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Briefly Noted

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Briefly Noted

Women and Christianity, Volume 1: The First Thousand Years. Mary T. Malone. Ottawa: Novalis, 2000, 276 pp.

This book presents a clear and very readable digest of the scholarship surrounding women and Christianity over the past 20 years. Although women have always been present in history, the history of Christianity has been written as if the history of males tells the whole story. Malone takes as her goal a presentation of the truth about women in the first millennium of Christianity. She writes as a Christian feminist historian using the evidence of recent historical and biblical studies. Part I focuses on women in New Testament times: women disciples, early Christian women and women in Apocryphal and Gnostic literature. Part II examines women martyrs, deaconesses, widows, and the life of virginity in the second to fifth centuries. Part III, the dark ages of the sixth to tenth centuries, studies the abbesses, women as monastic missionaries, and the story of the Englishwoman who became Pope. Malone concludes with the hope that her book will help make the names of the many women who have been foremothers better known in the Christian tradition. This is a balanced presentation using sound scholarship and deserve a wide readership. Malone lifts the curtain on half of Christian history that has been little known - namely the contribution of women. We look forward to volume two of her analysis.

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Hindu Writings: A Short Introduction to the Major Sources. Klaus Klostermaier. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000, 198 pp.

To accompany Klostermaier's fine *A Short Introduction to Hinduism* (Oneworld, 1998), Oneworld of Oxford has published Klostermaier's annotated introduction and short selections from the major source texts of Hinduism. Taken together these two books work well for introductory courses on Hinduism.

After a brief overview of the vast variety and roles of Hindu writings, the first four chapters offer selections on Indra (Chapter 1), Visnu (Chapter 2), Siva (Chapter 3), and Devi (Chapter 4) as they appear in Vedic, Puranic, Tantric and philosophical writings. Chapter 5 contains very brief (too brief - two pages only) descriptions and selections from the law code of Manu. Chapter 6 surveys the six philosophical systems offering a brief paragraph or two introduction to each school followed by a short selection from a primary text of the school so as to convey the approach. In a 16 page chapter, the treatments are necessarily short. However, a bit of a bias in favour of Advaita is shown (five pages as opposed to one page for both Sankhya and Yoga), but the selections are well chosen. Chapter 7, Modern Hinduism, has passages from Ram Mohan Roy, the Brahma-Samaj, Ramakrishna And Vivekananda. Chapter 8, opposition of Hindu Nationals, make the book relevant to current politics in India. Chapter 10 concludes with a sampling from some of the contemporary *gurus* (Swami Rama Tirtha, Ramana Maharsi, Sathya Sai Baba, and Anandamayi Ma.

Accompanied by notes, a comprehensive glossary and index, this is a most useful introduction to Hindu writings for beginning students - in spite of my minor quibbles.

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