When Pope Francis in July 2013 stated, “Who am I to judge them?” in response to a question about gay priests, the world was abuzz. The attention fell on the fact that the Roman Catholic Church has been neglectful to not even acknowledge LGBTQI individuals among their ranks. Francis’ response captures an attitude of many people in the twenty-first century, especially on such personal issues as religion, gender, and sexuality—who am I to judge?

This same sentiment can be applied to the people discussed in this edited volume. The authors delve into human behaviors and experiences not easily judged by moral categories of right or wrong and good or bad. Instead, the attention to religion, gender, and sexuality does intrigue, frustrate, and surprise because it provokes the raw reality of the everyday.

In the introduction, the editors elaborate on the difficult intersections of religion, gender, and sexuality in current scholarship. Because religion in a predominantly secular global society is more critical and judgmental of sexual preferences, it becomes inconsequential to cultural discussions. The reality is different when examining the lived-experiences of every day people whose lives are more complicated. The eight following chapters come from fields such as sociology, anthropology, geography, and cultural studies. The articles focus research from around the world, providing a more complex picture of the need to understand religion, gender, and sexuality in all countries and cultures.

Researchers Rasi Jaspal and Vanja Hamziic investigated and engaged with devout Muslims in Pakistan and Indonesia who must negotiate their sexuality and gender out of fear and anxiety. The expectations of families and culture only add to their anxiety. This work has provided an invaluable insight into silent voices that want to reconcile religion and sexual identity.

Sara and Sima Zaleberg’s chapter on the ultra-Orthodox Jewish attitude and approach to sexuality uncovers a very tight-knit community’s attitudes to sex. They expose a community that does not talk about human sexuality at home, in school, or in any public arena. Sex is just assumed to be known as one grows older. Young people are kept unaware of their own sexual development until they are safely married. This cycle continues within the community, perpetuating a frustrating shroud for young people around sexuality.

A more light-hearted but still discerning examination is that of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in the United States. They are LGBTQI activists who don religious habits to bring awareness and education to AIDS/HIV and
LGBTQI issues. They cram their purses full of condoms for distribution and preach the message of protection. They have emulated real sisters in admiration but also as a criticism of a Roman Catholic Church that has been quite condemning of people who identify as LGBTQI. Melissa M. Wilcox has spent much time interviewing the Sisters through their formation and ministry.

A discussion on conversion and its connection to sexuality opens an avenue for future investigations. Wim Peumans and Christiane Stallaert ask how sexuality influences religious conversion and more specifically queering conversion in Belgium. Does sexual orientation trigger a certain religious interest? They do not provide conclusive answers but continue to seek a better understanding of the issue.

Migration has been given much attention in the world; however, the connection with sexuality has not been widely considered. Bernadetta Siara look specifically at abortion and homosexuality from the perspective of the receiving country—the United Kingdom. People who come from religiously conservative countries such as Poland slowly change their perspective on highly charged issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage.

The last chapter focuses on the corporate or political aspect of religion and its engagement in society. Using Foucault’s concept of “governmentality,” Kenneth Houston questions the rise of faith-based politics and its impact on women and LGBTQI people. Governmentality is concern with the rationalities of government. That is, how do they justify what they do? The question focuses on how society conceives the person that is as citizen and as soul. Is this possible? It makes political entities regulators of morality on sex and of the role of the individual.

These chapters are a new phase of research. It is also part of a phase of truly not judging people. The volume is not only a must read for people concerned with gender equality, sexual orientation, and religious understanding but is also important because it broadens the understanding of these intersections.