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The Judean desert monasteries in the Byzantine period

Kevin J. Baglole

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nihilism of the figures she portrays, and it is not certain that these clerico-nationalists are the full-blown "Nazis" that she seems to suggest. More likely they are replicas of the Pétainiste collaborators of continental France. It is to be regretted that the flames of public controversy have enveloped the book. Mordecai Richler, with his own gratuitous snipes at Québécois patriotism, has made honest debate on the book increasingly difficult by his endorsement of Delisle's work. Nonetheless, *The Traitor and the Jew* has brought to the light of day much of the ugly side of the right-wing nationalism that dominated part of Quebec's past. Dr. John Hellman of McGill University is currently in the process of unearthing data that shows that sectors of Quebec's clerical and political elites played a major role in helping pro-Pétain *miliciens* escape justice after World War II. As painful as this past is, it must be owned by all of us, anglophones and francophones. Such openness will do its part to free progressive Québécois nationalists from any identification with a past which is the very antithesis of the patriotism they have embraced since the Quiet Revolution. *The Traitor and the Jew* can be of great service to that challenge.

Oscar L. Cole Arnal
 Waterloo Lutheran Seminary
 Waterloo, Ontario

The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period

Yizhak Hirschfeld

London: Yale University Press, 1992

302 pp.

At first glance this particular volume would appear to be on the arcane end of books anyone might want to spend their time reading. However, once enveloped by Hirschfeld's own thorough and compelling research, the need to consume the entire contents is significantly increased. The history of Judean Monasteries provides a foundation on which one can begin to build an understanding of ancient Christianity in Palestine. The connection between the monks themselves, the hermits around them and the wealthy Europeans who were their benefactors are all discussed.

Nine years of research is covered by the author, from early excavations beginning in 1981 and concluding during 1990. Therefore the information presented in this book is both current and relevant. Prior to 1981 there were fifty monasteries known to exist in both ruins and still in operation. Hirschfeld and his team discovered twelve more during their work. Hirschfeld does not limit himself to only archaeological discussions. Throughout the book there are many references to and a thorough analysis of the sociological aspects of the desert monk's daily life; these are

based both on the archaeological finds as well as the writings of the monks from that period. The sociological commentary was rivetting and would have made a complete volume in and of itself. An interesting and welcome addition to this tome, is a chapter entitled "Who's who of Judean Monasticism". This is a collection of brief biographies of the personalities who sought to follow their call to the monastic life in the Judean desert.

There is a clear distinction made by Hirschfeld on the two types of monasteries that existed in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E.; the *Laura* and the *Coenobium*. The *Laura* was a collection of monastic hermits, who only came together for weekly meals and worship, spending the remainder of the week in their own cells. The *Coenobium* is an enclosed compound where the monks shared everything in common on a daily basis.

The illustrations, photographs and drawings in this volume add to the reader's learning. The author has carefully arranged the photographs of archaeological excavations alongside drawings of how the completed building or artifact would look intact. The maps throughout the book not only provide an excellent reference tool for understanding distance, but for those who have visited Palestine, an idea in what proximity these monasteries were and are located.

Hirschfeld has provided a comprehensive and valuable tool to those who are engaged in research in this area. The footnotes, bibliography and content form a sound launching pad into further research. In addition this volume provides a complete overview of the area of Byzantine period monks, their living conditions and their routines. This book is therefore an asset to any personal or professional library, interested in monasticism, archaeology and or part of the story of ancient Christianity in Palestine.

Kevin J. Baglole
St. Luke's Lutheran Church
Ridgeway, Ontario

The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology for the Twenty-first Century

Robert Benne
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995
242 pp. \$21.75

Robert Benne is a Lutheran writing out of the American context (ELCA). Benne is an academician, currently serving as professor of religion at Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia and has a quarter century of experience writing theology.

Benne's context is American Christianity—arguably quite distinct from the Canadian context; nevertheless, this volume has much to commend it to Canadian readers. Benne's book is neither comforting nor comfortable to