Grant Macaskill (Kirby Lang Chair of New Testament Exegesis, University of Aberdeen) opens this timely and important book by remarking on how autism is now believed to be quite common, affecting between 1 in 200 and 1 in 50 persons, such that every Christian community will be touched by autism in some way. These opening remarks not only show this book’s undeniable importance but also identifies its audience. *Autism and the Church* is written for a broad Christian audience who want to “think biblically” (p. 2) or “think Christianly” (p. 44) about autism. Complex issues are clearly and sensitively presented for the non-specialist and technical jargon is almost entirely absent. I whole-heartedly recommend this volume to a general readership interested in the relationship between Christianity and autism. I enjoin all church leaders to buy a copy as a matter of some urgency. And I encourage students interested in disability theology and hermeneutics to receive Macaskill’s wisdom and apply it to their own areas of interest.

Chapter 1 outlines autism as “a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them.” (p. 11). Written as a broad and brief introduction to autism, this chapter displays a sensitive and nuanced understanding of both current scientific findings, social concerns, and the almost definition defying breadth of the lived-experience of autism.

*Autism and the Church* is straightforwardly evangelical and Macaskill’s central goal is to offer Christians a way to “think biblically” about autism. In chapter 2, Macaskill plays to his strengths as a biblical scholar by offering readers six principles for how to read Scripture (and three for how not to), all of which can be applied more widely to any modern issue not known to the ancient world. What happens when we apply these principles for reading Scripture to the case of autism? Focusing on Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, chapter 3 argues that the Bible criticizes how we intuitively value others by rewarding people who are easily “likable” and penalizing those who are perceived as odd, difficult or disruptive, such as people with autism often appear to neurotypicals. Macaskill argues that such systems of value are sinful and make churches unsafe for those who are different. By contrast, the God of the Bible consistently “draws near to those whom we naturally consider to be marginal or even contemptible and elects them to involvement in his work of salvation.” (p. 72)

If God actively incorporates those who are different and difficult into the Body of Christ, so too must the church actively accommodate and change to meet the needs of all God’s people. Chapter 4 argues that this requires a reevaluation of what we expect a “successful” church service or community to look like. In the case of autism, this means thinking much more carefully about the sensory and social environments we create (everything from perfume to PA systems) and allowing people a couple of days to “decompress” (p. 124) after a service, rather than busying church calendars with almost identical events.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn from questions of church inclusion to wider issues in the life of faith. This leads Macaskill to a brave and important discussion of the co-occurrence of autism with mental illness, particularly anxiety, depression, and addiction. Macaskill brings the good news of the Gospel to bear on this difficult topic by a discussion of how “weakness” and “flesh” will be redeemed and how persons with
autism may still engage in spiritual formation. Much of what Macaskill offers here might be applied to the theology of mental illness more widely.

Chapter 6 continues to interrogate what is perceived as “normal” Christian practices. This chapter exhibits a broad and generous evangelical theology. Macaskill defends different kinds of expressions of faith from straightforward verbal statements, advocates the regular use of the psalms and prayer books, remains thoroughly non-partisan on the topic of nonstandard sexual identities, and suggests that we might learn new exegetical insights from autistic people who read the Bible differently.

This book opens up a new field of inquiry into autism and Christianity and represents evangelical disability theology at its very best. Jesus Christ is at the heart of every argument. It is a study in how the Bible can be used in a way that offers a radically inclusive ethic and a community-focused account of the Christian life. The theme of “weakness” flows throughout this book as a way of emphasizing autism as a “gift” and how the abundant grace of God prioritizes those often considered the most difficult. The challenge is for God’s church to go and do likewise.

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Review of Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity. Candida Moss, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 208 pages, ISBN-10:0300179766. $45.

Candida Moss’s Divine Bodies provides fresh, provocative close readings of biblical texts and says something genuinely new about its topic. The book is readable for a non-specialist, but the footnotes still ground the specialists in the relevant scholarly bibliography. Further, Moss is able to make insightful contributions and to signal where her biggest contributions lie without chastising other scholars.

I want to talk about how this book contributes to resurrection studies. I think it exemplifies some crucial new directions, building successfully on what has come before and makes some genuinely new arguments—about Jesus’s scars, the role of amputation in Jesus’s teachings, and so on.

Let me begin by situating Moss in the landscape of scholarship on the resurrection. The way that I would characterize this topic is by dividing it into a different set of questions and methodologies. First, there is the apologetic historicity debate that focuses on the evidence or lack thereof for the resurrection of Jesus. Can the witnesses be trusted? How do we explain miraculous events in psychological terms? And so on. For some people, this is the only question, but it has limited appeal, a limited amount of evidence, and forces that evidence through a very narrow evaluative paradigm.

Second, the historical-doctrinal approach attempts to trace the history of the concept of the resurrection. This often takes two phases. In the first, scholars have