

## Notes on Recent Publications

*Editor's Note: Listed below (in the order of appearance) are the section titles in which notes appear. No single issue of RSR will likely include every section; however, those sections that are included will always appear in this order.*

Texts, Tools, and Media  
 Comparative Studies  
 Methodology and Theory  
 Psychology of Religion  
 Sociology and Anthropology of Religion  
 Gender Studies  
 Religion and Science  
 Ritual, Cult, Worship  
 Philosophy of Religion  
 Theology  
 Ethics  
 Arts, Literature, Culture, and Religion  
 Ancient Near East  
 Greece, Rome, Greco-Roman Period  
 Zoroastrianism  
 Christian Origins  
 History of Christianity  
 History of Christianity (through Early Modern Period)  
 Modern European Christianity  
 Jewish Thought  
 Judaism: Hellenistic through Late Antiquity  
 Judaism: Medieval  
 Judaism: Modern  
 Islam  
 Africa  
 The Americas: Central and South America  
 The Americas: Canada  
 The Americas: USA  
 South Asia  
 East Asia  
 Buddhism  
 Inner Asia  
 Australia and the Pacific

### Text, Tools, and Media

**RECENT REFERENCE BOOKS IN RELIGION.** By William M. Johnston. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996. Pp. 294. \$34.99, ISBN 0-8308-1440-X.

A well organized and useful research tool. Most of the reference resources included in this volume were compiled in the 1980s and early 1990s, although several classics date back to the 1960s. Introductory chapters provide valuable preliminary information for the researcher: a glossary of reference categories, for example, defines such terms as compendium, lexicon, and hagiography. The volume itself is broad in scope.

Categories include the world's religions, all aspects of Christianity, Asian religions, mythology, philosophy of religion and ethics, and social scientific approaches to religion. These categories are further subdivided; each subcategory lists from five to eight reference works. Thorough bibliographic information is provided for each. Each is described according to scope, strengths, and weaknesses, and compared to similar works. Johnston's comparative judgments are fair and reasonable. The affordability of this efficient one-volume reference guide makes it a particularly valuable tool for scholars in religious studies. Highly recommended for all libraries and students.

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**NEW WORLD TRANSLITERATOR.** Created by Christopher Buck, Department of Religion, Millikin University, Decatur, IL 62522-2084. \$50.00.

This font program accommodates the most important conventions for transliteration in Middle Eastern languages. It provides a full-range of transliteration characters for a number of languages (Arabic, Persian, Ottoman, Syriac, Hebrew, Pali, Sanskrit, Japanese, and Sumerian; all but one character for Swahili). The characters meet the standards of the recognized major scholarly transliteration conventions. Zero-width diacriticals enable supplemental transliteration as required for non-Middle East scripts. A special feature of New World is its intuitive character mapping, allowing for an easy learning curve. Currently, this font program is used by Harvard Library, Institute of Islamic Studies, Dartmouth, Utrecht, and a number of individual Islamicists (see review by K. Reinhart in the *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 27 [December 1993]: 294). In terms of appearance, the font is drawn with meticulous care so that the NWT screen fonts are equal to or superior to other fonts generated with Adobe Type Manager or TrueType fonts, with tighter character widths for improved typesetting views. The program is available for Macintosh or Windows, although the full set of screen fonts is available only in the Macintosh version.

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### Comparative Studies

**MYSTICAL UNION IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM: AN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE.** Edited by Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn. New York: Continuum, 1996. Pp. ix + 252. \$24.95, ISBN 0-8264-0882-6.

A collection of essays on comparative mysticism and an ecumenical dialogue among the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This is a reprint of *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1989); see *RSR* 17:149. Contributors include L. Dupre, Idel, McGinn, M. Sells, and D. Merkur. Highly recommended for all university libraries, and as a textbook in courses on mysticism.

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**LAUGHING GODS, WEEPING VIRGINS: LAUGHTER IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION.** By Ingvald Saelid Gilhus. New York: Routledge, 1997. Pp. viii + 173. N.p., ISBN 0-415-16197-5.

In this accessible book, Gilhus uses her expertise in gnosticism to examine the history of laughter in relation to religion. The bulk of the book traces the religious significance of laughter from the ancient Near East through Greece, Rome, early Christianity, medieval Christianity, and modern Christianity. A final chapter deals very briefly with laughter in Hinduism and Buddhism. Gilhus's aim is to investigate what is written about laughter in the context of religion, and she focuses on how laughter is used as a symbol in myths and rituals. Her analysis linking laughter with the passing of air and fluids through other bodily openings capitalizes on a number of anthropological perspectives. In general, Gilhus plots the connections among laughter and the cosmos in the ancient world, laughter and the body in Hellenism and Western Christianity, and laughter and the mind in the modern world. Many insights are to be found in the chapters dealing with the specific cultural and historical contexts of laughter, although the general conclusion to the book is too short. Those interested in issues of the body or in the conjunction of religion and cultural criticism should find this book of particular interest.

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