

Salome's Conversion

Rohn Alice Federbush

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Salome has long been viewed as one of the bad girls of the Bible. The seductive dance she performs before her stepfather, Herod Antipas, resulted in his pronouncement that she could have anything she wanted. At the urging of her mother, Herodias, Salome requested the head of John the Baptist on a platter, and Herod gave the command to have him beheaded.

In *Salome's Conversion*, Rohn Alice Federbush presents Salome in a much different light. According to his story, Salome is deceived about the true purpose of the dance, and she is given alcohol before she begins. Herodias had also forced her to wear a costume that would slash her legs and inflict pain with every movement. Decius Invictus, the Roman soldier assigned to guard Salome, rescues her and they escape into the night with her maid. The story then focuses primarily on the physical and spiritual journeys of Decius and Salome.

As a royal runaway, Salome finds refuge at the home of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Decius encounters Jesus and soon becomes a follower, but Salome struggles to believe in Jesus as the Christ. As Decius becomes more involved with Jesus' inner circle, he and Salome witness many of the scenes readers may recognize from the Bible. Even after the crucifixion of Jesus, Salome remains uncommitted in her belief.

Federbush weaves a credible narrative. Though the author does take liberties with biblical accounts, this does not detract from a story that is, after all, intended as fiction.

Two aspects of the book become somewhat annoying, however. First, Federbush always puts the name of Jesus in red type. This does not add any substance to the text; it only creates an awkward break in the flow of the words. Readers are sure to be puzzled at the author's purpose.

The second problematic aspect of the book, one that's even more distracting than the first, is Federbush's insertion of biblical passages into the dialogue. Characters who have been speaking in modern English are suddenly speaking the English of the King James Bible. Paraphrasing the passages into modern language would have conveyed the intent more effectively.

In spite of these minor flaws, *Salome's Conversion* introduces an interesting twist on a familiar biblical story. The author uses strong dialogue, solid character development, and a well-structured plotline to produce an intriguing and entertaining novel.

JEFF FRIEND (January 20, 2012)

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