

*amour-propre* (200), the profane (145), spirituality (192), or personal privacy (169). In his discussion of the middle way Cladis reveals his motivation for imposing the public–private distinction on Rousseau’s oeuvre. He notes that in Rousseau’s chapter on “Civil Religion” in *The Social Contract* “Rousseau described and rejected two models of religion—one exclusively private, the other exclusively public—and went on to champion a third model that embraces religion in both its private and public aspects” (192). Religion, then, is the “interpretive key” (196) that Cladis uses to examine Rousseau’s social and political texts and one of the primary tools that Rousseau himself uses to nurture the “Flourishing City.” The problem is that private religion does not easily map onto what is otherwise meant by “the private” or “privacy.” Cladis acknowledges this difficulty but opts against developing a more precise understanding of the term. Nevertheless, his theological reading of Rousseau is engaging, insightful, and challenging.

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*Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture.*  
By Eliezer Diamond. Oxford University Press, 2004. 228 pages. \$45.00

This study is based on the author’s perception that conventional definitions of asceticism are inadequate for describing and assessing certain features of rabbinic culture that involve large measures of discipline and self-denial but are not rooted in the stereotypical antagonism to things of the flesh that is the usual motive behind asceticism. In a revealing disclosure in the Introduction Diamond relates that the impetus for this volume is to be traced to his personal experiences at an American yeshivah where the ethos imposed on the young students had surprising similarities to monastic disciplines in such areas as sexual restraints and isolation from secular culture. These features of the Torah lifestyle are not easily accounted for by conventional accounts of Judaism that portray it as a consistently this-worldly and life-affirming tradition. Diamond seeks to trace the roots of these attitudes to the teachings of the talmudic rabbis. Most of the standard investigations of rabbinic asceticism (e.g., those of I. Baer and E. Urbach) tended to assume that asceticism itself is clearly defined and easily recognizable, so that the scholar’s main task is to determine the degree to which it can be found in rabbinic culture. Diamond reopens the methodological question of what precisely constitutes asceticism. In doing so he demonstrates impressive familiarity with both classic methodological statements of the subject (e.g., Max Weber) and recent, more nuanced formulations (e.g., S. Elm and D. Boyarin).

The body of the book consists of studies of selected phenomena from rabbinic literature that attest in diverse ways to a culture of self-denial. The topics of the chapters are (1) how the demands of Torah scholarship and discipleship clash with those of marriage, family and sexuality; (2) the theology that encourages

denial of physical gratification in this world in order to increase the rewards in the world to come; (3) uses of the lexical root *PRSh*, the most common Hebrew term for denoting asceticism; (4 and 5) the religious functions of fasting and the differing attitudes towards it among Palestinian and Babylonian sages. Diamond demonstrates a wide-ranging familiarity with talmudic sources, with traditional and academic scholarly literature, and with the intricacy of the historical and methodological issues. His analyses of specific passages display depth, intelligence, and attention to textual detail. The strongest chapters in the book are the ones that deal with the motives for fasting as an act of religious devotion, tracing the practice from its flimsy biblical roots through to its frequent mentions in rabbinic literature as an accepted regimen of piety. The rabbinic evidence is studied in connection with comparable developments in Judaism (especially the Nazirite vow) and other religions. Diamond's discerning of differing attitudes towards fasting in Babylonian and Palestinian sources is an important one, though his way of accounting for the difference, by arguing that Palestinian Jews were instilled with a deeper sense of being in "exile," seems unnecessarily convoluted.

I felt that the book's main weakness lay in its general thesis and in the framing of its question. As is perhaps to be expected in a pioneering work that aims at a far-reaching paradigm shift, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists* challenges the reader to engage in the debate but is not always persuasive. On the whole I was not convinced that a clearer understanding of the data is achieved by grouping together under a single heading phenomena that are fundamentally heterogeneous in their natures and rationales. Although the phenomena might produce similar outward manifestations, the incidental limiting of a person's economic opportunities or the infrequency of sexual relations that result from devoting more time to religious study are, after all, very different matters from an ideology that negates carnality as inherently sinful. The latter attitude is, of course, what is conventionally understood by the concept of asceticism, and it seems to me that the traditional usage provides a better understanding of the data than the amorphous categories that are proposed by Diamond, which in any case require further subdivision into essential, instrumental, and incidental types. I doubt, for example, that most people would consider classifying a study of marital stresses among contemporary urban professionals under the "asceticism" rubric. Based on Diamond's own reasoning, and his admission that he is aware of the problematic aspects of his formulation, it would have been more appropriate to replace the problematic term "ascetic" with a different one that is capable of encompassing the varieties of discipline and limitation that are the foci of this book. On occasion we have the feeling that the cited sources are being coerced to serve the needs of the author's methodological purposes, notwithstanding the well-known dangers that are involved in deriving conclusions from schematic rabbinic hagiographic narratives (e.g., in the implications he proposes to draw from R' Yose b. Halafta's claim in TB Shabbat 118b about "planting five cedars" in five sexual acts).

On the whole, the weight that he assigns to the ascetic stream of rabbinic culture—even after we have accepted Diamond's expansive use of the term—strikes me as disproportionate to its place in the larger context of the sources

(especially the halakhic ones), which overwhelmingly encourage or presuppose ideals of marriage, physical health, sexual satisfaction, and general “pursuit of happiness”; and this leads to some questionable interpretations of the data. To cite one instance that seems central to the book’s argument: he assumes that the designation *perushim* is normally employed favorably in rabbinic discourse and then is compelled to devise contrived interpretations of the talmudic tradition about the “seven *perushim*” who are evidently being criticized for various types of moral tunnel vision. It would seem that these apparent inconsistencies could have been easily avoided if he had considered the possibility that *parosh* is initially a term of disparagement directed against a kind of elitism and that, in its sense of “Pharisee,” it usually makes its appearance in quotes from their Sadducee opponents. Though Diamond is ultimately compelled to acknowledge the negative attitudes displayed in those texts, he still insists on squeezing from them a measure of implied approval of certain manifestations of *perishut*.

It is to the book’s credit that the reader is stimulated to pose additional questions to Diamond’s discussions. Some of these questions are occasioned by the feeling that he has ignored obvious, but conventional, interpretations, out of a preference for more novel, ingenious theories. Examples of a few questions that occurred to me include How much of a factor was the Greek philosophical tradition (especially the Platonic and Neoplatonic streams) in promoting a dualistic clash between body and spirit? Can the conflicts between scholarly and family commitments be linked to the institution of oral Torah, in that it required disciples to spend time away from their homes to be in the presence of their masters, because essential elements of the tradition could not be learned from books? Is it possible that the concern for restraining youthful hormones was a concern that shaped the puritanical norms of ancient discipleship (as is evidently the case in the modern yeshivahs that inspired Diamond’s inquiry)?

In spite of the reservations that were raised in the preceding paragraphs *Holy Men and Hunger Artists* is a rewarding and enlightening study. Its fresh approaches to the understanding of familiar rabbinic texts penetrate beneath the technical surfaces of talmudic law and rhetoric to confront important issues of Jewish spirituality and lifestyles. Diamond has not said the last word on his topic, and the paths that he has opened up deserve to stimulate serious scholarly discussion.

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*Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation between Church and State.* By Daniel L. Dreisbach. New York University Press, 2002. 282 pages. \$42.00.

In a succinctly argued 128 pages Daniel Dreisbach deftly traces the transformation of an eighteenth-century “architectural metaphor” (3) into a twentieth-century “rediscovery” by Justice Hugo Black in the *Everson v. Board of Education*