

“labor feminism” with the convincing case Ziparo makes that it was women’s claims of neediness and dependence upon men that won them jobs and, ultimately, denied them equal pay. Patriarchy lurked in every federal office then, but Ziparo does succeed at having us marvel that an equal pay discussion occurred in such circumstances at all.

Despite these probably unavoidable limitations, some strong and important conclusions emerge clearly from Ziparo’s hard-won research. For one, this study shows powerfully that as the United States developed its industrial and bureaucratic institutions, middle-class women could become just as subject to the whims of men’s sexist, inconsistent, and arbitrary management as lower-class women had long been. As Ziparo shows, it was only by testifying to their profound powerlessness, generally because of missing or ill husbands but also simply as the “fairer sex,” that middle-class women could even find work in the first place. Of course, this does not mean such women workers lacked agency, savvy, or even fun. Ziparo also makes clear that women quickly learned to play the games of political patronage, “managing up,” and pacifying managers’ egos, and that they could very much enjoy their work and individual freedom while doing so. Indeed, Ziparo’s strongest chapters are those that take place outside of the federal offices, where Civil War-era women were changed by and helped to change the character of the nation’s capital.

A bit of repetitiveness, a somewhat narrow scope, and lightness in theoretical range are the only drags on this otherwise fine and well-wrought monograph. Ziparo’s work does honor to the brave and fascinating women who entered the nation’s service to find freedom, decent wages, and comradeship in a workplace suffused with war, corruption, sexism, and also openness and opportunity. These women not only changed federal offices and Washington, DC, but as Ziparo shows, they “proved to government supervisors and to private industry that women were capable of performing clerical work, opening what would become a significant labor sector to women across the country” (8). If Cindy Aron made the introduction, Jessica Ziparo has given us a deeper connection.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Cindy S. Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service: Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Cathleen Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Frederick Gooding, Jr., *American Dream Deferred: Black Federal Workers in Washington, D.C., 1941–1981* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018); Joseph McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Margaret C. Rung, *Servants of the State: Managing Diversity and Democracy in the Federal Workforce, 1933–1953* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Eric S. Yellin, *Racism in the Nation’s Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson’s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

## GRANT IN THE WHITE HOUSE: A NEW LOOK

CALHOUN, CHARLES W. *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017. xii + 721 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7006-2484-3.

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“To tell the truth about” Ulysses S. Grant, John Russell Young observed in 1901, “sounds like unreasoning adulation” (593). Historian Charles W. Calhoun concludes his assessment of the

Grant presidency with this carefully chosen quotation from Young, who had come to know the former president during his famous world tour between 1877 and 1879. If Young's observation held true in 1901, the trend only intensified for the remainder of the century. Even as historians reassessed Grant's life at various points, his presidency was usually an afterthought. Witness: as single-termers such as Rutherford Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and William Howard Taft long ago got their scholarly treatment in the University Press of Kansas's American Presidency Series, only now is the much-needed volume on the Grant years available. Scholars of political history will believe it is worth the wait. A volume informed by extensive original research, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant* is likely to be the last word on Grant's presidency for generations.

As those who are familiar with Grant scholarship long have known, the military components of Grant's meteoric career have long overshadowed the political. With the exception of William Hestelme's 1935 *Ulysses S. Grant: Politician*, few professional historians have devoted monograph-length studies to Grant's presidency. Biographies of the enigmatic hero abound, but most downplay the presidency. Mired in corruption, plagued with scandal, and unable to solve the largest issues of his day, the Grant years embody the nadir of nineteenth-century politics in many historical surveys. Charles Calhoun's challenge, therefore, is not only to take the Grant presidency seriously, but to do so with fresh eyes. Careful not to fall into mere flattery, Calhoun acknowledges that Grant had far too many setbacks to be considered a "great" president. These setbacks were not all of Grant's making, however. The first of Calhoun's two major themes illustrate context: Grant was "an embattled president operating under severe fire from the beginning of his administration to the end" (5). Many of these critics were professional politicians who looked down on Grant for his humble origins and his career as a soldier.

Calhoun's second major theme addresses "substantive accomplishments ... despite the incessant conflict." Here, Calhoun seems to hedge his bets, asserting that these accomplishments included initiatives and achievements, some of which "fell short of their goals" (6). Agreeing with revisionist historians who have credited Grant's doggedness in trying to protect African American right in the South, Calhoun also identifies monetary policy, civil service reform, an attempt to rethink relations with American Indians, as well as the successful resolution of the *Alabama* claims against Great Britain as areas of Grant's success. Calhoun concedes that on some of these matters, Grant did not fully meet his objectives, which is charitable to the president.

Far from a helpless dupe who let crooked cronies dictate policy, Grant proved to be a careful study of issues, if not of men. Unfortunately, his loyalty to friends and family came back to haunt the president. Whether it was his secretary Orville Babcock, who would be ensnared in the Whiskey Ring scandal at the end of his second term; or brother-in-law Abel Corbin, who attempted to use his personal relationship to help robber barons Jay Gould and James Fisk corner the gold market, too often Grant was undermined by those who should have helped. Yet on closer inspection, some of Grant's initiatives, such as civil service reform, clearly were not successes, as *both* parties embraced the mantle of reform during the 1876 election. Calhoun aptly cites Gilded Age historian Mark W. Summers regarding the corruption issue and acknowledges that "Grant's administration exhibited enough delinquency to provide his enemies a convenient brush with which to tar his presidential reputation in perpetuity" (593).

One of the most useful components of Calhoun's study is its examination of Grant's attempt to fashion a more modern presidential apparatus. Here Grant borrowed heavily from his war experiences and hoped that in so doing he could create stability and authority in the executive branch. Given the lack of strong peacetime presidential leadership in the years since the presidency of Andrew Jackson, this was quite a challenge. Like Jackson, Grant faced critics who were certain that Grant was attempting to undermine democratic traditions. In fact, Calhoun illustrates, Charles Sumner was charging Grant with unbridled personal ambition, which he sometimes labeled "Grantism," or others labeled "Caesarism," while Grant was still in his first term. That Grant so willingly seemed to encourage his candidacy for a third term in 1876 and especially in

1880 was more grist for the pundits' mills. Calhoun asserts these charges are misleading; in his rendering, Grant remained a faithful public servant who warmed up to political life when he recognized his strengths as a leader and the paucity of suitable alternatives available. In sum, Grant grew to appreciate his own talents and pointed to the need for more assertive executive action that most scholars would later attribute to Theodore Roosevelt.

Calhoun's use of primary materials, particularly the Ulysses S. Grant Papers, but also a myriad of collections at the Library of Congress, is impressive. At times, this can lead the historian to trod through every wrinkle of every personality and every dispute, a doggedness that Grant no doubt would have admired. The scope of the work may be its chief liability: in his quest to leave no angle unexplored, Calhoun has written a tome that is nearly double the length of the similar volume devoted to Franklin D. Roosevelt. And, in spite of his tireless devotion to primary sources, at times the author is less willing to engage in secondary literature that is topical in nature and might help with context and clarity. These critiques do not subtract from a herculean effort by Charles Calhoun to save the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant from caricature and invective. Calhoun's book reminds us that American presidents were not always egomaniacs, but that devotion to principle and to country were hallmarks that citizens could expect from the Oval Office.

## MATERIAL SALVATION: FOLKLORE AND SYNTHESIS IN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

HAYES, JOHN. *Hard, Hard Religion: Interracial Faith in the Poor South*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 250 pp. \$27.95 (paperback) ISBN 978-1-4696-3532-3.

MULLEN, LINCOLN A. *The Chance of Salvation: A History of Conversion in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. 384 pp. \$39.95 (cloth) ISBN 978-0-6749-7562-0.

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Within the current social context, the historical study (and restudy) of American religious history is indeed a worthy endeavor. No longer a "jack-in-the-box" topic, religion has captured the attention of American historians inside history departments and religious studies faculties alike. Yet writings on American religion by historians continue to draw both acclaim and critique by religious studies scholars, with religious studies scholars often claiming the approaches to religious history employed by historians presuppose the nature of American religion. There is a gradual shift toward social and cultural histories of "lived religion" that incorporate the visual and material, as well as continued intellectual histories of internal or individual beliefs. It is this scuffle that Hayes's and Mullen's work joins.<sup>1</sup>

Both Hayes's and Mullen's books provide strong examples of American religious history seeking to revive folklore and synthetic history. Notably, Hayes's use of exploration and integration of folklore in his study of the religion of poor and working-class Southerners gives the reader a tangible way to see beyond notions of religion as primarily an individual or internal belief. For Hayes, religion, in the form of "folk Christianity," was a space in which poor whites and blacks "creatively used an array of cultural material to probe the depths of mortality, or personal transformation, of manifesting the sacred, of living as a neighbor" (196). Mullen, on the other hand, reminds the reader that despite the movement within American religious history to focus on collective and community-based formations of religion, during the nineteenth century, individual choice