should be of interest to scholars of religion, constructive theologians, and anyone struggling with living inside a religious tradition in these troubling times." --Shaul Magid, Indiana University "Sam Fleischacker has accomplished something rare and significant: a highly-readable, philosophically-compelling and utterly enjoyable defense of revealed religion. I hope this book is read (and argued over) among the devout, the secular, the seeking and the skeptic." --Eboo Patel, Founder and President, Interfaith Youth Core "Sam Fleischacker has given us a conceptual tour de force that illuminates the path for those seeking to have an ethical faith that is grounded in revelation. Lesser thinkers choose only one side of the tension or create false harmonies. In contrast, Fleischacker carefully untangles the knotty issues then he boldly and cogently shows a path of combining Divine teachings based on revelation with liberal virtues and modern science. The book deserves a broad reception and engagement with its timely ideas." --Alan Brill, Seton Hall University "It isn't easy to say something powerful and accessible in Jewish theology, but Samuel Fleischacker has in this brief, elegant volume done just that. With lucidity, rich learning worn lightly, deep moral and religious commitment, and rich humanity, he illuminates the meaning of revealed religion for traditional communities and their thoughtful critics alike. A very good book about the good book, and the other good books too." --Yehudah Mirsky, Brandeis University, author of Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution "The original contribution of this book to philosophy of religion, and to the justification of religious commitment, stands out unmistakably..." -- Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews Online "A great strength is his ability to effectively address his message to the modern reader, of whichever religion that reader may be."--Religious Studies Review

Samuel Fleischacker, University of Illinois-Chicago Samuel Fleischacker is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Illinois-Chicago. His previous work has focused on Enlightenment moral and political thought, especially that of Kant and Adam Smith, and on conceptions of culture, liberalism, and distributive justice. He is the author of *Divine Teaching and the Way of the World*

(OUP, 2011), On Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations: A Philosophical Companion (Princeton University Press, 2004), and A Short History of Distributive Justice (Harvard University Press, 2004), and editor of Heidegger's Jewish Followers (Duquesne University Press, 2008). He is Director of Jewish Studies at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

For those questioning the advantages of accepting a revealed religion, or even for those who feel totally comfortable with where they are religiously, this book is a must read. It's intellectually honest, refreshingly insightful, and clearly written. Using primarily his own thoughts, Fleischacker cleverly presents his rationale behind his choice to accept Jewish doctrine, and masterfully responds to the critiques of revealed religions. In doing so, Fleischacker has crafted a masterpiece, allowing the reader to re-examine the way religious people think about, justify, and submit to a seemingly archaic moral code. He argues religious people naturally bring their own moral intuitions to the table when accepting a form of ethics beyond themselves, which allows for a more holistic view on what it means to live a meaningful life. All in all, a fascinating and fantastic read.

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