

ing nature of these tools; his caution against the “ubiquitous referencing of crime statistics about black criminality today,” given the silence that often surrounds white crime, is both provocative and well-founded (p. 277). Undoubtedly, his book will be a seminal text for historical, as well as contemporary, studies of race, crime, and urbanity.

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New Women of the Old Faith
Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era
 By Kathleen Sprows Cummings

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Pp. xvii, 278. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

Scholars of gender often benefit from tracing the societal intersections that guided women toward power—unless the topic concerns the Roman Catholic Church. Under the broad umbrella of Catholicism, authority and womanhood stand apart, seemingly intractable antagonists in a history that stretches over centuries. In her thoughtful book, *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era*, Kathleen Sprows Cummings challenges that assumption, illuminating the intellectual and spiritual complexities of faith-driven women.

Within the context of the Progressive Era, when an emerging female identity remained largely grounded in Protestant ideologies, Cummings examines the lives and thoughts of four Catholic women,

two religious and two secular. This multiple character design is risky, as a text can lose its thematic unity or its subjects can appear forced into a pre-ordained conclusion. Cummings avoids these problems, giving this work its purchase from richly diversified primary research conducted in numerous archives, buttressed by a wealth of secondary literature. The result is a monograph of balanced interpretation that considers how Catholic women viewed their religion, themselves, and their life choices in early twentieth-century America.

Cummings argues that Catholic women carefully maneuvered themselves into aspects of the “new woman” image associated with higher education, professional occupations, and suffragist impulses, even as their church fiercely opposed

changing female behaviors. She successfully demonstrates that Catholic women invoked early religious “heroines” as indicators of the way the church uplifted its distaff side, endorsed female enlightenment, and stamped out ancient pagan oppression. Praising these feminine models of the European past in modern America, Progressive Era women relied on non-threatening language and demeanor to secure gender concessions, promote their own public authority, and stay within church-approved boundaries. Essentially these female church loyalists adopted the quixotic position that inside the United States democracy, charged by its documents to uphold republican ideals, the true gender liberator remained a non-American organization that by law and custom openly denied women equality.

Cummings’s insightful assessment of the religious vision and personal goals of women standing on shifting Catholic ground proves one of the major strengths of her book. Few authors tackle the subjects of professed religious and their lay counterparts in the same study, for the two—regardless of their close interactions—live out different worldviews. As Cummings unravels their attitudes and actions, she shows that harmony as well as contention moved events within and across both groups.

There is much here for those interested in America’s heartland. Granted, the four women centered

their energies on building parochial education in Philadelphia, advancing the Catholic press in Chicago, countering the suffragist movement in Boston, or founding Trinity College for Women in Washington, D.C. While the focus of these endeavors lay outside Indiana, they nevertheless relate to a state that boasts a healthy network of parochial classrooms, a solid place in Catholic publication, suffrage activism that dates to the 1850s, and two Catholic women’s institutions: St. Mary-of-the-Woods and St. Mary’s College. To make the connection directly: Katherine Conway, the Boston anti-suffragist, joined the faculty at the latter school in Notre Dame, Indiana, where she taught the legendary Mandaleva Wolff, who was destined to be a Sister of the Holy Cross, president of her alma mater, and a leader in women’s higher education.

An epilogue comparing Cummings’s four women to particular twentieth-century feminists introduces a fresh literary device and suffers from brevity. Criticism aside, Cummings offers a readable and original contribution to the literature of Catholic womanhood, professed and secular. It is highly recommended to scholars of gender and religion—and all Hoosiers.

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