

research. The book is a much-needed and timely intervention that sets an example for interdisciplinary approaches to history and religion in an increasingly diverse society.

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*Saintly Women: Medieval Saints, Modern Women, and Intimate Partner Violence.*  
Nancy E. Nienhuis and Beverly Mayne Kienzle.

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xvi + 198 pp. \$155.

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Social movements, most notably Me Too and Black Lives Matter, have fought to draw attention to the pervasive violence of systemic inequalities. These forms of resistance have coincided with a rise in the blatant visibility and political support of misogyny, racism, and religious intolerance across the world. In response to the state of our domestic and global scenes, scholarly communities have challenged each other to engage a public audience and to use our research for social change. *Saintly Women* is a crucial contribution to that effort.

Nancy E. Nienhuis and Beverly Mayne Kienzle confront the complicity of religious traditions in providing theological justifications for intimate partner violence (IPV). While the authors recognize current efforts of religious leaders and practitioners from diverse faith traditions to end abuse, they also reveal that historical studies rarely accompany such critical work. Their book thus focuses on archival narratives of violence to challenge the continued “misuse and misapplication of religious and cultural beliefs” to excuse batterers and work against survivors’ attempts to find safety (2). *Saintly Women* analyzes hagiographies of medieval and early modern Christian saints and martyrs that cultivated theologies of suffering, subordination, and ownership through the sanctification of domestic abuse victims. The staying power of these oppressive theologies, in fact, derives precisely from turning the records of victims into sacred texts to be emulated by survivors from our past and in our present.

The strength of the book lies in its accessibility, which makes it a teachable text for students, non-academic audiences, and especially for groups who offer resources, guidance, and support to survivors of IPV. The first chapter defines IPV and gives an overview of its ubiquity, affecting people of all religious backgrounds, genders, races, and sexual orientations. A detailed justification for their methodologies follows with an explanation of the important perspectives gained through literary analyses guided by feminist criticism and ethics to dismantle rather than uphold kyriarchal systems. *Saintly Women* contextualizes hagiographic accounts, uncovers the patterns and attitudes that enable violence, reads for silences and gaps in narratives, and underscores that oppressive systems of power have authorized certain voices to be heard, remembered, and extolled over others.

For example, rather than take 1 Timothy and 1 Peter with their strong injunctions against women as indicative of feminine subordination in early Christian communities, the authors insist that such instructions point to women's enfranchisement during a time of widespread religious persecution due, in part, to the perceived radical egalitarian practices of early Christians. The command for women's submission adhered to the dominant Greco-Roman standards of the family and society. Women were called "to sacrifice themselves on the altar of male domination in order to blend in more unobtrusively to the surrounding culture" (103).

Through a comparative study of primary sources on holy women (e.g., Saint Monica, Hildegard of Bingen, Rade Gund, Godelieve of Gistel, Umiliana dei Cerchi, Dorothy of Montau, and Catherine of Genoa), the book questions the motivations behind the commemoration of domestic abuse victims, whose hagiographies conveniently align with oppressive social, economic, and political patriarchal norms. Ambitious in its scope, the book also considers the effects of Christianity on the cultural practices of Native populations like the Montagnais during the colonization of New France, as well as the theological groundings espoused in defense of the transatlantic slave trade. The book, therefore, can be placed in dialogue with existing scholarly work on critical race studies, the global spread of Christianity, and on the erotics of masochism and submission.

Some particularly poignant moments include excerpts from the diary of Abigail Abbot Bailey and the testimonies of contemporary women of faith who painfully demonstrate the internalization of the messages contained in medieval hagiographic accounts. Despite its focus on victimization, the book also provides a message of hope. Buried in the archives—the authors stress—lies a history of resistance to violence, such as the records of Merovingian women, medieval women exegetes, the Cathar woman Guilhelme Maury, and Matteuccia Francisco of Todi. Their voices reveal the strength of communities that challenge oppressive structures. *Saintly Women* provides a historically based theological support for such communities endeavoring to empower those who suffer abuse as they make the decisions to become survivors.

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*The Reform of Zeal: François de Sales and Militant French Catholicism.*

Thomas A. Donlan.

St Andrews Studies in French History and Culture 9. St Andrews: University of St Andrews, 2018. iv + 146 pp. Free.

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In his short book, Thomas A. Donlan offers a new interpretation of François de Sales's spirituality, arguing that the Savoyard saint developed a piety that was the opposite of a