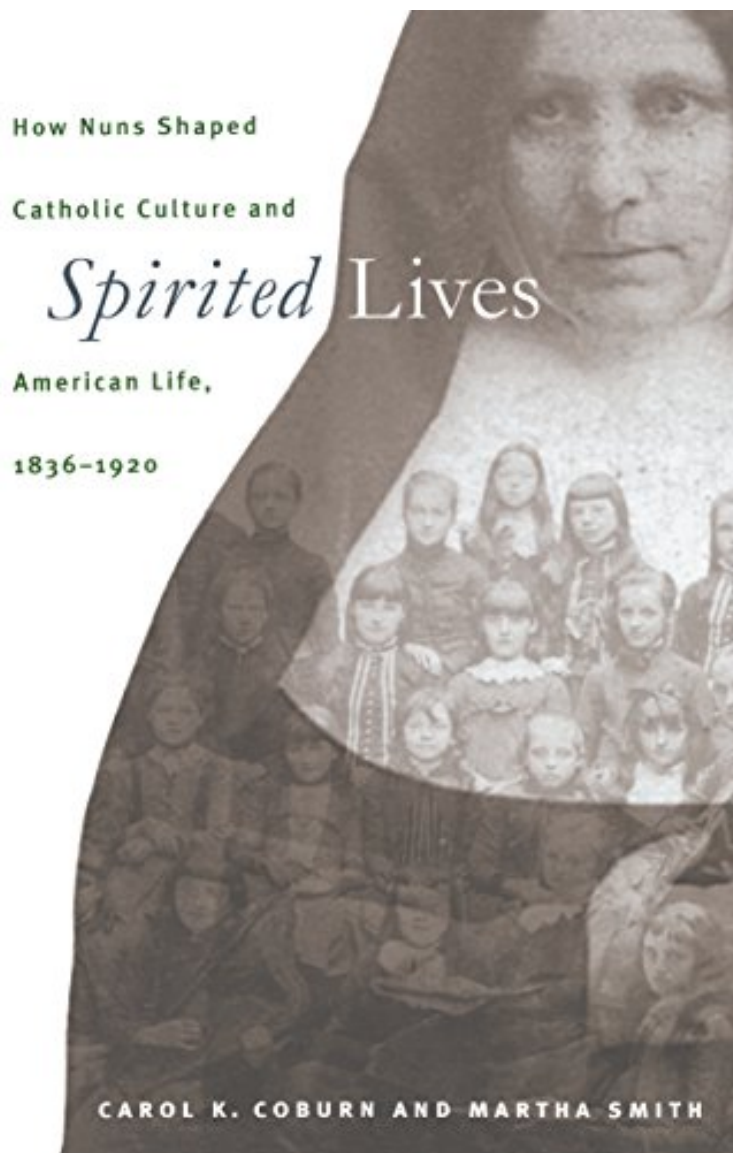


(Download free ebook) Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920

Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920

Carol K. Coburn, Martha Smith

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Made doubly marginal by their gender and by their religion, American nuns have rarely been granted serious scholarly attention. Instead, their lives and achievements have been obscured by myths or distorted by stereotypes. Placing nuns into the mainstream of American religious and women's history for the first time, *Spirited Lives* reveals their critical impact on the development of Catholic culture and, ultimately, the building of American society. Focusing on the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, one of the largest and most diverse American sisterhoods, Carol Coburn and Martha Smith explore how nuns directly influenced the lives of millions of Americans, both Catholic and non-Catholic, through their work in schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other social service institutions. Far from functioning as passive handmaidens for Catholic clergy and parishes, nuns created, financed, and administered these institutions, struggling with, and at times resisting, male secular and clerical authority. A rich and multifaceted narrative, *Spirited Lives* illuminates the intersection of gender, religion, and power in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America.

From Library Journal Writing the early story of the Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, a community of French origin, history professors Coburn and Smith (Avila Coll.) offer a broad context for the influence of nuns on American life. In 1836, six French sisters founded a school for deaf children in St. Louis. The community gradually developed schools, hospitals, and other social institutions throughout the United States. As local congregations dealt with patriarchy, frontier rigors, bigotry, governance issues, and clerical clashes, the Sisters of St. Joseph established a remarkable record of achievement in education and healthcare, serving through epidemics and wars under extreme circumstances, largely financing themselves, and selflessly influencing millions. This readable scholarly work, heavily documented with a careful interweaving of primary and secondary sources, is written from a feminist perspective. The authors have made an important contribution to a neglected corner of American religious history. Highly recommended for history and religion collections. AAnna M. Donnelly, St. John's Univ. Lib., Jamaica, NY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. A great historical perspective on religious life and puts today's discussion of vocations and religious life in a new light. "Catholic News Service" Brings into sharp focus something that needs regular emphasis: the historical role of women in the church. "Commonweal" "Spirited Lives" makes an important contribution to the history of women religious through its use of current scholarship and methodology. "Catholic Historical " An invaluable resource for anyone seeking to understand the history of women's religious communities in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. "Comptes Rendus" An important book for readers interested in a more broadly inclusive story of women's experience in America. "American Historical " [Brings] into sharp focus something that needs regular emphasis: the historical role of women in the church. "Commonweal" Clearly documents the contributions of the Sisters of St. Joseph to American culture and dispels myths about the kind of women who lived in convents. . . . Humorous anecdotes, poignant reminiscences, and insightful observations about the comforts and struggles of convent life abound. . . . An important book for readers interested in a more broadly inclusive story of women's experience in America.--American Historical [Brings] into sharp focus something that needs regular emphasis: the historical role of women in the church.--Commonweal An important contribution to a neglected corner of American religious history. Highly recommended.--Library Journal This book makes a vital contribution to the burgeoning new field of the history of Catholic sisterhoods by integrating that history into the larger narrative of American history. It should become required reading for students of American religious history and will appeal broadly to readers of women's history, immigration history, and Western history. An outstanding achievement.--Kathryn Kish Sklar, State University of New York at Binghamton We know too little about women religious, who staffed U.S. Catholicism's most influential institutions and thereby shaped American life. Focusing on an important religious order, the Sisters of St. Joseph, *Spirited Lives* persuasively documents their pivotal role in teaching the young, nurturing the forgotten, and tending the sick. A wonderful book on a neglected topic.--Thomas A. Tweed, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Coburn and Smith move beyond the story of one congregation and write a history which addresses this question of the sisters' role in shaping American culture, one sorely neglected in American Catholic church history and in the secular history of the United States.--Canonical Counsel A great historical perspective on religious life and puts today's discussion of vocations and religious life in a new light.--Catholic News Service *Spirited Lives* makes an important contribution to the history of women religious through its use of current scholarship and methodology. Its analysis of gender, religion, and power places sisters firmly in the context, not only of the history of American Catholicism, but of American history and women's history as well.--Catholic Historical An invaluable resource for anyone seeking to understand the history of women's religious communities in the nineteenth-

and early twentieth-century United States.--Comptes Rendus