

7-1-2016

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Sociology of Religion, Vol. 77, No. 2 (2016): 223-224. [DOI](#). This article is © Oxford University Press and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](#). Oxford University Press does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from Oxford University Press.

Review of *Queer Christianities: Lived Religion in Transgressive Forms*, by Kathleen T. Talvacchia, Michael F. Pettinger, and Mark Larrimore

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This is a deeply generative and resonant collection. Benefiting from decades of interdisciplinary study of religion and sexuality, in Mark Larrimore's words, it "explores the living worlds of queer Christianities" (1). The organization of the collection reflects a great deal of careful thought. Divided into parts entitled "Celibacies," "Matrimonies," "Promiscuities," and "Forward!", the book brings together diverse scholarship and writing about queerness in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Several chapters are so gorgeously written that they brought tears to my eyes.

This rich and diverse collection will add depth and perspective to the sociology of religion. Some chapters provide historical background; others might exemplify various basic principles in the sociology of religion for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. Others still will challenge readers to

identify how natural-seeming worldviews are shaped by social privilege and power. All add immense depth and richness to contemporary discussions of marriage, sexuality/gender embodiment, and power. Kathryn Lofton's final chapter attentively situates the previous chapters in the past twenty years of scholarship on Christianity and queerness, arguing that if the question of the 1990s was "Can one be religious and gay, lesbian, or queer?", the question addressed in this volume seems to be "Is it possible to be Christian *without* being queer?" (199).

The contributors define queerness as, like Jesus's ministry, calling adherents to transgress entrenched social norms, boundaries, and power. Several chapters highlight Jesus's norm-defying love as the essence of the Christian message. Elijah C. Nealy's chapter and two "Church Interludes" speak to this extravagant love, and Yvette Flunder's in particular includes a direct call to heal "oppression sickness," the felt need of those oppressed to identify with their oppressors by oppressing others. Scholarly and personal reflections on coming out by Sister Carol Bernice and Kathleen T. Talvacchia challenge the "Christianity vs. LGBTQs" narrative by showing how they each came to awareness of their sexual identities in the process of reflecting on their faith.

Unsurprisingly, marriage receives a lot of attention. Jennifer Harvey goes so far as to say, "In theological terms, disrupting the normal might be conceptualized as sacred work" (107). Addressing the question of to what extent same-sex marriages assimilate to systems of domination or transgress social power, she insists that any assessment of queer families must be rooted "in the real material experiences of actual and diverse families," turning to sociology to gain an understanding of such material experiences (109). Heather White uncovers the lost history of same-sex marriage at the height of gay liberation in the early 1970s, revealing the Christian voices long submerged under the liberationist rhetoric more commonly associated with that era. Theresa Delgado uses the twelfth century Roman Catholic principle of "reception," the belief that church law is tested by its members, to argue that heterosexuals who reject (by their actions if not their words) the church's teachings on the purpose of sex as procreative might stand in unity with LGBT Catholics to declare that the sex's true purpose is unitive and that the hierarchy needs to change its teachings on human sexuality. Mary Hunt offers a striking challenge to maritalist culture; citing the legal conundra couples face navigating the bureaucracies that crystallize around *marriage*, she challenges us to imagine how society would change if we could see not marriage as the bedrock of society, but rather *friendship*.

Other contributions speak to the very recent elevation of marriage within Christianity. Lofton reflects explicitly on the irony that many contemporary Christians see passionate heterosexual marriage as the ultimate—and indeed only—expression of Christian faith while being seemingly unaware of how strange that formation is to the history of Christian thought, faith, and practice. Chapters by David G. Hunter and William E. Smith III show the "queerness" of the early church and explore medieval experiences of marriage. Building on Hunter's historical discussion of the early church's views of marriage and celibacy, sociologist Lynne Gerber points to the early Christian desire to overcome lust through marriage, seeing the "tepid" marital desires avowed by the ex-gay spokespersons she has observed as more in keeping with that earlier approach to marriage than the avid heterosexuality avowed by conservative Protestants more commonly.

The chapters resonate with other themes as well, and I have not summarized every chapter here; but rather taken this as an invitation to examine the volume. While it is not written or edited chiefly by sociologists, it engages at a deep level in conversation with our discipline and more importantly, it

provides deep, gorgeous examples of lived religion in the twenty-first century overlap of Christianity and sexuality.