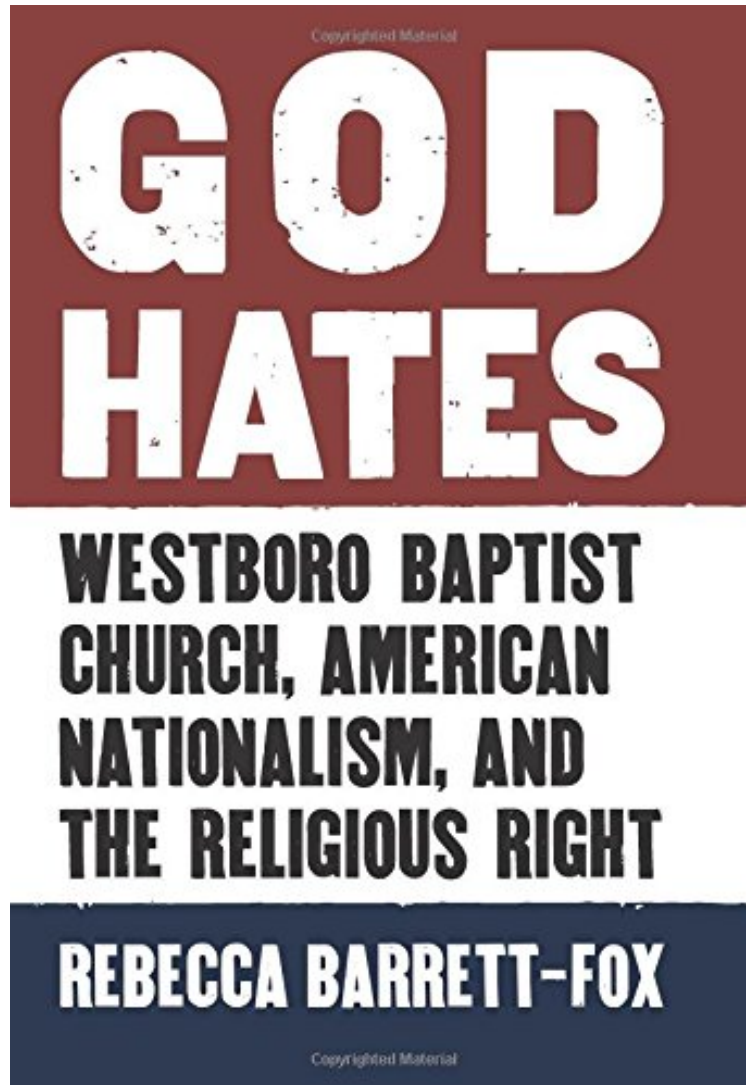


God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right

Rebecca Barrett-Fox

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Rebecca Barrett-Fox : God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and the Religious Right:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. They do what they do for love, although to those of us of a different ...By MtsscholarI know the author personally, so this is a biased appraisal.Dr. Barrett-Fox has written a fair and accurate account of the mission and ministry of Westboro Baptist Church. She traces their theological threads from

their actions back to their Hyper-Calvinist understanding of scripture. They do what they do for love, although to those of us of a different theological bent, it seems like madness. A good source for thoughtful discussion of the issues of our day in politics and religion. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Well written and researched but it's not an easy read or for a casual reader. By Motorcycle Kelly Well written and researched but it's not an easy read or for a casual reader. It helped me understand why the Westboro folks do what they do. Nothing new tho, just another religious group who are convinced they are the only people on the earth who have religious truth. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Religious Wrong By TJPI am filled with a sense of revulsion before I even open the book and read the Preface, the Table of Contents and the dust jacket blurbs. I have heard of these monsters, these creatures who picket the funerals of dead military veterans and gay men. Do I really want to read *God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and The Religious Right?* Author Rebecca Barrett-Fox is to be commended, both for the courage shown for undertaking such a project in the first place, and for the dispassionate objective style she applies to the narrative. Dr. Barrett-Fox is an assistant professor of sociology and the director of women and gender studies at Arkansas State University. She tackled a controversial subject and gave the church and its people more respect than it or they deserve. Readers will be given a theology primer in the early chapters. The grim principle of predestination, where a god has long ago determined who will be saved (the elect) and who will be relegated to an eternal hell-fire. What a horrible thought to plant in the minds of young children. What an even more horrible thought to be encountered by men and women of faith facing their Final Days. While their theological playbook dates to 17th and 18th century Calvinism, Westboro Baptist activists utilize 20th and 21st century technology to spread their message of hate and divisiveness. The connection between the church and the Religious Right with respect to their anti-gay theology, a connection both sides deny, is documented well. *God Hates: Westboro Baptist Church, American Nationalism, and The Religious Right* is not a pleasant read, not a light Oceanside summer-time read. However, there are valuable, if unpleasant insights to be gained and I'm glad I took the time to find them.

The congregants thanked God that they weren't like all those hopeless people outside the church, bound for hell. So the Westboro Baptist Church's Sunday service began, and Rebecca Barrett-Fox, a curious observer, wondered why anyone would seek spiritual sustenance through other people's damnation. It is a question that piques many a witness to Westboro's more visible activity—the GOD HATES FAGS picketing of funerals. In *God Hates*, sociologist Barrett-Fox takes us behind the scenes of Topeka's Westboro Baptist Church. The first full ethnography of this infamous presence on America's Religious Right, her book situates the church's story in the context of American religious history and reveals as much about the uneasy state of Christian practice in our day as it does about the workings of the Westboro Church and Fred Phelps, its founder. *God Hates* traces WBC's theological beliefs to a brand of hyper-Calvinist thought reaching back to the Puritan extreme Calvinism, emphasizing predestination, that has proven as off-putting as Westboro's actions, even for other Baptists. And yet, in examining Westboro's role in conservative politics and its contentious relationship with other fundamentalist activist groups, Barrett-Fox reveals how the church's message of national doom in fact reflects beliefs at the core of much of the Religious Rights rhetoric. Westboro's aggressively offensive public activities actually serve to soften the anti-gay theology of more mainstream conservative religious activism. With an eye to the church's protest at military funerals, she also considers why the public has responded so differently to these than to Westboro's anti-LGBT picketing. With its history of Westboro Baptist Church and its founder, and its profiles of defectors, this book offers a complex, close-up view of a phenomenon on the fringes of American Christianity and a broader, disturbing view of the mainstream theology it at once masks and reflects.

"If one desires a look inside the Westboro Baptist Church compound to learn how the WBC members explain their behavior and belief system, how they profess to love and care for each other, *God Hates* is a necessary book." *Kansas History* "This important book challenges readers to reflect on America's long history of homophobic religious discourse. It marks a significant and timely mediation on the relationship between religion, sexuality, and civic discourse in a post-Obergefell United States." *Journal of Church and State* "A measured account of the work and people of the Westboro Baptist Church. The strength of the book is in its explication of the WBC positions logic." *Choice* "Barrett-Fox meticulously outlines the theology, history, ministry, and political ideology [of the Westboro Baptist Church]." *New Territory Magazine* "Barrett-Fox gives us the first full-scale examination of Westboro, and it makes for fascinating and horrifying reading." *Journal of American History* "God Hates is a disturbing book, not because it exposes the theology of hate and homophobia of Westboro Baptist Church though it does so, powerfully and effectively. It is disturbing because it refuses to distance this church movement from more mainstream segments of the political and religious right. In this sensitive study, Rebecca Barrett-Fox reveals Westboro's theology of hate to be no less than the political and theological unconscious of the modern Christian Right itself—the less palatable but now fully visible heir to America's Puritan legacy." Anthony Petro, author of *After the Wrath of God: AIDS, Sexuality, and American Religion* "Rebecca Barrett-Fox examines the infamous Westboro Baptist Church with thick ethnographic descriptions and an illuminating theological analysis that recognizes a shared ideology between these extremists and some less reviled, more powerful Christian conservatives." Carol Mason, author of *Oklahoma: Lessons in Unqueering*

AmericaAbout the AuthorRebecca Barrett-Fox is visiting assistant professor of sociology at Arkansas State University, Jonesboro.