

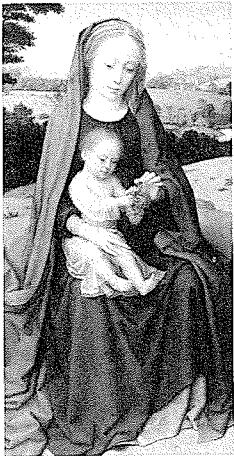
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## NEW TITLES

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### *History*

**HOLY FEAST AND  
HOLY FAST:  
The Religious  
Significance of  
Food to Medieval Women**  
by Caroline Walker Bynum  
Univ. of Calif., 1987  
444 pp. \$29.95



**EMBATTLED COURAGE:  
The Experience of Combat  
in the American Civil War**  
by Gerald F. Linderman  
Free Press, 1987  
357 pp. \$22.50

Throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, Christian women of extraordinary piety did strange things: they exuded miraculous fluids from breasts, fingers, and stigmata; they ingested the filth of the sick; they lived on the Eucharist alone; they felt divine teachings turn to honey in their mouths. But most of all, they fasted.

Why, in the famine-wracked years following 1200, did religious women renounce food? Medieval historians have long held that women, having internalized the misogyny of their times, sought to mortify their weak and despised flesh. Bynum, a University of Washington professor of religion and women's studies, finds otherwise.

Medieval men divided their world into dualities (God/humanity, spirit/flesh, law/mercy). Authority and spirit were male, weakness and corporeality, female. Male saints usually broke with their past lives, renouncing such things as sex or wealth. But for women, a religious vocation meant continuing the activities of childhood, and often provided an escape from the burdens of womanhood: child-bearing and the inevitable drudgery of marriage.

Medieval religious women accepted the notion that they were "poor little" creatures, their weakness being the symbol for all humankind. Female suffering—like Christ's—brought salvation.

Modern psychological analyses of anorectics, argues Bynum, do not apply to these early mystics. Rather than seeking to control their bodies in response to social ideals or family pressures, medieval women renounced food for the pain it brought them—the straightest path to God.

Union and Confederate soldiers marched into America's first modern war determined to prove themselves men and heroes. The Civil War was to be both glorious and short.

In 1861 both the civilians and military viewed war as a struggle that only the most courageous and God-fearing could win. The realities of combat, says University of Michigan historian Linderman, shot such chivalric notions to Hell. For every man killed on the Civil War battlefield, two died of disease in camp. All told, there were 1.1 million