



★ **Given Up for You: A Memoir of Love, Belonging, and Belief**

Erin O. White

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Erin O. White's *Given Up for You*, part of the Living Out gay and lesbian autobiography series from University of Wisconsin Press, explores the intersection of faith and sexuality. As a young woman, White experienced two big firsts simultaneously: conversion to Catholicism and falling in love with a woman. Incisive and discerning, White's memoir is not about losing her faith but about letting go of systems that don't see her as equal.

White is twenty-three and living in Philadelphia when she first discovers Catholicism through the twin influences of her therapist and Thomas Merton. She's falling in love with belief when Chris walks into a party she's attending and an entirely different kind of desire blooms. Soon after, White realizes

There was nothing ephemeral about my desire for her. I knew that if I did not make the future I wanted happen—somehow—with her I would never know such perfect solidness again, and I would wish for it always.

White's memoir documents her attempt to learn how to “weave these tangled strands of desire and belief into an orderly, harmonious, and decidedly adult sort of life.”

Reflective and self-reflexive, White considers the collusion between straight privilege and religious practice. In a bold move, she suspects and acknowledges herself on both counts. But her goal is neither self-castigation nor self-loathing. White guides her narrative with expansive generosity and complete control. Her investigation models a deep self-knowing that owns and ultimately frees her to be who she is in the world.

Given Up for You is a wonder—as poetic, spare, and declarative as the gospels themselves. An autopsy of the relationship between the world White was raised to expect and the life she finds herself living, this memoir slowly gives itself over to the knowledge that “no outsider ... could remain inside a culture that didn't see her as fully human.”

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (LGBTQ+ 2018)

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