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Women and Christianity: The first thousand years v 1

Oscar Cole-Arnal

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counter to the prime assumptions of all other current work on Jesus, most especially on the question of why he was killed. I emphatically include my own earlier book, *From Jesus to Christ*, in this group whose conclusions this book challenges. I do not feel that her recent book has supplanted or challenged seriously either her earlier fine book or that of most major Jesus of history scholars. In spite of this sharply critical review I believe also that every scholarly work that survives the test of peer review and publication deserves a continued hearing and further discussion. This book is no exception. Although historical Jesus studies are not my field, I remain much more convinced by the continued work of such figures as John Dominic Crossan and William R. Herzog II. Let the dialogue continue.

Oscar L. Cole-Arnal
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

Women and Christianity: The First Thousand Years, Volume I

Mary T. Malone

Ottawa: Novalis, 2000

276 pages, \$19.95 Softcover

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

This book review in the form of a letter stands as an unqualified and urgent letter of recommendation. Although I am somewhat hesitant to advocate a book for the sisters (since men have too long presumed to do so for women), I will take the risk because of the exceptional quality of Mary Malone's first volume of *Women and Christianity*. I have no such hesitancy with pressing my brothers to purchase this book, read it and then act upon its wisdom.

Last year for the first time I taught my new course on "Women in Christian History" and was unable to find a textbook that I could recommend unequivocally. Yes, there are studies by feminist theologians and historians which are excellent, but none of these quite fit the bill as a textbook. Dr. Malone's book (just out) fills that gap admirably.

The only criticisms I might have about her first volume are so minuscule as to be useless, but given the constraints of space, I would like to highlight some of the many especially excellent facets of the work. Her first chapter "Reading Women into History" is alone worth the price of the book. It is simultaneously measured advocacy, history of the treatment of women in the tradition, and methodology – all written with a blend of grace and balance. Throughout the book I found myself chilled and outraged by the progressive and relentless

silencing of women by the “Fathers” and deeply saddened by the walls built around the sisters in violation of the ministry of Jesus and the Galatians 3:28 manifesto of equality. Simultaneously I rejoiced at the courage and creativity of those sister apostles, missionaries, deaconesses, virgins and missionary nuns who managed to keep burning the fires of Christian equality during a nightmare of gender repression. I have read much of late of this repression/liberation struggle, but few have engaged my whole being – heart, mind and spirit – as much as Dr. Malone does in this work. I could barely constrain my outrage with the stance of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine. That they were misogynist here and there, I knew, but Dr. Malone’s exposé left me furious. Their views and behaviour was so ugly and vicious that today we would react with horror to the display of such positions. Yet we continue to lift up these men and their abstract theologies while hiding their reprehensible views and treatment of women. Our seminary courses judge us and find us wanting.

Dr. Mary Malone has this to say at the end of her first chapter: “My hope is that readers will become as excited as I am at meeting such an extraordinary gallery of fore-mothers, and that they will share my joy of discovery and also my outrage at the deprivation and tragic distortion of the Christian story.” Certainly her wish proved true in my reading of this exceptional text, and I will do my part to see that her hope is fulfilled in my classes and in others I encounter. My only regret is that volume 2 is not yet written.

Sincerely,

Oscar Cole-Arnal
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

What In The World Is God Doing? Re-Imaging Spirit And Power

Lee E. Snook

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999

170 pages, \$25.00 Softcover

Lee Snook is emeritus professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota and writes this book in response to the impact of his years of teaching at the University of Zimbabwe and life in Africa. The reader will quickly discover that this is no ordinary book, just as Africa is no ordinary place, for Africa, compared to Snook’s United States, is alive with the Spirit of God. So alive is Africa with the Spirit, that Snook was forced to recognize this power and re-vision his theological concepts. To re-vision our understanding of the Spirit, Snook states that we must “reverse our normal way of speaking of God as Father, Son,