

priest is explored, but this, along with his ability to restore people to the faith, came under threat when an 'odious woman' [*muliercula*] in pursuance of a feud with the man who was shielding him, told the authorities where to find him and 'described the features of the his face' [*eiusque lineamenta vultus descripsit*] so they could not mistake him. He was arrested and imprisoned in chains. But 'certainly he did not eat his bread in prison as a man of leisure, for he was doing God's work daily. Thus Catholics were allowed entrance on the pretext of a visit and he daily heard the confessions of many and offered Holy Mass' (pp. 877–8). He even converted a Cambridge graduate (who had fallen on hard times and was in prison for debt). After several months in prison, Fr Shelton was transported to Barbados but 'after completing his sentence he returned to Holland and to Ireland' (p. 878). There is a lot more to these volumes than tales of extraordinary courage and witness.

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Susan O'Brien, *Leaving God for God: The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent De Paul in Britain, 1847–2017*, London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 2017, pp. xiv + 448, £20, ISBN: 9780232532883

The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul arrived in Britain from France in 1847—an ominous year for so many reasons. Typhus gripped the industrial centres, another cholera pandemic loomed, and Irish migration accelerated dramatically as the island was hit by the darkest year of the Famine. When the Daughters arrived in Salford, prompted by the Church's growing panic over how to cope with the influx of Irish, they had no idea what they were walking into or of the intense anti-Catholic bigotry that awaited them. Too much to bear, they abandoned this first foundation after just two years and it was only in 1857 that they returned to Britain and re-established themselves in Sheffield. From that point in time, the movement and activity of the Daughters was rapid—so much so that by 1900 they had a global reach that was unrivalled.

As one of the leading researchers of women religious in Britain, Susan O'Brien is more than equipped to handle a study as extensive as this one. Given the time period covered in this book, from foundation until the present day, the prosopographic approach adopted enabled her to present a 'collective profile' showing how these women lived in community over time and space. O'Brien discusses five specific generations (foundation, expansion, conserving, renewal, and transforming) across the book's four main sections. Instead of going through the specifics of each of them, this review offers some thoughts on what was found to be the most interesting and revealing.

Having been founded in Paris in 1633, the Daughters' membership worldwide would peak at 45,000 in 1960. This growth fulfilled one of their main missions which was to take their work beyond France. Their first external activities were concentrated in other parts of Europe, but in the nineteenth century there were major movements beyond this region to include Egypt, China, Latin America, and the Middle East. This expansion was enabled by a dramatic rise in the number of women joining the Daughters. Their growth was both a blessing and a curse as the Church hierarchy saw them as a labour force to be deployed as and when required. Establishing the British and Irish province in 1885 was a pivotal moment because it restructured authority within the community by permitting women interested in joining to enter a local seminary instead of having to undertake their training in France. O'Brien's discussion about the strategies employed to ensure the maintenance of a 'shared identity' across international boundaries sheds light on how this was achieved and under what circumstances communities digressed. While rituals, symbols, and prayers common to all communities created a strong identity, local circumstances and tensions between community members challenged uniformity. One of the most interesting aspects of the book was the discussion about the degree to which the 'Frenchness' of the Daughters was accepted or rejected by the British and Irish communities and about the pivot towards the inclusion of practices that were more British and Irish than French. O'Brien's astute observations about leadership and the influence of external political factors, such as the establishment of the Irish Free State, reveals much about how the situation could change quickly. Internal, nationalist tensions between Irish and English sisters, for example, were common and in this respect, the Daughters were no different to countless other communities across mainland Britain.

Another thing that O'Brien does particularly well in this book is to explain the Daughters' structure and to make clear that they were not technically religious, but rather 'consecrated lay Catholic women living in community'—a fact which sets them apart from the vast majority of Catholic sisters and nuns operating in Britain during this time period. This unique status underpinned the core of a vocation that was neither solely lay nor completely religious—they would ever only be an outward looking active community focused on responding to crises and immediate need. Their ability to avoid being categorized as a religious congregation subject to canonical jurisdiction, at least until after Vatican II, meant that they possessed a degree of independence that was out of reach of most mainstream female religious congregations. In highlighting this, O'Brien provides a window on the inherent

complexity of the female Catholic mission and the ministry of women. Unsurprisingly, as she explains, ‘neither the practice of charity nor their relationship with Church and state have had identical or unambiguous meanings’. It is more accurate to describe their work as care than welfare because care was a primary component of the residential homes and training institutions they ran, the social support they provided, and the home visitations and the pastoral parish work they undertook. Providing clarity on this point enables O’Brien to integrate the Scottish dimension effectively and in this she stands apart from most works on Catholic women living in community in Britain and Ireland.

Finally, it is important to highlight the long-overdue correction that O’Brien makes to understandings of the term missionary. Contrary to popular opinion, particularly in clerical circles, being a missionary was not the preserve of priests and brothers. The work of female Catholic missionaries was transformative for the Catholic Church and in many respects it was the Daughters of Charity who led the charge. While O’Brien offers an invaluable foundation of information about their missionary work, she admits that this aspect of their work requires a separate history, one that can explore their influence in much more depth.

This weighty book is a tour de force and O’Brien deserves much congratulations for undertaking what can only be described as a truly mammoth task. In mapping out the complex history of a group of women who became a lynchpin in the infrastructure of Catholic care provision, she has made a much-needed contribution to the historiography of the Catholic Church in Britain and Ireland. If the historical experience of women religious is to be taken seriously, and it must be, then it is imperative that communities reach out to professional historians whose training prevents them from a hagiographic drift. This book is meticulously-researched and sound, and in approaching O’Brien to write their history, the Daughters selected one of the field’s most capable scholars. Thanks to this book, we are that bit closer to understanding just how foundational women, lay and religious, were to extending the mission of the Catholic Church.

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Bruno Duriez, Olivier Rota, and Catherine Vialle, eds., *Femmes catholiques, femmes engagées: France, Belgique, Angleterre, XXe siècle*, Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2019, pp. 205, €22, ISBN: 9782757428597

‘Votes for women!’ was shouted on 7 June 1914 in Westminster Cathedral where Bernard Vaughan, a conservative but popular Jesuit within the