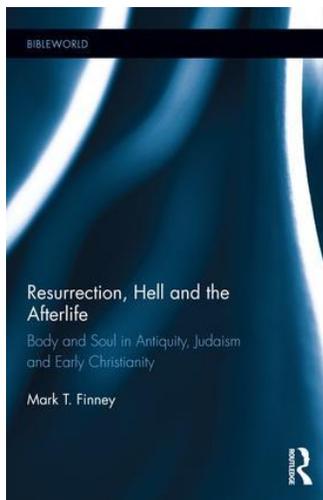




Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2017.02.02

Mark Finney, *Resurrection, Hell and the Afterlife: Body and Soul in Antiquity, Judaism and Early Christianity*. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-138-64765-7. 203 pp. \$140.00 cloth/ebook.

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Mark Finney’s short monograph on resurrection, hell, and the afterlife in ancient paganism, Judaism, and early Christianity is well worth reading. The first chapter is an examination of the afterlife in Greco-Roman paganism. In the second chapter he reviews the afterlife in the Hebrew Bible, and in the third he examines texts on the afterlife in Second Temple Judaism. The fourth chapter is a brief overview of the afterlife in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in later rabbinic texts. He then turns to Paul’s views of the afterlife in chapter five, and in chapter six he reviews texts on the afterlife in the later New Testament. The seventh chapter summarizes developing beliefs in the afterlife in early Christianity, and the eighth chapter reviews the development of the concept of hell in the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and later Christianity. One can perhaps encapsulate the main thrust of his book in the following statements: ancient pagans had much less faith in the

immortality of the soul than previously imagined, and in fact many accepted the concept of immortal flesh in the afterlife for certain heroes. In the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism there are few unambiguous texts that assert the resurrection of the body, although there was a strong belief in the immortality of the soul. Paul does not believe in the resurrection of the physical body and is uncertain about the nature of the resurrected Christ (“Christ’s soul had been glorified” p. 183). A belief in bodily resurrection did emerge in later NT texts.

The first chapter engages deeply with the research of Dag Øistein Endsjø (*Greek Resurrection Beliefs and the Success of Christianity* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009]). Finney uses the study to argue against the view that the Platonic conception of the soul dominated the ancient pagans’ view of the afterlife. Instead, many believed in the bodily translation of certain heroes into an embodied immortal existence. The belief that the “soul could achieve divine nature by itself” was never adopted by “the masses” (17). Homeric souls in Hades were “dead souls” (16). He quotes Endsjø approvingly: “the conviction that immortality must include the eternal union of

soul *and* body remained strong” (17, his italics). Such generalizations are difficult to prove, since the evidence is primarily elite texts and objects of art (e.g., the vases that depict the translation of Heracles, 15). One important absence is the inscriptions. There are many studies on the afterlife in Greco-Roman epitaphs, and Richmond Lattimore’s classic investigation, for example, cannot be ignored before one tries to generalize about the views of “the masses” (*Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962]). Although Lattimore does not believe that the conviction in immortality was widespread, the epitaphs that do accept immortality nearly always refer to disembodied existence.

The second chapter concentrates primarily on Isa 14:9–11, Isa 26:19, Dan 12:1–3, and Ezek 37. In Isa 14:11 (26–7), Finney identifies the soul with the shades (*rephaim*) in Sheol, although he places the bodies in the earth. Isaiah makes no such distinction (cp. Ezek 32:27–28—a chapter to which he also refers). He quotes Isa 26:19 (MT and LXX) and affirms that only souls are raised, since they abide in “Sheol/the grave” (30). The distinction is problematic, since the text includes the phrase ἐγερθήσονται οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις “those in the tombs will rise” and not “those in Sheol.” In addition, נבלתם (if one accepts the emendation of *BHS*) means “their corpses” and not “their shades.” His argument that the text is a reference to the reconstitution of the nation is certainly a good option (31). He denies that Dan 12:1–3 implies a resurrection of the body (32–4). For this he accepts the view that אדמת עפר (“land of dust”) is Sheol. It is not obvious that one can distinguish the grave/Sheol in Dan 12:2, and in any case corpses are also in the grave/Sheol in Isaiah and Ezekiel. A principle that has been forgotten is that “the ideas of the grave and of Sheol cannot be separated.... The dead are at the same time in the grave and in Sheol, not in two different places” (N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, *BibOr* 21 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969], 77, 91, 139). He does not use the perceptive study of Jon Levenson, who insists on Daniel’s “reticence” concerning the location of the dead (*Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel. The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* [New Haven: Yale, 2006], 186). The absence of any verbal reference to “soul” in Dan 12:1–3 is not mentioned by Finney. Although Finney admits that Ezek 37 uses the concept of physical resurrection, it is “an image of national restoration” (35–7).

In chapter 3 Finney argues that there are very few reliable references to bodily resurrections in Second Temple literature. Two examples highlight the challenges of his argument. First, he argues that 1 Enoch 51:1–2 (57) refers only to the spirit and not the body, but he includes in a footnote [71, n. 17] the following remark of G. W. E. Nickelsburg and J. VanderKam: “[in 1 Enoch] earth is where the body is buried. Sheol is the place to which the spirit or soul descends” (*1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012], 184). However, both earth (*medr*) and Sheol are mentioned in 1 Enoch 51:1, and the risen dead dwell (*yahadderu*) on the earth (*medr*) in 51:5 and walk on it—clearly an embodied existence (cp. 1 Enoch 61:4–5, an embodied resurrection). Second, Ps. Phocylides 103–115 only envisions the immortality of the soul according to Finney (59). He takes λείψαν (“remnant”) as a singular in 103–104 (καὶ τάχα δ’ ἐκ γαίης ἐλπίζομεν ἐς φάος ἐλθεῖν / λείψαν’ ἀποικομένων· ὀπίσω δὲ θεοὶ τελέθονται [For in fact we hope that the remnant of what has perished will soon come to the light again out of the earth. And afterward they become gods]), which he identifies as “the soul.” The last α in λείψανα (“remains”), however, is omitted due to the elision required by the hexameter—and generates a better translation such as “the remains of the departed ones.” There is ample evidence that λείψανα refers

to human remains (cf. LSJ s.v.), and P. W. van der Horst (“Pseudo-Phocylides on the Afterlife: A Rejoinder to John J. Collins,” *JSJ* 35 [2004]: 70–75) has shown that the δέ (“but,” “and,” “for”) functions as a γάρ (“for”). It is clear that the resurrection hope is not mere speculation, since “afterwards they become gods.” As these two examples demonstrate, it is unwise to dismiss bodily resurrection from the texts of Second Temple Judaism.

In the fourth chapter Finney denies that there are any allusions to resurrection in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and asserts that the resurrection of 4Q521 (ומתים יחיה) is “this worldly” (80–81). He does not note that the text begins with a reference to the messiah (cf. 4Q521 frag. 2 col. ii + 4, lines 1–12). The mention of healing is not inconsistent with an eschatological vision, and some later rabbinic texts pair healing with resurrection. The more fundamental problem, which Finney does not address, is whether 4Q521 is sectarian or not. He does not comment on the similarity in the phrasing of the scroll with the second of the Eighteen Benedictions (מחיה המתים), which presumably dates to the first century (see T-S K 27.33b for one version). He appeals to *Pesiq. R.* 20:4 for the view that only souls are revived (a reference to Isa 26 [87]), but the passage does not preclude resurrection of the body. He does not mention *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:7 (where the righteous dead roll in tunnels to the land of Israel, where their souls are restored and then they are raised). Nor does he include *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:3 where Isa 26:19 (“your dead will live, corpses will rise”) is the proof text for “the holy one, blessed be he, who brings the dead to life” (הקדוש ברוך הוא שהוא) (מתים מחיה). In general, his interpretation of rabbinic texts seems fair, and he justifiably cautions (93) against reading later rabbinic views back into the first century C.E. Some of the rabbis posited an intermediary state for the soul after death before the resurrection, and Finney seems to have missed that nuance. The rabbis’ materialistic views of resurrection appear to be a *creatio ex nihilo* on his reading of ancient Jewish texts.

Next (chapter 5) Finney turns to Paul’s views of the afterlife and resurrection, and his primary focus is on establishing the thesis that “Jesus’ soul is raised from the dead and taken up to heaven” (114), and he supports the thesis with his analysis of the texts of Second Temple Judaism such as Josephus. His description of Christ as a “soul that has been glorified” (183, cp. 123) stands in ironic contrast to what Paul actually says in Phil 3:21 (ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ [NRSV: he will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory]). With regard to 1 Thess 4:17 (ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις ... [NRSV: Then we who are alive, who are left will be caught up in the clouds ...]), he astutely notes that ἀρπάζω (“seize,” “catch up”) is “a verb typically used in the period to describe those carried off by the Greco-Roman gods and made physically immortal” (108). He rejects the consequences of this insight, since “this ascent of physical bodies ... would be a unique picture within Second Temple Judaism (and within the New Testament) ...” (109, but see the cryptic Matt 24:40–41 par. Luke 17:34–35). Consequently, given his reading of the texts of Second Temple Judaism, he argues that Paul means “the rising of the soul” (109). Paul, however, does not say αἱ ψυχαὶ ἡμῶν (“our souls”—an orthodox Platonic phrase from *Phaed.* 70c, etc.) ἀρπαγῆσονται (“will be caught up”). ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες (“we who are alive”), a phrase that refers to human bodies subject to death in 2 Cor 4:11, is decidedly unPlatonic (just as it is in 1 Thess 4:15). Since Finney’s argument about bodily resurrection in the texts of early Judaism collapses, his interpretation of Thessalonians seems

profoundly weak. The text was repulsive to a Platonist philosopher (Macarius, *Monogenes* 4.2.1–5), but at least the unnamed philosopher was willing to take Paul at his word. A crucial insight of Jan Bremmer has been ignored: “in the apostle Paul we rarely find *psychē* and never in respect to the afterlife” (*The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* [London: Routledge, 2002], 3). Paul says nothing of the soul in 1 Thess 4:13–18. Besides his beliefs about Second Temple Judaism, the linchpin of Finney’s argument about 1 Cor 15 seems to be his view that *σῶμα* (“body”) in context means not “body” but “new life,” a “new creation,” a “new entity” or “the organic principle which makes a man a self-identical individual” (112, appealing to various scholars). These are not so much semantic analyses, but rather baroque theological interpretations of the word. The metaphors are attractive, but they depend on the basic meaning as defined in BDAG s.v.: “the living body.” Paul’s own usage confirms the lexicon’s decision: 1 Cor 12:16, 18, 19, 20, 22 the body and its parts; 6:13 “the body is not for *πορνεία* (fornication)”; 13:3 “if I hand over my body,” etc. The *σώματα ἐπουράνια καὶ σώματα ἐπίγεια* (“heavenly bodies and earthly bodies”) in 15:40 likewise comprise an aspect of Paul’s physics. One can profitably read Paul through the lens of Plato as Finney does, but Paul’s affirmation that “we [who are still alive] will be changed” (15:52: *ἡμεῖς ἀλλαγησόμεθα*) is almost certainly a “reworking” of 1 Thess 4:17 (G. Luedemann, “The Hope of the Early Paul: From the Foundation-Preaching at Thessalonika to 1 Cor. 15:51–57,” *PRSt* 7 [1980]: 195–201). There seems little room in either text for the view that the corpses of those alive at the end will be left on the ground bereft of their immortal glorified souls. Paul affirms the image of transformed bodies—not abandoned bodies.

Chapter six is a quick review of the resurrection narratives in Mark, Luke-Acts, and the later NT. The first page includes a theological statement, which assumes the “decay” of Christ’s body, which itself “offers consolation to those departed Christ-believers whose own bodies” decay (123): “Consequently, there is hope for believers in the continuity and parallel model of the Christ-event; the transformation and glorification of Christ’s soul is the proleptic event of their own glory to come” (123, from W. Pannenberg). I believe this statement reveals much of the goal of the monograph. Finney uses the argument (123–4) that since Paul does not mention the empty tomb and appearance stories of the Gospels that he had not heard them from Peter (Gal 1:18). This is an argument from silence that is merely a logical fallacy, and it is time to lay it to rest. Finney speculates that Mark might believe that “what is raised to be with God is the soul alone” (125)—a point of view that contradicts Mark’s empty tomb narrative, and especially the young man’s declaration in 16:6. The “trajectory” is “away from that of Paul and towards and emphasis on the *physicality* of Christ’s resurrection appearances” (135, his italics). Luke “is making a concerted effort to establish a framework of resurrection belief more aligned to Greco-Roman thought” (139)—by that last phrase, Finney means the “Greco-Roman resurrection narratives” (138). He says little of John, except that the Thomas narrative is a “perfect example of literary imagination” (132). I would have thought that a scholar interested in theological and pastoral concerns would find it necessary to engage the venerable Roman historian (and self-avowed atheist) Robin Lane Fox who views the beloved disciple “as an excellent primary source: a disciple who was very close to Jesus, who reclined beside him at the Last Supper, who saw into the empty tomb” (*The Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible* [New York: Vintage Books 1993], 205, cp. 340). Fox, again (*ibid.*, 360): [with regard to the historical truth about the resurrection] “On the available evidence, historians cannot decide the matter: in my view, there is a primary source, the ‘beloved disciple,’ who later claimed to have seen burial clothes in the empty tomb, but was his claim correct and did he draw the right conclusions?”

The seventh chapter offers a review of the afterlife in early Christianity, which tended to insist on the resurrection of the body—even though there was resistance to the concept among those who insisted on the immortality of the soul. His claim that “many” in Polycarp’s epistle denied the physical resurrection of Christ (150, 154; Pol., *Phil.* 7:1) while “asserting the Pauline position” is doubtful, since Polycarp only says they deny “resurrection and judgement” (μήτε ἀνάστασιν μήτε κρῖσιν) and gives no details. His additional reference (154) to Tertullian, *Res.* 2.2, 17, 53.12 as proof that “between the time of Polycarp and Tertullian those asserting the Pauline position [as Finney constructs it] were clearly the majority” seems unfounded. His statement that Clement of Alexandria “conceived the afterlife in terms of the immortality of the soul” would surprise Clement who asserted (*In Ep. Petri prima [Hyp.] frag.* 1 [GCS Clemens Alexandrinus III, 203 Stählin/Früchtel/Treu]) that “it was proper that neither the just nor the evil soul ever returned to the body again in this life for a second time ... however, in the resurrection each is returned to the body” (*Decebat autem iterum nunquam reverti secundo ad corpus animam in hac vita, neque iustam ... neque malignam ... in resurrectione autem utramque in corpus reverti*). In *Paed.* 1.6.46.3, with ref. to the bread and flesh of John 6:51, “it asserts that it (the bread) is the flesh (of Christ) which in fact rises through fire, just as wheat rises through decay and sowing” (σάρκα αὐτὸν λέγει καὶ ὡς ἀνισταμένην δῆθεν [διὰ πυρός], καθάπερ ἐκ φθορᾶς καὶ σπορᾶς ὁ πυρὸς ἀνίσταται).

The final chapter is a brief survey of the development of the concept of hell. Paul, though distinguishing the destiny of believers and non-believers, perhaps thinks that the latter are “annihilated after judgement” (161). The afterlife Paul believes in is “some kind of anthropomorphic entity capable of housing the spirit” (161, with ref. to 1 Cor 15:50). Finney uses cautionary quotes around “body” in the expression “resurrection ‘body’” (161, cp. 180 “spiritual ‘body’”): “Paul in continuity with Second Temple Jewish texts ... envisions an afterlife comprised of the soul, although he can confusingly employ *body* language” (161, his italics). One wonders if the confusion is not in Finney’s attempt to force Platonism on Paul. The Synoptics are the origin of the concept of Gehenna in the NT, and Jesus is ultimately sanitized of any responsibility: “So, the language of the afterlife placed upon the lips of Jesus in the Gospels vis-à-vis the demarcation of the righteous and the wicked stands in continuity with Second Temple Judaism but not with the Hebrew Bible” (165–165). The chapter continues with a review of hell in later Christianity through the Renaissance (Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*). Hell is “a construct” in which the religious authorities in ancient Judaism and in the church (including the Pope) held/hold the keys to the differentiation of the “wicked from the righteous” (173).

Finney reiterates his results in the conclusion. The book is pleasant reading, not burdened with heavy footnotes, and belongs in any scholar’s library who is working on the topic of resurrection and the afterlife in Mediterranean antiquity. He has a pastoral (a word he uses several times) concern for alleviating the anxiety of those who have been traumatized by the fear of hell.