

This is the second moment in the book that Hirschfeld marshals a lexicon of scientific curiosity, the first being a brief discussion of epigenetics, a burgeoning field of research which has shown that trauma alters the genetic coding of offspring in lab rats. If applicable to human beings, epigenetics suggests that our mental health struggles could incarnate the multigenerational struggle of our ancestors against every peril of human history. Hirschfeld invites the reader to theologize here that a cosmic battle is waged in our own flesh, and small victories—resurrections—over isolation and despair are won with the abiding presence of Christ who joins us, especially as we attend others who struggle also.

In the final section of the book, the patient becomes physician to the church. Recalling his personal bout with bulimia and anorexia during college, Hirschfeld diagnoses the church with “parochial anorexia.” He suggests that our inherited indices of parish vitality are like weight scales that invite a maladaptive body image. Dysregulation and disorder ensue as we center the wrong questions. Framing parochial decline as symptomatic of an illness equips Hirschfeld to approach the struggles of his diocese with confidence and personal wisdom. That approach includes placing less emphasis on the scales—these are “second-order questions”—and more emphasis on re-centering “first-order questions” such as “what does it look like to love and follow Jesus?”

In response to this question, I wonder if loving and following Jesus might look something like the courage of a bishop’s “coming out of the closet of mental illness.” It looks like “living in the realm of nonetheless,” where hope in the resurrection is embodied in the choice to *live with* depression, and where “Easter morning somehow gives us the resilience and power to remember what happens on Good Friday.”

This short book will be useful to anyone who seeks a theological framework for understanding their struggle with depression and mental health. It goes beyond this, however: Hirschfeld’s battle with depression is an honest microcosm of the struggle to be Christian, more generally, in these times. It is functional for support groups and prayer groups. Each chapter ends with a topical prayer and simple reflection questions that could be used as journal prompts or to launch group participation. Its length and tone balance accessibility and interest. Hirschfeld, a painter by hobby, has offered a self-portrait of the spirituality and practices that have given him buoyancy for decades. Some of them have proved true for me, too, as this time has forced me to confront my own maladaptive coping strategies. I commend this book, and I think it will offer stability, wisdom, and hope for anyone who reads it.

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New Testament Christianity in the Roman World. By Harry O. Maier. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018. 264 pp. \$26.95 (paperback).

In *New Testament Christianity in the Roman World*, Harry O. Maier aims to “attend to the lived realities of the ancient world [to] help put flesh and blood into [New Testament] texts that can otherwise be read as disembodied” (p. 2). He first argues that we need to be aware of the religious landscape of the Roman world to understand the emergence of

Christianity. In this framework, which mainly consisted of participation in cultic practices, “[t]he chief difference between gods and humans was that gods were immortal, immeasurably more powerful, and could be in many places at once, and were in a position to bestow unlimited benefits” (p. 39). Moreover, since the notion of a person being granted divinity was already familiar to Romans, the story of Jesus would not have sounded strange. New Testament authors were also well aware that Romans often treated emperors as objects of worship or reverence, and in rejecting such practices, they suggested worshipping Jesus as the alternative. “However enthroned they were with Christ in the heavens,” Maier maintains, “his believers still lived with both feet on the ground” (p. 62).

The texts of the New Testament came from parts of the Roman Empire where there was a stable environment for commerce and trade, which was also conducive to the spread of Christianity. Maier addresses the common misconception that Romans disliked Christians due to their refusal to worship Roman deities, arguing instead that the concern was more due to the threat they posed to civic order. He also highlights the rampant social inequality across the empire: “A very small fraction were elites. The overwhelming majority was made up of slaves, freed persons, and freeborn for who served them, along with the small-scale manufacturers and traders” (p. 73). Christianity appealed to many of these disenfranchised people, especially seeing how Christianity offered converts a new “citizenship” in Christ. Focusing in on urban Christians specifically, he explains how their lives and practices were constantly on display in the ancient city: “Cramped urban conditions probably also occasioned suspicion when Christians conducted rituals open to only initiates . . . This kind of rumor based accusation probably arose in part to the closed-door religious practices in crowded neighborhoods and tenement buildings” (p. 114). Christians also may have attracted suspicion by avoiding public festivals, which, for Romans, “were occasions for publicly marking hierarchical distinctions” and a “means of naturalizing the social order” (p. 106).

Returning to the theme of inequality, Maier examines the “household codes” in the New Testament, arguing that some of them actually subverted them by expanding their obligations. Further, since the majority of early Christians were engaged in manual labor and lived in crowded quarters, they may have been less likely to express traditional Roman hierarchical structures in their households.

While New Testament authors were not philosophers, we can nevertheless find remnants of ancient philosophers’ ideas in their writings because eclectic knowledge of these theories was common. Specifically, Maier focuses on Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Epicurus’ shared belief that “self-mastery and control of desires and passions” was a chief good. These beliefs are often present in the New Testament, especially in passages that encourage believers to live according to a certain set of virtues (and to control their desires and passions as a result). Such common philosophical knowledge is nowhere more evident than in the writings of Paul, for whom “such training belongs to the crafting of a new self that comes about through participation in the life of the resurrected Jesus” (p. 195).

At the outset of this book, Maier describes early Christianity as “a complex phenomenon incapable of being described or understood through appeal to any single theory of

origins or historical narrative” (p. 18). Just as he shows that Roman culture and early Christianity are complex and interconnected, so too are the chapters that this book covers. In terms of structure, the book is arranged topically, despite the fact that all the topics seem intertwined. On one hand, this structure supports Maier’s main argument about the interconnectedness of these phenomena, but on the other hand, it tends to create a repetitive reading experience. The chapters make sense separately, but when reading them consecutively, it can be difficult to keep track of the complexity and the interrelatedness of themes of religion, empire, city, household, and so on.

That being said, Maier introduces the complexity of these topics in a way that is easy to understand for an audience new to the subject. Overall, this book is an excellent introduction to early Christianity in the Roman Empire, and it reminds us of the importance of contextualizing the New Testament in its ancient environment.

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Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity. By Candida R. Moss. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019. 195 pp. \$45.00 (hardcover).

Candida Moss’ *Divine Bodies* explores Christian commitments and anxieties about human identity and the human body that emerge whenever we speak about the resurrected body. Drawing on her expansive knowledge of early Christianity as well as ancient Jewish, Greek and Roman philosophy, culture, and medicine, Moss investigates the Gospels and other hitherto overlooked New Testament scriptures on this subject. Moss’ scholarly curiosity about resurrected bodies is guided by her awareness that any talk about resurrected bodies is always “self-consciously hypothetical” (p. 17) since the experience of such lies beyond our grasp. For this reason, Moss understands all words and images about resurrected bodies to be “a prime location in which to examine our own commitments, both spoken and simply felt, to what makes us who we are” and a place where “our values are most nakedly displayed” (p. 17).

Moss makes a strategic choice in the introduction to her book to bracket Pauline concepts and images of resurrected bodies apart from other New Testament descriptions. This is by no means an attempt to diminish Paul’s distinct contributions to the subject, but rather an attempt to disentangle a persistent irony within the Christian Tradition: we tend to furnish our imagination of resurrected bodies with the *metaphysics* of the Gospel narratives yet with the *vocabulary* of the Pauline script. Moss describes how this routine confusion produces a “hybrid version of the resurrection” that is neither Paul’s nor the Evangelists’, “but wholly and unmistakably our own” (p. 14). Her point is this: when we use Pauline vocabulary, but ditch the accompanying Pauline metaphysic, the resurrection quickly becomes a focal point for our speculations about the ideal quality or type of body we imagine to be perfect rather than an understanding of the resurrected body’s pneumatic and/or material constitution. Therefore, Moss explains, “Onto Paul’s assertion that