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Modern Day Moabites: The Bible and the Debate About Same-Sex Marriage

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With the debate about same-sex marriage raging in the United States, this paper asks whether the canonical scriptures offer any justification for blessing same-sex unions. It looks to the ways that the Bible is used by proponents and critics. It analyzes the hermeneutics of the religious left and the religious right, particularly as they grapple with the "clobber" texts. It then turns to the biblical book of Ruth, which critic J. Hillis Miller describes as having "been alienated from itself, and put to new uses. The paper puts the book of Ruth to yet another new use/misprision, using it as a prooftext to support same-sex marriage, which has already been upheld by lesbian readers of scripture because of the intimate relationship between the protagonists

"misreads" the text differently. Ruth describes how a marriage made between an Israelite and a Moabite brings about the most important figures in the Bible and the man from whose line the Messiah is expected to come. The biblical laws prohibiting Moabites are not permitted to enter into the community of Israel. Juxtaposing the levitical laws (ostensibly) prohibiting Moabites from Israel, this paper argues that the religious left could hold up the book of Ruth as a biblical text that seems explicitly forbidden by biblical law.

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