Calvin greatly reproached him for this: “Castellion thinks that this is a lewd and obscene poem in which Solomon describes his immodest loves” (272). Calvin thought the Song was more properly understood as referring to Christ’s love for the church. Despite Calvin’s comments on the text, the editors here note that it took almost fifty years after the beginning of the Reformation for a Genevan pastor to preach on the Song of Songs. Theodore Beza noted (in the published sermons of 1586) that it was not good to refrain from commenting on this book (like Calvin, presumably), nor was it good to downplay the book’s importance (like Castellion) (270).

Together, the introductions, texts, and notes make for a wonderful edition of Castellion’s texts. There is great detail in this volume but also many remarks that help to situate Castellion’s translations and comments in its late medieval and early modern setting. Scholars of the Genevan Reformation and the history of exegesis should be interested in this edition but so also should those still working on translations of the texts of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Song of Songs.

—Jason Zuidema


Paul Fullmer has produced an interesting, well-written book on the theme of resurrection in biblical, classical Greco-Roman, and novelistic literature. By well-written I mean that it is well-organized, succinct, easy to read, and filled with convenient charts and helpful footnotes.

Fullmer persuasively demonstrates how cross, tomb, and resurrection motifs occur both in novelistic literature (especially Chaereas and Callirhoë) and biblical literature. Fullmer reports that “Chariton narrates the crucifixion of his secondary character, Theron (Callir. 3.4.18), and Iamblichus tells of the crucifixion of his secondary character Soraechus (Bab. Tale, 21). Primary characters also face crucifixion, but they typically find redemption before the process is complete. For example, Chaereas faces crucifixion in Chariton’s novel but receives reprieve from the king just as he mounts his cross (Callir. 4.3.5-6). Rhodanes, the hero of Iamblichus’ Babylonian Tale (second century C.E.), is also removed from the cross on which he hangs (Bab. Tale 22). Habrocomes, the hero of An Ephesian Tale, survives crucifixion: a gust of wind causes his cross to topple over into the Nile (Eph. Tale 4.2). The occurrence of crucifixion in the gospel of Mark is not unique among the writings of novelistic literature. What is unique, however, is the death of the protagonist (Mark 15:37)” (34). Fullmer even compares the declaration of the Roman soldier at the cross of Jesus (“Truly this was God’s Son,” Mark 15:39) with the declaration of the Romans after Habrocomes returns from his crucifixion (“The gods were looking after him,” Xenophon, An Eph. Tale 4:2) (39). Regarding the tomb, characters in both Callirhoë (3.3.1–7) and
the gospel of Mark (16:4–6) encounter respective empty tombs and subsequently conclude that the emptiness is the work of the divine (39, 196).

Fullmer narrates a whole series of resurrection stories located in novels.

Achilles Tatius crafts several apparent death scenes of the most sensational type in which his heroine returns to life (1) after her intestines are (seemingly) extracted from her abdomen, (2) after her head is (seemingly) cut off, and yet again (less dramatically) (3) when she is reported to be dead but in fact lives. Apuleius writes his resurrection narratives with yet a different type of character in mind: a young boy. In *The Golden Ass*, a grieving father learns that his son actually had swallowed a somnolent, rather than poisonous potion. He arrives at the tomb just as his shrouded son is in the very act of returning to life. In *Callirhoë*, the heroine experiences a return to life in her very own tomb. Like Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus also tells of an apparent death of his heroine that is followed by an incident of tomb robbery in which the “deceased” returns to life” (31).

Because death and revival are referred to twenty-seven times in the novel *Chaereas and Callirhoë* (cf. chapter 3, n. 17 for the list), this work becomes for Fullmer the document that Mark is compared with most closely.

Basic to Fullmer’s conclusions is a distinction between an epic resurrection *topos*, which begins with a sense of confusion and proceeds through death (which is specifically qualified) and resurrection to arrive at a place of enlightenment (2) and a prophetic resurrection *topos*, which repeatedly begins with a breach of divine trust that results in a stark death but concludes with a reestablishment of divine communion following resurrection (3). He contends that before the Hellenistic age these were separate, so that both Hebrew literature and Greco-Roman literature combine to influence the genre of gospel. In fact, he contends that the epic resurrection *topos* exerts more influence on Mark than the biblically based prophetic resurrection *topos* (40, 197). I believe that here Fullmer is making a distinction that is much more specific than the data allows. His four elements of epic (confusion to enlightenment, a crowd, resurrection structuring the narrative, and the element of death qualified) could only be recognized by a scrutinizing expert. It is doubtful that ancient writers distinguished between an epic resurrection account and a prophetic one. A more important distinction would be between a metaphoric resurrection and a physical resurrection, but Fullmer does not recognize this difference.

Fullmer contends as well that the resurrection motif in Mark occurs at strategic points in the narrative, but I find his evidence unconvincing that the two resurrections of children in Mark’s gospel (Jairus’ daughter in 5:35–43 and the epileptic boy in 9:14–29) are structurally significant. Fullmer claims that the resurrection of the girl is the final story of four healings before Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth (172). However, if this was significant would not Mark place resurrection stories before the rejection by the Jewish leaders in 3:6 and his own disciples in 8:17–21? Fullmer claims
that Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10 are parallel stories (174), but Mark has constructed this healing into a resurrection account for emphasis. However, because Matthew 9:23–26 and Luke 8:49–56 repeat Mark’s story, the other gospel writers certainly envision them as separate stories. In addition, Fullmer claims that the resurrection of the boy is strategically placed before 9:32 as the “fourth and final statement about the disciples’ lack of understanding” (190). However, misunderstanding is connected in Mark not just with resurrection accounts but also with parables (Mark 4:10–13), sayings of Jesus (7:17–18), and epiphanies (6:32; 8:17–21). In fact, after the deliverance of the epileptic boy, the misunderstanding intensifies into actions with the disciples’ flight, Judas’ betrayal, and Peter’s denial. These resurrection events have little or no structural significance for Mark. The other synoptic writers likewise do not see resurrection events as structurally important; Luke attaches one loosely in 7:11–17, and Matthew places the miracles all together in chapters 8–9. Finally, if Mark really wanted to proclaim the significance of the resurrection, surely he would have ended the book differently. Mark wants to keep the reader’s eye on the death of Jesus and the disciples’ (un)willingness to take up the cross. Any close parallel with novelistic literature or the so-called epic _topos_ through a structure of resurrection events breaks down.

Regarding Fullmer’s conclusions, it could be true that “Mark prefers the techniques of popular literature over those of elite biography in order to make his accounts widely accessible” (37). Furthermore, Fullmer appropriately contests the older thesis that examples of bodily resurrection (but not returns from the underworld to the land of the living) are wholly unknown to Greco-Roman thought before the advent of Christianity (58) as well as Glen Bowersock’s thesis that early Christian traditions initiated the rise of the novel and instances of resurrection. Fullmer acknowledges as well that novels are not unconnected with history because, for example, the hero and heroine of _Callirhoë_ are children of historical persons of earlier periods (see section 2.3.3). The serious tone involving real places and people in customary situations indicates that they are historical novels. Finally, Fullmer is probably right that “religion and the novel are in the same market since both depict the world as it ought to be and not the world as it is” (205).

However, the strongest argument against Mark’s connection with this novelistic literature is that the theme of romantic love is missing from the gospel. Even Fullmer admits that “it is true that neither romantic love nor the concomitant concern for sexual fidelity plays a substantial role in Mark” (55). Therefore, Fullmer concludes that “novelistic literature provided the author of the Gospel of Mark with a style, a set of motifs and themes, and a basic narrative structure which he could follow without necessarily envisioning his word to be a biography, history, apocalypse, midrash, or _memorabilia_” (57). However, this is such a general conclusion that it is not very
helpful. Finally, I sincerely doubt that “the novelistic genre of the Gospel communicates that the primary interest of Mark’s story is entertainment” (205). With Christians being persecuted and dying for their faith, the gospels can hardly be labeled as entertainment novels. I prefer to entitle Mark’s genre kerygmatic or preached history, but if Mark bears similarities to a novel, I would lean to entitling it novelistic history or biography rather than a historical novel.

—Dean Deppe


Because the writings of the church’s foundational collection are significantly removed in time and culture from our own, according to Pregeant, there is a need to translate the meaning and values of these texts before making direct application to contemporary ethical matters. Furthermore, the documents themselves are significantly pluralistic in their worldviews and valuations and need to be heard in synthetic harmony to receive the appropriate communal moral wisdom.

Pregeant proposes “a hermeneutic grounded in Alfred North Whitehead’s understanding of language” (321) in order to facilitate the recapturing of the New Testament as an ethical sourcebook for Christianity in a postmodern age. This requires treating the language of New Testament documents from two foci. First, the writings must be understood as having an open-endedness that denies “absolute exactness” of meaning. Second, this must be coupled with an excavation of the “systematic thrust” that was intended by the original authors and their readers. The first emphasis steps away from dogmatic pronouncements that is more culturally conditioned than divinely revealed while allowing the texts to continue functioning as Scripture with a vital message in a changing world. The latter pursuit ensures that any moral instruction derived from the New Testament is consonant with its authentic heritage.

In this approach, Pregeant stands in the tradition of postmodern deconstructionism, but he is unwilling for the multiplicity of perceived meanings and disparate understandings to reduce biblical ethical studies to a mere multiplicity of competing approaches or derivative values. Thus, he demands that close attention be paid to the original contexts of New Testament documents and the intended urgencies they elicit. “A text can mean many things,” he said, “but it cannot mean ‘just anything’ we want it to” (321).

In order to mine the various New Testament texts for both their peculiarities and their substantive meaning thrusts, Pregeant establishes a five-step exegetical investigation: (1) use historical-critical tools to identify as clearly as possible the original shape, context, and meaning of each text;