

## BOOK REVIEWS



Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and James D. Whitehead, *Fruitful Embraces: Sexuality, Love, and Justice* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2014), 198 pp.

**W***hat time is it?* We are long past the time when it was morally sufficient to listen only for the brokenness and pain related to authentic expressions of sexuality that confront current social norms and cultural taboos. It is now time, according to the Whiteheads, for all those in ministries to also attune our listening to the joy and abundance, *the fruitful embraces*, found in the rich complexity of human sexuality and gender and to call for justice for those living outside of their authenticity and experiencing social rejection and legal discrimination.

The book, divided into three parts, begins by celebrating and exploring the mutuality of Christian spirituality and sexuality embodied in the dynamics of sensuality, intimacy, vulnerability, and self-care that are foundational to vital relationships with God and one another. Part two puts forth an optimistic case for the coming together of justice and sexuality in broader social arenas, in particular marriage equality, justice for institutional sexual abuse victims, and the rights of the physically disabled. Part three encourages developing a more enlightened, welcoming, and effective pastoral presence to offer to those whose sexual expression is nuanced in ways outside our own experience.

The authors lay out a comprehensive theological history, particularly the schism that resulted in the Eastern and Western Christian churches, to support evolving values and morals related to sexuality, but they might have considered including a more explicit framework for sexual ethics that would have added greater depth and understanding of the conflicting dynamics within this struggle for justice. In describing their own journey to-

ward an embrace of the abundance and wholeness of human sexuality, the Whiteheads challenge all of us in ministry to come to greater insight and compassion through learning, self-examination, and developing personal relationships with those denied their right to flourish as authentic human beings.

Julia M. McKeon  
Stanford University Spiritual Care Department  
Palo Alto, California