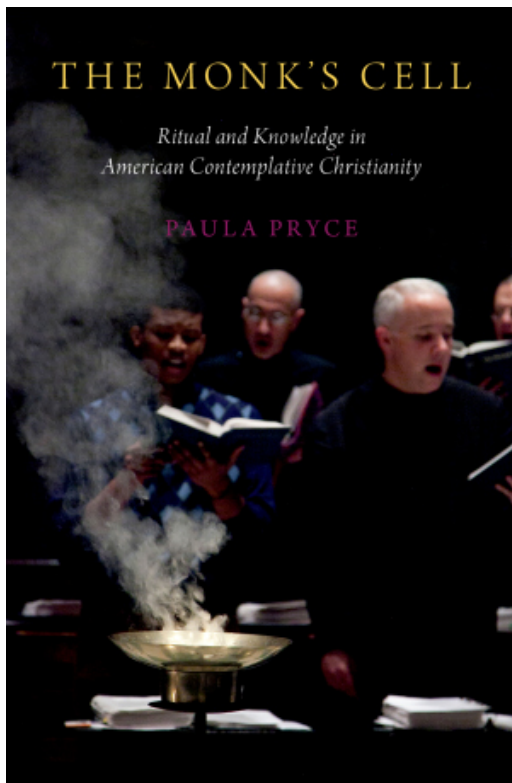


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THE MONK'S CELL

Ritual and Knowledge in American Contemplative Christianity

By Paula Pryce



December 2017

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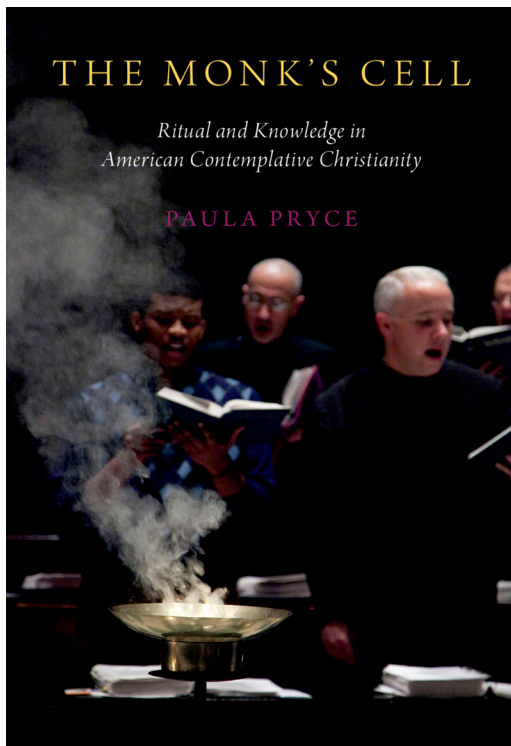
Based on nearly four years' intensive research among semi-cloistered Christian monastics and a dispersed network of non-monastic Christian contemplatives around the United States, *The Monk's Cell* shows how religious practitioners combined social action and intentional living with intellectual study and contemplative practices to modify their ways of knowing, sensing, and experiencing the world. Paula Pryce developed innovative "intersubjective" fieldwork methods to explore how these opaque, often silent communities practiced seclusion, chant, and a paradoxical combination of formalized ritual and intentional "unknowing" to cultivate and hone a powerful sense of communion or "unitive being" in the midst of the everyday life of cosmopolitan societies. Organized by the metaphor of a seeker journeying towards the inner chambers of a monastic chapel, the book uses evocative language to explore the fine details of how "communitas" actually occurs, including the relationship of agency and habitus (habitual behavior and thought) in practitioners' attempts at transforming consciousness. Cloistered monastics encouraged a commitment to ancient Christian ideals and practices, but both they and dispersed non-monastics nevertheless enriched the movement's character by drawing from aspects of other religious traditions and life in the everyday world. This study develops an epistemological framework to boldly depict the interplay of silent contemplation and social action in the unwieldy, dynamic context of pluralistic society.

Paula Pryce is a Postdoctoral Fellow funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada at the Department of Anthropology, the University of British Columbia.

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FEATURES

- An intimate look at the ritual processes that result in *communitas* or phenomenological intersubjectivity
- A unique ethnography of the practice of silence as hospitality, positive sociality, and a form of communication.

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