Ruose juben, 1918], modeled after the refined and somewhat esoteric structure of traditional Chinese opera, and a spoken drama of the Joseph story, *Vernacular Romance of Joseph the Ancient Saint* [古圣若瑟白话演义 *Gusheng Ruose baihua yanyi*, 1925], by Wu Guodong (吴国栋), made more accessible and entertaining for a wider audience (76–82).

In the next chapter, Lai traces Chinese Catholic retellings of the story of the Maccabees, namely *The Story of the Maccabees* [玛加白阿传 *Majiabai'a zhuan*, 1918] by Fei Jinbiao and *The Old Testament Stories with Commentaries* [古史参箴 *Gushi canzheg*] by the Chinese Jesuit Shen Zekuan (沈则宽), to demonstrate both the power of martyrdom dramas (*zhiming ju* 致命剧) in the wake of the Boxer Uprising, which decimated Catholic communities in northern China, as well as the clever ways in which these playwrights used biblical stories to appeal to the audience's cultural predispositions, even when they appeared incompatible. On the face of it, the story of the martyred seven brothers and their mother in Maccabees would appear to contradict the notion of filial piety (*xiao* 孝), since the brothers' decision to sacrifice themselves would destroy their bodies and their lives, bestowed upon them by their mother. Yet, Lai shows how Fei and Shen translated the story in such a way and added commentary to it so as to contend that, though a tortuous decision, martyrdom is indeed the filial choice in this case, and that the mother encourages her sons to accept martyrdom "as a way to repay her great loving kindness" (99).

This is a valuable contribution to the field, both summarizing and enhancing the ongoing "literary turn" in the study of Christianity in modern China. The various chapters serve as compact case studies in translation and cross-cultural interaction and are useful for both research and teaching purposes.

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Nadine Amsler

Jesuits and Matriarchs: Domestic Worship in Early Modern China. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018. Pp. xii + 258. Pb, \$30.00.

Historians have long noted the relative lack of research devoted to Catholic women in the history of Christianity in China, especially during the early modern period, in comparison to their Protestant counterparts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This neglect has only recently begun to

be addressed by a small but steadily growing body of literature that centrally focuses on the lives and religious experiences of female Catholic individuals and communities. Samples of this new scholarship include, among other fine studies, several articles on Candida Xu (1607–80) by Gail King, especially her “Candida Xu and the Growth of Christianity in China in the Seventeenth Century,” *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): 49–66, and discussions on groups of Christian virgins and other female devotees in different Chinese localities by Robert Entenmann (“Christian Virgins in Eighteenth-Century Sichuan,” in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 180–93; Qin Heping 秦和平, “Guanyu Qingdai Chuan Qian deng di tianzhujiao tongzhennu de renshi” 關於清代川黔等地天主教童貞女的認識 (On Catholic virgins in Sichuan, Guizhou and other places the mid-Qing dynasty), *Sichuan Daxue xuebao* 四川大學學報 (Learned journal of Sichuan University) 6 (2004): 110–19; Zhang Xianqing 張先清, “Cong Zhong Xi shiliao kan Qingdai qianqi de nuxing tianzhujiaotu” 從中西史料看清代前期的女性天主教徒 (Female Catholics of the early Qing as gleaned from Chinese and Western sources), in *Xingbie yu li-shi: Jindai Zhongguo funu yu jidujiao* 性別與歷史：近代中國婦女與基督教 (Gender and history: modern Chinese women and Christianity), ed. Tao Feiya 陶飛亞 (Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2006), 68–104; Zhou Pingping 周萍萍, *Shiqi shiba shiji tianzhujiao zai Jiangnan de chuanbo* 十七、十八世紀天主教在江南的傳播 (The spread of Christianity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jiangnan (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2007), chapter 5; Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, & Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China* (Harvard University Asia Center Press, 2009), chapter 8; and 康志傑 Kang Zhi Jie, *Jidu de xinniang: Zhongguo tianzhujiao zhennu yanjiu* 基督的新娘：中國天主教貞女研究 (Bride of the Christ: a study of Chinese Catholic virgins) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2013). What began as a fresh trickle has grown into a discernable stream against the main current of scholarship that largely remains fixated on the Jesuits and their elite, male *literati* interlocutors. Nadine Amsler engages and redefines this exciting new scholarship by offering an audacious first attempt at systematically reconstructing and conceptualizing the agency of Chinese Catholic women in the early modern period and the modalities of their spiritual experiences. Focusing on the long seventeenth century (1580–1690) and the Jiangnan region, her *Jesuits and Matriarchs: Domestic Worship in Early Modern China* simultaneously challenges and reconciles with the established narrative about the Jesuit mission and early modern Chinese Catholicism.

Amsler presents a two-fold central argument in the book: On the one hand, the Jesuits entertained a diminished role of women in their overall scheme of

conversion and pastoral care in China, which was “not merely the result of Chinese women’s great seclusion but also an effect of the missionaries’ deliberate decision to adapt their lifestyles to that of the literati elite.” On the other, “the missionaries’ limited contact with women did by no means result in the latter’s passivity. Rather, it prompted women to organize their piety independently and to rely on predominantly female religious networks to do so” (152). Largely because of the agency of these women, and with varying degrees of Jesuit stewardship, a distinct form of early modern Catholic spirituality sprung in China that featured domestic piety at its core. She brings a wide range of archival and printed sources in Latin, Portuguese, Spanish, French, German, and Chinese, as well as material artifacts, to bear on this argument through meticulous and perceptive analyses.

The book consists of an introduction, nine compact and well-constructed chapters, and a conclusion. Consistently applying a gendered perspective, Amsler shifts her analytical focus mid-way in the book (around chapter 5) from the Jesuits towards Chinese Catholic women. The first half of the book explores how the Jesuits’ pursuit of a strategic accommodation with the creed, values, and lifestyles of the Confucian elite shaped their gender identity, intellectual outlook, theological approaches, and daily pastoral activities. Chapter one tells how, following the decision to switch their self-identity from “Western monks” (*xiseng* 西僧) to “Western scholars” (*xiru* 西儒 or *xishi* 西士), and the attending change of attire, the Jesuits recalibrated their masculinity as European Catholic priests in order to match the two ideal male types in the Confucian world, the *junzi* 君子, the “senior gentlemen with a deep concern for Confucian moral learning,” and *shengren* 聖人 (the sage), a title reserved for the very few revered for their encompassing moral virtue (25). This calibration could take a misogynous turn when it was what it would take to win the sympathy of their mainly male and married *literati* audiences. For example, in his *Government of the Family in the West* (*Qijia xixue* 齊家西學, c.1625–30), Alfonso Vagnone (1566–1640) defended the fathers’ celibacy by citing from “the famous sage Plato,” who said: “If a man marries, he will only have two peaceful days [with his wife]: the day of their marriage and the day of death” (31).

Chapter Two analyzes Jesuit correspondences and published writings about women and gender dynamic in Chinese society as works of proto-ethnography. Amsler shows how the Jesuit strategy of accommodation gave rise to a distinctively Confucian representation of China’s “moral topography,” as they took on the position of the elite males and focused on Chinese female seclusion and modesty, which did not hold true among women of lower social classes. Ricci went so far as to praise foot-binding as an “invention of a wise man, serving the

goal not to let [the women] walk the streets and making them stay at home, as is most appropriate for women" (44). But Amsler complicates the story by showing that many of Ricci's confrères did not share his sentiment. Diego Pantoja, Alvaro Semedo, and Martino Martini, for example, decried the practice as unworthy of a nation so cultivated as the Chinese (44).

Chapters three through five explore how the Jesuits worked within the gender hierarchy and strictly segregated social spaces in China and managed to creatively expand their outreach to women and deliver pastoral care among their female converts. The Jesuits employed four groups of go-betweens to interact with women in elite households, including their male relatives, children, servants, and in the case of imperial households, the eunuchs. Amsler treats a fifth group, female catechists, separately and points out that in a society that encouraged homosocial bonding the most important agents for spreading the faith among women were women Catholics. They took on larger roles as stand-ins for the priests as the Catholic Church expanded and the Jesuits became seriously short-staffed. This led to the emergence of a "specifically female version of Catholic religiosity, which developed its own organizational forms and distinct expressions of piety" (52), with house oratories, rather than churches (which were far fewer in number), as the primary anchors of Catholic women's worship. Comparing this with Catholic female piety in seventeenth-century Europe and Buddhist popular piety in China, Amsler points out that Chinese Catholic women's devotion was more confined to their homes. Another potentially fruitful comparison may be drawn, however, with Japan during its "Christian Century" (1550–1650), where strikingly similar female networks were formed that promoted the spread of Christianity among women within individual households.

Other innovations the Jesuits made to conform to Confucian gender norms had more serious theological complications. Their adaptations to important Catholic sacraments, such as baptism and unction, became major points of contention with their opponents in the Rites Controversy from the 1640s through 1690s. The vast debate literature related to these rituals has yet to be examined by modern historians. Consequently, our voluminous secondary literature on the Rites Controversy, which is occupied primarily with the debates on Chinese terms and the Confucian rites dedicated to Confucius, ancestors, and gods of city walls and moats, remains mute on this topic. Amsler's detailed interrogation of this literature is a major scholarly contribution in its own right. In chapters four and five, Amsler discusses how the Jesuits coped with the conflicts between the Christian and Chinese notions of marriage and served the spiritual needs of their women devotees around pregnancy, delivery, and childbearing. The Jesuits again demonstrated their agility on the field

as they were ready to make compromises with Confucian patriarchal values and local religions alike. Amsler's discussion on the Marian cult suggests that the Jesuits tolerated or even supported Mary's metamorphosis into some form of Christian Guanyin (94).

In the second half of the book, Amsler zooms in on the domestic sphere as the major arena where Catholic women performed their worship, cultivated their spirituality, and contributed to the development of their local communities and the wider Catholic network across China and globally. Here one gains an intimate look into the distinctly segregated spiritual lives of the Catholic men and women. We learned that Catholic men enjoyed freer access to the priests and socialized among themselves and practiced their devotion primarily at their churches and religious associations. Catholic women, on the other hand, were homebound, organized by lay leaders in their communities, who were generally the matriarchs of wealthy families. The membership and organizational lives of the congregation hinged on the personal preferences and style of the matriarch (104). The congregation leaders were assisted by the catechists, usually of humble origin, who could be called upon to receive the miracles of God more easily than others due to their psychological traits reminiscent of the spiritual mediums (106). In Chapter Seven, Amsler gives an in-depth study of the female network of the Xu's in Shanghai—consisting of their daughters, daughters-in-law, nieces, and granddaughters—and proposes that we expand our notion of Chinese Catholicism as a family religion. Previous scholars have understood “family religion” primarily as one centered on the patriline and the intergenerational transmission from father to son (122). She advances another pattern of religious spread within the family, through relationships formed by marriage, to highlight the prominent role of women in every aspect of Catholic domestic religiosity. Chapter Eight tells the stories of the Catholic widows and virgins in the domestic convents of Hangzhou and Nanjing, both established and funded by Agnes Yang, daughter of Yang Tingyun (1562–1627), who was regarded as one of three pillars of the Catholic Church in the late Ming. Chapter Nine follows the extraordinary life of pious patronage of Candida Xu. We learned that, during the 1660s and 1670s, Xu sponsored the construction of eight church buildings across four provinces, where his son's civil official appointments carried them into. She also donated a total of fifty thousand *taels* of silver over a thirty-year period to fund the Jesuits' daily expenditures, with the income earned through textile work done by herself, her daughters, and maidservants. Amsler points out that Xu's case conforms to a pattern of prominent patronage among moderately wealthy and rich gentry Catholic women that was virtually absent among women devotees of comparable class standings in other religions in China (138).

Forcefully argued and methodologically sophisticated, Amsler's monograph significantly enriches, complicates, and transforms our understanding of the nature of the Jesuit enterprise in China and the social and spiritual landscape of Catholic religiosity that grew in late Ming and early Qing China.

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Ethan H. Shagan

The Birth of Modern Belief: Faith and Judgment from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. Pp. 408. Hb, \$35.00.

In this ambitious and sweeping study, Ethan Shagan explores the evolution of the category of belief from the early Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. He seeks to examine not the "content of religious belief, but the category itself—what it meant to believe" in different periods throughout European history (1), adopting the approach of *longue durée* intellectual history. While arguing against scholars who have treated belief "as stable object" (1), Shagan likewise takes on historians who have argued that modernity is characterized by the decline of belief. He suggests instead that the modern world has seen a transformation in the meaning of belief, which has "become a synonym for opinion or judgment: a space of autonomy rather than a prescription for its exercise" (6). Far from being devoid of belief, Shagan maintains, the modern West can be characterized by a reduction in the role played by religion but also by a proliferation of belief that now "structures everything from political affiliation to consumer tastes, to dietary habits, enveloping us in a rich atmosphere of private ethical judgment" (292).

Shagan delineates three distinct "credulities," defined as "spaces or conditions of believing," that he separates into "medieval, confessional, and modern" (282–83). He likens the concept of "credulity" to Thomas Kuhn's notion of "paradigm" and Michel Foucault's concept of "episteme," calling it "a framework of intellectual resources and assumptions that shapes religious knowledge and its relationship to other truth claims" (282). The majority of the narrative is thus preoccupied with analyzing the category of belief within each of these frameworks and explaining the transitions between them.

Shagan begins the book by analyzing how medieval theologians approached the problem of belief and how it was related to other forms of knowledge.