

The Journal of Religion

4. The opening words of the Shema are “Hear, O Israel,” not “Hear, O Lord” (251).

The second major flaw is the treatment of illustrations. There are sixteen illustrations in the book, all of them taken from manuscripts in the British Library. This seems to have something to do with the fact that the book was published in conjunction with a 2007 exhibition at the British Library on sacred scripture in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, entitled *Sacred*. Yet there is no attempt whatsoever to connect the text of the book to the illustrations. There is much discussion of the recording of scripture on scrolls in ancient times, of the eventual fixing of rules for the writing of Torah scrolls, of the page layout in Hebrew Bible and Qur’an manuscripts, and in polyglot Bibles such as Origen’s Hexapla and the Complutensian. All of these topics cry out for illumination. There is not one illustration of a Torah scroll or of a biblical text surrounded by Masorah and commentaries in either print or manuscript. The illustrations that are included sit in splendid isolation. Most are very beautiful, some are relevant to the text (e.g., pl. 8, the Polyglot Harley Psalter; pl. 11, the Gutenberg Bible; pl. 14, a decorated Qur’an), but none is keyed to it, and several seem to have no connection at all to the matter at hand (e.g., pl. 4, an autograph responsum of Maimonides, or pl. 5, a page from *Meshal ha-kadmoni*, a collection of fables by Isaac ibn Sahula). One can only conclude that the illustrations were thrown in with little thought as to how they would relate to the text or serve the author’s purpose. It seems that an opportunity was lost here to produce a work that would have been truly illuminating in more ways than one, and this is lamentable.

To conclude, Peters has made an important contribution to the comparative study of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, this book would have been much more valuable for both the scholar and the general reader had the author properly documented his work and provided it with illustrations that actually had a direct connection to the text.

BARRY DOV WALFISH, *University of Toronto*.

SCHROEDER, CAROLINE T. *Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007. 237 pp. \$79.95 (cloth).

This remarkable study focuses on the leadership style and what Schroeder describes as the “ideology of asceticism” developed by Shenoute of Atripe, the third leader of the elaborate complexes for men and women monastics established in the mid-fourth century in Upper Egypt. He exercised his leadership of Deir Anba Shenouda, known as the White Monastery, from around 395 to 465 CE. Shenoute stands larger than life in the traditions of the Coptic Church, where the present Patriarch Shenouda bears his name. His length of tenure as monastic leader together with his prodigious activity both within his own monastery and in the wider arena of the often chaotic world of the late empire made him a towering and enigmatic figure among his contemporaries.

The study follows the first formulations of Shenoute’s ideology, written before he became spiritual leader, and then explores his commentary on the rules in respect to sexual purity, the “one body” ideology when the monks are “fellow members” of each other (1 Cor. 12) and are obedient to one head. The study continues with the analysis of the sermons Shenoute preached at

the construction of the new monastic church, as well as the discourses that highlight Shenoute's teaching on the sacrality of the human body in the context of Christian teaching on the incarnation of Christ and the resurrection of the body.

In focusing on the letters, sermons, and treatises in which Shenoute expounds his call for a rigorous fidelity to the monastic life centered on the discipline of the body (3), Schroeder's research takes him out of legends into the analytical world of religious science. Threading her way deftly through the problems of some seventeen volumes of textual reconstruction of Shenoute's literary corpus (9 vols. of canons and 8 vols. of public discourses), she draws attention to the striking parallels in Shenoute's thought to the disciplinary regimes examined in Michel Foucault's writings on modern technologies of the body through which the subjected individual comes to "an awareness of his status as subject, responsible for his own actions" and, through a process of internalization, objectifies himself or herself to the external authority or "other" (168). Discipline and salvation are linked in the thought of Shenoute. The transformation of the body of the monk through discipline and the transformation of the social body of the community is integral to his understanding of salvation. Ascetic discipline transforms the body and, in transforming the body, situates the Christian monk in a social and theological position subordinate and obedient to God, to Christian orthodoxy, and to the monastery's leader (5).

Throughout her study, Schroeder emphasizes the ideology of asceticism, with ideology defined as "meaning in the service of power" (9). She follows Foucault's usages of "discourse" and "power" in exploring the distinctive features of Shenoute's ideology of the body in his lengthy discourses to the monks over a period of seventy years. It is in these discourses that Shenoute developed his distinctive ideology of ascetic discipline. In both canons and discourses Shenoute images sin as "pollution," a potent symbol of moral corruption, spreading through the ascetic body both as external "invasion" and internal "imbalance." Shenoute, in prophetic denunciatory style, tirelessly warns his audience of the need for the individual monk as well as the whole community to be free of sin and corruption. According to Schroeder, the use of the term "ideology" draws attention to issues of power within the Christian monastery and in the empire-wide power struggles to define the nature of orthodox Christianity (11).

The sophistication and systematic rigor of Shenoute's nexus of theory and praxis has been admirably demonstrated by Schroeder throughout this work and is in line with the research interests of other specialists, such as Samuel Rubenson, who have also argued for a renewed appraisal of ascetic thought in late antiquity. Schroeder herself argues for the need for complementary approaches to this rich and complex area to which she has made so admirable a contribution. I recall the monks of the monastery of St. Bishoi in the Nitrian desert insisting on the significance of a depiction of Bishoi washing the feet of a stranger. The difference between an understanding of monastic spirituality sourced on the inversion of power modeled by Jesus as he washes the feet of his disciples and an understanding of asceticism based on parallels from Foucault's ideology is palpable. Scholars will welcome this volume, which provides such a rich and provocative insight into the thought of a man who even under acute scrutiny retains much of his enigmatic charisma.

PAMELA BRIGHT, *Concordia University, Montreal.*

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