

**Review of Amy DeRogatis, *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelism*,
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Amy DeRogatis explores the world of American evangelical sex in her new book *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelism*. In it she writes about a large population of Americans, about one third, who self-identify as evangelical and the books they consume in their search to be saved, have intimate relationships with God, and also be in what they consider both 'natural' and 'Godly' sexual relationships. She debunks the common stereotype that sex, especially good sex, is outside the realm of evangelical life. As the title so aptly states, sex and salvation go hand-in-hand. DeRogatis takes the reader through a number of evangelical social movements and their accompanying major publications. She begins the book by looking at purity literature written for pre-school to young adult girls that have prince and princess fairy-tale themes and titles like *The Princes and the Kiss: A Story of God's Purity*, *My Princess Bible*, *Apples of Gold: A Parable of Purity*, and *Before You Meet Prince Charming: A Guide to Radiant Beauty*. In these books purity is more than abstinence from sex before marriage – it is a lifestyle where girls are encouraged to put their thoughts, desires, and bodies under self-surveillance and critique in order to remain pure for their future husbands and be faithful to God's 'plan' for heterosexual marriage. A major theme in DeRogatis' text is evangelical anxieties about the secularisation of America. Girls are presented with the opportunities for an alternate form of empowerment than the one offered by feminism in purity literature. 'Purity authors go to great lengths to present young chaste women as empowered, countercultural heroines who are taking a brave stand against a world that degrades their sexuality and humiliates their faith' (p. 40).

DeRogatis then moves on to looking at evangelical sex and marriage manuals, where sex is presented as a healthy and pleasurable part of marriage and a way to connect on a deeper level with God. The author provides a history of evangelical sex manuals, explaining that they exploded onto the evangelical scene in the 1970s alongside bestsellers like *The Joy of Sex*. Usually written by married couples like Tom and Beverly LaHaye, these books use literalist readings of the Bible to

offer practical sex advice like sexual positions and advise that sex should involve mutual satisfaction. Although there are disagreements about practices like masturbation, oral sex, and sex toys, the manuals are uniform in claiming 'one can and one should express one's faith not only through spoken testimony but also through bodily acts' (p. 69). These sex manuals present what evangelicals consider to be normative gender roles, where men initiate and women receive.

In the next chapter, DeRogatis presents the counterpoint to the goodness of sex for evangelicals – spiritual warfare and fears that 'unnatural sex' leads to spiritual contamination. She engages with deliverance literature that claims that demons are literal beings that harm people and their bodies based on their sexual and moral choices. She focuses specifically on one text, *Holy Sex: God's Purpose and Plan for Our Sexuality* by Terry Wier and Mark Carruth, in order to explore larger evangelical anxieties about the body as spiritually vulnerable. Wier and Carruth believe that Sexually Transmitted Diseases are really sexually transmitted demons and that demons live in DNA and are transmitted through bodily fluids. Non-normative sexuality is not only morally wrong, then, but also spiritually and physically dangerous. Here evangelicals' engage directly with science, where it 'has provided a new vocabulary and the material evidence to identify evil' (p. 73).

DeRogatis then moves to a set of texts that are from a subculture in American evangelical life, a movement known as the pro-natalists, Titus 2, or Biblical womanhood. Instead of a focus on sex for pleasure, as detailed earlier in the book, here, sex is for reproduction only. Pro-natalists are anti-contraception and anti-abortion and believe that a focus on sex for satisfaction in marriage misses the larger point of sex, which is having as many children as God desires. Women are required to submit to men, including sexually, and older women are the ones who are supposed to teach younger women about sex, not Christian sex manuals or experts. Girls and women are encouraged to stay at home with children, a role that 'offers women a role in Christian missions without leaving the home' (p. 99). For women, marriage is not a fairytale but about duty and sacrifice.

The final chapter of the book focuses on the writings of African American evangelical powerhouses Juanita Bynum and T.D. Jakes. DeRogatis differentiates between this chapter and the rest of the text, which we learn here, is mostly about white evangelicals. Although the messenger is racially different, the messages remain largely the same, e.g. women are supposed to be help-mates to men and sex should be mutually pleasurable in marriage. However, there are some key differences. Jakes, for example, does not shame women, as does some of the white purity literature, for past sexual relationships outside of marriage. Jakes offers a 'softened' approach to evangelical sexuality for African American women (p. 144).

DeRogatis's book is a must-read for scholars of evangelical Christianity and anyone interested in the emergence of new social movements in American culture. The book is mainly about white evangelicals and DeRogatis could have analyzed whiteness more in the text. I wondered how white privilege and anxieties affected white evangelical choices about sex and reproduction. Overall, DeRogatis has done an excellent job of laying out the key texts and debates of twenty-first century American Christianity as they relate to gender and sexuality.