

Corinthians, set within a description of this emerging posture, is also noted. Verse 8 envisions salvation as resultant of God's search for his lost children. This analogy displays the Irenean ethos of the text's theology, whereby creation and redemption are tethered. Here, too, one gets a glimpse of the *Acts*' occasional polemical interaction with Marcionism.

The fourth section of *3 Corinthians* exhibits the decisively anti-Gnostic perspective of the *Acts*. Here, one discovers a Pauline response to theological inquiries sent from Corinth. The deployment of the well-known New Testament "seed" analogy (compare with John 12:24) utilizes a recognizably Gnostic term so as to subvert Gnostic repugnance toward corporeal redemption. Further to this, the letter contains several appeals to Old Testament figures—Jonah and Elisha—in advancing its affirmation of the bodily resurrection. In this strategy, the author wisely uses examples, knowing their potent persuasive power. The examples chosen correspond to prominent themes of early Christian art. And they influenced, as Pervo asserts, the developing gospel traditions of the church.

Pervo's commentary, as the forgoing examples reveal, is brimming with insights on the influences, agendas, literary techniques, and theological assumptions at play in the *Acts of Paul*. Unlike other treatments of the *Acts*, it does not preoccupy itself with the Thecla narrative, but gives careful consideration to the treatise in its entirety. Pervo's commentary is suitable for anyone—specialist or not—wanting to dip into the ApocActs with a bit of seasoned guidance. The student of early Christianity will find the bibliographies at the end of each chapter an apt resource for more extensive research. Bravo to Richard Pervo for a historical and literary textual analysis of the *Acts of Paul* which is scholarly, readable, succinct, and engaging.

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Second Sky: Poems. By Tania Runyan. The Poiema Poetry Series. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2014. 73 pp. \$12.00 (paper).

In *Second Sky*, National Endowment of the Arts fellow Tania Runyan mixes contemporary situations with the thought-provoking, sometimes controversial writings of St. Paul. The result? Powerful poems that stir both brain and spirit.

This is a book to read on several levels, each poem deepening into another. Runyan links all fifty-seven works to specific verses from St. Paul's epistles and histories. But these are no simple pairings. The poems and biblical passages serve as commentaries on each other. Both ancient and modern-day worlds breed spiritual struggles. Biblical personas and suburban soccer moms yearn for and deny the Alpha and Omega.

Runyan acknowledges such tension in the opening poem, "Eutychus Raised from the Dead." Here we witness not only the physical and spiritual reawakening of the young man fallen from the loft, but also the poet's reactions to the Almighty and his apostle.

I, too, have slumped
at the sound of Paul's voice,
plummeted from the ledge,
the skeleton of my belief
disjointed and smashed.

But sometimes he stops
just long enough to find me
bleeding. Sometimes he takes
my face in his rough hands,
and I wake. (p. v)

Yes, the apostle's admonishments can be hard to hear and our rising "difficult" (p. 52). Paul's familiar voice may put us to sleep, or its seeming harshness may shake our beliefs. But his words also can be loving, as he holds us with rough but healing hands and wakes us to epiphany. And always, we are cradled by the hands of God.

True, we do not always recognize our need for rebirth, as in the poem "Newness of Life: South African man wakes after 21 hours in morgue fridge." A response to Romans 6:4, the piece ends with, "Some burst alive / on the pyres of the Spirit. / Some blink open. . . . *How did I get here? / I never knew I was dead*" (p. 4).

This is a book of deaths and resurrections, of wounds and miraculous healings, of sight taken away or restored. Not always, though, is it both. In "The Faith to Be Made Well" (Acts 14:8-10), the poet claims even God knows sudden healings don't "happen / to people like me, people who make a home / of their tiny, stinging wounds" (p. 25).

The book is filled with scales of doubt, but also images of sight and insight. In the long poem "Damascus" (pp. 15-18), Runyan sharply contrasts her (and many of our) less than "sin-tacular" experiences with Paul's dramatic conversion: "Each day another scale falls, / and another covers my eye.

... Can he save me again, / a woman too laggard to lose any hope, / too blind to collapse in a flash of light?"

In a world as full of tragedy as Paul's itinerary, our "groanings" are often "too deep for words" (Rom. 8:6). When Runyan reads "about the newborn / found in the fast food dumpster, / . . . the magma of [her] own anger ris[es] / with terrible speed" (p. 2). Despite or because of this, she contemplates Paul's directives with courage and honesty, as is evident in poems such as these: "Setting My Mind" (Col. 3:2), "No One Can Boast" (Eph. 2:9), "Approach with Boldness" (Eph. 3:12), "Put on the New Self" (Col. 3:10), "Buried with Him in His Death" (Rom. 6:4), and "Do Not Be Anxious About Anything" (Phil. 4:6). Repeatedly, Runyan takes us into the minds of the apostle and his contemporaries (Onesimus, Ananias, the prison guard at Philippi). But she also is intent on helping us understand our contemporary world: "the woman down the street," children playing on a garbage heap in Indonesia. Not surprisingly, given Paul's letters, she ultimately leads us to love.

In her humorous and perceptive application of 1 Corinthians 13, Runyan describes how "the greatest of these" "yields the last word on the Facebook fight. / . . . Takes a breath and thanks God / there is even a zipper to get stuck. . . . Smiles and listens to the grandmother complain / about her knees, rubs the knees, / ladles another bowl of soup. . . . Echoes long after the cymbals have died" (p. 34).

Such revelations reverberate throughout *Second Sky*. And although, like Runyan, we may sometimes insist, "*I won't be saved, / my invisible fists rising*" ("Holy and Blameless," Eph. 1:4), ultimately Agape overpowers all:

*Let there be light, you said,
and I hid my face.
I can see you,
and you are good* (p. 6).

Good, as these poems are. In *Second Sky*, poet Tania Runyan gives us Light by which to read, not only St. Paul's writings, but also our own hard-to-decipher selves.

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