

Shamash” (99). Some of R.’s other arguments show the same problems. The evidence for the presence of an image of Yhwh in Solomon’s temple is thin. The identity of Yhwh’s consort as Asherah and her depiction in Judean pillar figurines is equivocal and hotly debated. R. argues in favor of both propositions, but on the support of such meager data, R.’s assertions do not quite persuade.

This book is a translation of the original French *L’Invention de Dieu*. Raymond Geuss’s lucid translation only fails with technical terms and proper names, which appear in their French form. This is usually only distracting. For example, baetyl is *betyle* (92, 142–43); Uzziah is *Ozias* (134) and *Osias* (150); the Egyptian historian is named Manetho and Manethon on the same page (234). This failure causes real problems once, however, when the similarity between the French spelling of Hezekiah (*Ézéchias*) and Ezekiel (*Ézéchiel*) leads to a mention of the reforming kings Ezekiel and Josiah (125).

Despite these minor flaws, this work is a superb addition to the study of ancient Israelite religion. R. amply illustrates the slow process by which a warrior deity of the Arabian desert became the transcendent and universal deity of biblical monotheism. It rightly deserves a place in the classrooms and libraries of anyone interested in the development of the Abrahamic faiths.

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The Story of Monasticism: Retrieving an Ancient Tradition for Contemporary Spirituality. By Greg Peters. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015. Pp. ix-278; \$15.37.

Greg Peters has written a work of history and apologetics that aims to contribute to ecclesial renewal and ecumenical dialogue. While this may seem overambitious for a book of 278 pages, P. generally accomplishes its admirable goals.

As a work of history, this volume traces the development of monasticism from the ancient world to contemporary movements. Its definition of monasticism is very broad: “monasticism refers to those who intentionally live alone or in a community under a rule of life and vows that give shape to their daily routine and shared mission in life” (4). Thus P.’s history embraces not only the ascetics of the ancient church and the rise of influential communities (Benedictines, Cistercians, Carthusians, etc.), but also religious congregations not normally classified as monastic, such as the Franciscans and the Jesuits. This blurring of the traditional definitions may give historians reason to frown, but what P. really desires is to chronicle the history of those living Christianity in an intentional and countercultural way. In his telling, each community or movement contributes an important charism to the entire church for an evermore authentic witness to Christ. His rapid overview of this story, while not breaking new ground and lacking a full engagement with contemporary criticism, does provide a concise introduction to some of the major movements in both Eastern and Western Christianity.

P. also writes with an apologetic intention for a Protestant and Evangelical audience. He desires to overcome certain biases toward the monastic way of life in order to allow for forms of intentional living within Protestant traditions. Thus he begins by establishing scriptural grounds for the contemplative life and highlights the positive contributions of religious movements to Christianity. He defends monasticism from charges of rampant corruption on the eve of the Reformation and finds a degree of openness to monastic values even among the reformers. Chapters on Protestant communities, such as Marion Hughes's Society of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, and contemporary movements, such as the New Monasticism, demonstrate that the monastic impulse never fully disappeared among Protestants. His argument also draws upon the writings of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, both of whom saw essential virtues in forms of intentional living. P. concludes that "monasticism is as Protestant as the sermon or hymn-singing, and to think otherwise is to ignore the historical facts" (242).

P. hopes that monasticism in its various forms will become a source of renewal in contemporary churches. Each chapter ends with a section entitled "*Ressourcement*" that offers a reflection on the appropriation of monastic values today. The themes include the need for a dynamic and flexible "rule of life"; the virtues of humility, obedience, hospitality, and poverty; the need for countercultural practices; the importance of regular reform; contemplation and prayer; and ministry to others. P. even argues that monasticism has been an instrument of the Holy Spirit in the church and still has significant contributions to make. While this does not mean that Evangelicals should begin constructing abbeys and singing Gregorian chant, P. does envision a creative adaptation of monastic practices in daily life. Movements such as the New Monasticism and Scott Bessenker's "New Friars" reveal that this adaptation has already begun.

Finally, this book may also contribute to ecumenical dialogue between Protestants and Catholics. P. recognizes that "the ongoing animosity of many Protestants toward the Roman Catholic Church" continues to impede the restoration of monasticism in Protestant churches. Yet growing interest in ancient Christianity and recent accomplishments in ecumenical dialogue have opened up possibilities for a reappropriation of monasticism. P. dedicates the final chapter to monastic practices in contemporary Catholicism and encourages a serious consideration of these traditions for other churches. Monasticism, if it were to become a shared tradition, could therefore serve as a spiritual bridge for dialogue among Christians.

P. writes with evident love for his subject and desires to inspire serious reflection on the part of his readers. Though perhaps not appropriate for courses on church history, this book would make an excellent text for courses on spirituality at the undergraduate or graduate level. Its readability also makes it a good choice for churches, Protestant and Catholic, seeking inspiration for intentional living and countercultural witness. P. tells a fascinating story that has the potential to move minds and hearts.

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