
The leading question of this collection of essays is how the contemporary student of Paul can best approach a study of the Pauline letters. What perspective should one choose? What, in effect, does one need to know in order to comprehend Paul’s writings? The essays in the volume are written by a variety of faculty who actually teach Paul in their classrooms and offer a rich smorgasbord of possible approaches: historical, rhetorical, spatial, economic, visual, feminist, Jewish, African American, Asian, post-colonial, and “queer.” The head of a prospective student might be spinning after going through this array of methodologies and perspectives. Curiously, given the nature and purpose of the Pauline writings, one perspective that seems left out of the selections is the vantage point of a community of faith or a theological or pastoral viewpoint.


Part of this attractive new series that brings the reader into contact with the original context of biblical and early Christian motifs and practices (see the volume by Timothy Laniak reviewed above), this winsome book traces the biblical and early Christian fascination with the desert as a locus of contemplation and purification. Nassif’s method is to reflect on the lives of several revered desert saints: Anthony, Makarios, Pachomius, Melania, John the Little, Moses the Ethiopian, and Simeon the Stylite. Nassif’s commentary and the beautiful photos and illustrations of this book provide the reader with both information and inspiration about this fascinating dimension of our biblical and Christian heritage.


Well known and respected Australian Catholic scholar Gerald O’Collins offers a rich exposition on what one might call the “spirituality” of the resurrection. He begins with a brief survey of recent studies of the resurrection, noting that there have been relatively few major modern works on this crucial aspect of Christian faith. He then considers the worldview of the first century in which belief in resurrection needs to be situated, recalls the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus and the events and currents that led to his death and resurrection, and turns to an exposition of both the empty tomb stories and the various appearances of the Risen Christ noted in the gospels, Acts, and 1 Corinthians. The ultimate purpose of O’Collins’s work, however, is not simply exegetical or apologetic; rather, he wants to consider what resurrection faith means for our Christian lives, such as the belief in the possibility of transformation and redemption and the impact of resurrection faith on our worldview, including morality and our experience of the sacraments.