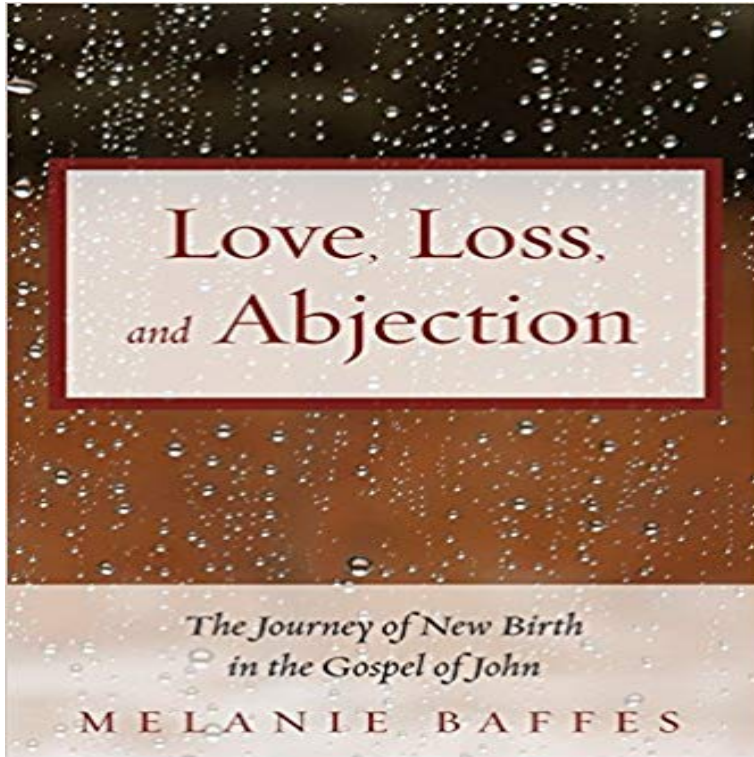


# Love, Loss, and Abjection: The Journey of New Birth in the Gospel of John



This study explores the premise that the experience of being born from above in John's Gospel can be seen as mirroring the development of human subjectivity, particularly as understood through the psychoanalytic work of Julia Kristeva. It draws specifically on Kristeva's theory of how the human self/subject takes shape in infancy, her contention that subjectivity is a work in progress, and her insistence on abjection as a catalyst for developing selfhood. Examining the story of Mary of Bethany (as narrated in John 11-12) through this lens, this analysis seeks to better understand the concept of new birth and how it relates to being fully human. Melanie Baffes has undertaken this project to repair a matter of significant neglect on the part of the scholarly treatment of the Gospel of John. Her concern is with the lack of appreciation or notice of Mary of Bethany, her person, role in the Jesus narrative, and the symbolic value that her presence has in the story. . . . Baffes surprises the reader with the amazing amount of material she is able to generate out of the limited references to Mary in John's Gospel. She sees profound implications in each turn of phrase and linguistic element in the narrative. This book will challenge the community of Johannine scholars with its remarkably nuanced view of the character in the Jesus story that Baffes lifts as one of the chief of the disciples, and apparently the first one to really get the point of Jesus's life and ministry. --J. Harold Ellens, Director of the MCECS, University of Michigan, and Professor of Biblical Interpretation and Christian Spirituality, Ecumenical Theological Seminary of Detroit; author, *The Son of Man in the Gospel of John* (2010) Unfolding a transformative faith that arises from love and loss, Melanie Baffes journeys with Mary of Bethany and befriends Julia Kristeva, giving us a reading in which psychoanalytic theory and

biblical narrative reveal the semiotic emergence of selfhood. Intriguing! A must-read for scholars of the Gospel of John, especially on the aesthetic relationship between abjection and fully human in biblical faith, communal discipleship, and interdisciplinary hermeneutics. --K. K. Yeo, Kendall Chair of New Testament, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary; Affiliate Faculty, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, Northwestern University

Melanie Baffes approaches the often confusing and misunderstood figure of Mary of Bethany through the interpretive lens of psychology/psychoanalytic theory, analyzing Mary's transformation in part through the work of Julia Kristeva and the theory of the development of selfhood, along with the Johannine idea of being born from above. This is an exciting new look at the book of John for all scholars, but even more for those who have searched for a new way to look at Mary of Bethany, not simply as a shadow figure behind Martha, but as a transformed figure brought to new life, fully alive in faith. --Diane Capitani, Lecturer in Literature and Religion, Northwestern University; author of *Truthful Pictures: Slavery Defended from Scripture in the Domestic Sentimental Novel of the 19th Century South* (2009)

Melanie Baffes (M.Div., Ph.D.) is a writer and independent biblical scholar. She is the coauthor of *Research and Writing in the Seminary* (2014) and coeditor of *Nation and World, Church and God* (2014).

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