



Biblical Porn: Affect, Labor, and Pastor Mark Driscoll's Evangelical Empire

Jessica Johnson

Duke University Press (May 11, 2018)

Softcover \$24.95 (248pp)

978-0-8223-7153-3

Biblical Porn is, like the story of Mars Hill Church, both more complex and more disturbing than it first appears. Jessica Johnson's unsparing book offers a deep look at the sexual politics and subsequent scandals that dismantled the church in 2014.

Johnson, a professor of Anthropology and Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington, dives deeply into her subject. After a cursory explanation of "affective labor," *Biblical Porn* jumps into the convoluted processes of religious conviction.

Mars Hill Church and its founder, Mark Driscoll, are deconstructed from a feminist perspective. *Biblical Porn* argues that Driscoll used women's bodies, labor, and "biblical porn," or a highly sexualized, commercial reading of the Bible, as a recruitment tool. The success of Mars Hill Church, which grew to fifteen facilities and thirteen thousand members in less than two decades, is read as a testament to Driscoll's successful use of sex as a conversion tool.

In spite of its racy title, *Biblical Porn* is academic, not titillating. Johnson's perspective, as a non-Christian, single person, is an outsider's, a stranger investigating the sexual mores of a guarded, insular culture. Her personal experience in attending the services and seminars adds dimension to this theory-rich book.

One excellent scene describes her discomfort while praying at a women's training day lunch break. "For all the times that I had bowed my head, I still did not know this language," Johnson says. Yet, despite her inability to assimilate, *Biblical Porn* is a powerful and surprisingly humble observation on Mars Hill Church's social dynamics.

With deep insight and an absence of judgment, Johnson interprets the driving forces behind Driscoll's rhetoric, and the toxic effect it had on the believers who followed him.

CLAIRE FOSTER (Religion 2018)

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