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Robert E. Goss and Mona West (eds.). *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000. Pp. 239. \$24 (Paper).

[1] This book will cause people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender to return to the Bible as a source of affirmation and inspiration; it will invite straight people to read the Bible with new eyes. All people will be enriched by this book's capacity for creating new questions about old assumptions and for finding deeper meaning by reading from a previously understudied and taboo point of view.

[2] This book contains 21 articles that interpret scripture with a queer lens. The authors vary by gender, race, sexual orientation, and religious tradition. Because of the diversity of authors, the reader leaves the book with a deeper understanding of how the "perspective of the interpreter plays a major role in deciphering the meaning of the text" (161). From the Jewish lesbian's voice to the male to female transsexual, African American woman, and gay Unitarian, this book covers the gamut of interpreter perspectives.

[3] In explaining new interpretations, the authors are astute enough in their theology to be credible. With references to original translations as well as citations of modern scriptural scholarship, they situate and ground their speculations in existing work. Yet, at the same time, they use language that is accessible to the layperson and, for the most part, devoid of scholarly dryness. Many of the authors skillfully weave touching personal stories into their scriptural commentary. Their connections to reputable scholarly sources were sometimes weak, but this lack may have been deliberate due to the post-modern and inspirational nature of this work.

[4] The authors of this collection are courageous. They take on such disturbing issues as the Hebrew image of the abusive God and the misogynistic death and desecration of Jezebel. They problematize complex notions and emphasize tensions present in the texts. By reframing questions and perspectives and wrestling with the contradictions present in Scripture, they help guide the reader to a new sense of hope and peace with the tradition.

[5] Social issues such as gender equality, institutionalized homophobia, violence against women, death and dying, sexuality, relationships, and intimacy are brought into dialogue

with the Bible in this collection of essays. Most of the authors seemed acutely aware of the complexity of these issues and brought all points of view into the conversation. Even the queer perspective was criticized in many cases, and other frameworks such as feminism, liberation theology, and the hermeneutics of suspicion were used to cast new light on the issues. The authors were also creative as they dealt with the wide variety of social issues. They experiment with and create new theories of interpretation based upon new questions.

[6] This book is for anyone who wants to question old assumptions about Scripture. This book is for courageous people who value new ideas and like to push the envelope. However, the book is especially suited for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender believers who have been cut off from their past by years of unrelenting and hateful exclusion. It will help to begin to take back the Word from a form of distortion that has been used to maintain control rather than to seek God.

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