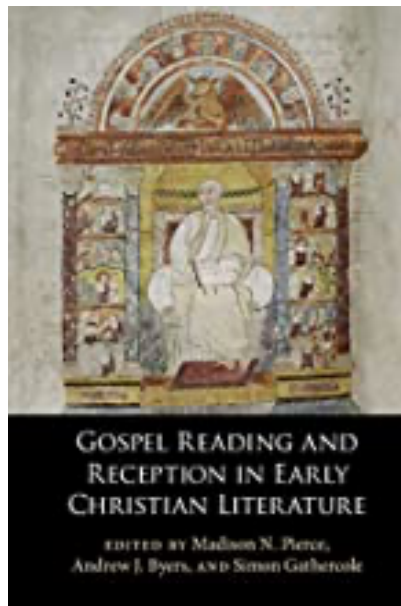


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**Madison N. Pierce, Andrew J. Byers, and Simon Gathercole, eds.**

***Gospel Reading and Reception in Early Christian Literature***

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To consider the gospels through the eyes of reception history entails not only tracking down subsequent interpretations and appropriations but also recognizing the gospels as products of exactly such reception themselves. To write a gospel or simply about the gospel necessitates theological reception of at least one of those. Such reception is here called “gospel reading,” which throughout the volume is understood broadly as the interpretation of Israel’s Scriptures or prior gospel materials in light of the recognized importance of Jesus.

The volume is divided into three parts concerning early Christian reception of the gospel in the Jewish Scriptures, of written gospels by gospel writers, and gospels (or gospel materials) in the church tradition. The volume aims to counter the methodological division between an exclusively historical-critical and an exclusively theological approach. This is done by showing from various angles how focusing on reception is a methodological remedy that does justice to the hermeneutical dynamics at work before a gospel was written, during the writing process, and afterwards.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer praises Francis Watson in the foreword, to whom the volume is dedicated, for his integrative “canonical” approach to biblical interpretation. The approach includes both historical criticism, hermeneutics, and theological interpretation. The “meaning” sought by such interpretation is not to be excavated behind the text but perceived as a theological reality in front of it, with help from perspectives such as reception, canon, readers, and reading cultures.

“Reading the Old Testament Christologically,” by Ian A. McFarland, explains that, although Christians have in the Old Testament read “testimonies” (direct predictions) and “types” (retrospective often symbolic connections) as pointing to Jesus, they have also perceived the Old Testament to be about Christ more generally. Since it is about the God who became flesh in Jesus, it is about Jesus. In that light, the condemnation of Marcion, who rejected the Old Testament, follows logically from Jesus being the incarnation of the God of Israel. Furthermore, that Jesus is the Lord necessitates some form of christological reading of the Old Testament. McFarland offers a Trinitarian hermeneutic for such a reading.

Beverly Roberts Gaventa, in “Where Is the ‘God of Israel’ in Paul’s Reading of the Gospel?,” considers several possible reasons for Paul’s avoidance of “God of Israel” and similar terms relating God to his ancestors in his letters. Gaventa notes the contrasting prevalence of such terms in contemporary Pauline scholarship to indicate that for Paul the history of Israel was essential for knowledge of God (40–41). Paul was, however, not simply adapting his terminology for gentile audiences. His new Christ-centered hermeneutic, that is, that God is now primarily known through the death and resurrection of Jesus, had become his hermeneutical key to the past, present, and future. This revelatory locus is what defined Paul’s terminology.

Madison N. Pierce’s “Gospel Reading and Prosopological Exegesis in Luke-Acts” concerns Luke’s employment of prosopological exegesis, which retrospectively sees the face (*πρόσωπον*) of Christ in characters and elements in the Jewish Scriptures. Such exegesis was employed already in Luke’s sources. Although such readings are christological, that is rather the result than the method (54). Pierce focuses on how Luke presents Jesus as the Messiah and the Servant of the Lord by interpreting characters in the Psalms and the book of Isaiah to be Jesus. Illustrative of this is Philip’s answer to the eunuch asking about the identity of the Servant in Isa 53. By simply proclaiming the gospel about Jesus to him (Acts 8:35), Philip implies that the Servant is Jesus and that his “vicarious suffering” is part of Jesus’s messianic identity (64).

In “Why Not Matthew’s Use of Luke?,” Mark Goodacre argues for the Farrer Hypothesis and against Matthean posteriority, whose logic, he argues, is conditioned by the two-document hypothesis. Goodacre sees several features suggesting a second-century date for Luke. He identifies several Matthean characteristics (tripartite structure, offensive imagery, etc.) present in Luke’s Gospel that indicate that Luke used Matthew’s account. Some of these elements remained in Luke’s version due to editorial fatigue where the redactional effort decreases through a pericope. The parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:12–27 // Matt 25:14–30; pp. 85–86) is an example of this. Luke begins the parable with ten servants (his redaction) but ends with only three, as Matthew. Further, Luke refers to the most successful servant as “the one who has ten minas” (Luke 19:24), which would fit Matthew’s account (Matt 25:20, 28), instead of “the one with authority over ten cities” or “the one with eleven minas” (one invested plus ten earned), which would fit his own.

Dale C. Allison argues for the opposite hypothesis in “Luke Rewriting Matthew? The Case of the Sermon on the Plain.” He identifies the Matthean redactional elements in Matt 5–7 as triad structures, characteristic vocabulary, Moses typology, preference for extended discourses, teaching as antitheses, ordering of material by topics, and focus on the fulfillment of Law and Prophets. When these elements are retracted, the text “lines up very nicely with Luke 6:20–49” (105) or with a reconstructed Q. Allison suggests that 1 Clem. 13.1–2 reveals access to the source behind Luke 6 (110). Further, he argues that Luke 6:27–42 is a distinguishable textual unit in dialogue with Lev 19 and Jewish interpretations of it, which Matthew then scatters in three parts (5:38–48, 7:1–5, and 7:12) to order the material topically (111). Matthew must (more than Luke) have realized the connection to Lev 19, since he supplied Lev 19:18 in 5:43 (117). It is, then, unlikely that Luke should at once remove that quotation from Matthew’s account while also gattering the three sections relating to Lev 19 in Matthew into one textual unit.

“Reading Mark and Writing John: The Feeding of the 5,000 in Johannine Perspective,” by Wendy E. S. North, concerns how Mark’s version of the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:30–44) is appropriated in the Gospel of John (John 6:1–15). She argues that John included the miracle to present Jesus as Moses, who gives bread from heaven in the desert, to demonstrate the last point of the previous chapter that the Scriptures speak about Jesus (134). This christological reading of Scripture is then utilized in the following discourse to explain the christological sign(ificance) of the miracle story.

In “On Historical *Epochê* in Gospel Reading as Exemplified by John and the Egerton Papyrus,” Troels Engberg-Pedersen seeks to address the methodological problem of “historicizing” in gospel scholarship, that is, when two texts are initially compared and the differences used to assign each text a tentative *Sitz im Leben* or historical placement or to isolate different strata in the texts, and where these uncertain historical suggestions are then redeployed in the reading of these texts. In such a case, historizing “risks hardening the meaning of either text so as to oppose them directly to one another” (153). Instead, the comparative perspective must be resisted until each text has been interpreted intrinsically, and different strata should be proposed only when there is a break of meaning (157–58). Engberg-Pedersen examines the debate on the dependency between the Egerton Papyrus and John’s Gospel to highlight exactly this methodological challenge and to demonstrate the caution he calls for. He concludes that John must depend on Egerton.

“Generosity without Borders: Reading Gospel-Commands in Early Christianity,” by John M. G. Barclay, presents a study of the exhortations to love one’s enemies, nonretaliation, and extended benevolence in early Christianity. Barclay considers their rhetorical purpose, the theological rationale behind them, and the social effect they had. This superior ethos became an important part of Christian identity and served to distinguish Christians in Roman society, particularly during persecutions (176). Christians should live aligned to the generosity of God shown in Christ (*imitatio Dei*), and, when benevolence was not returned, they could expect compensation as a

divine reward. When refusing to retaliate, they believed God would uphold justice and revenge for them. Barclay demonstrates that Christians saw positive outcomes from practicing this ethos (e.g., conversions and reputation) and that it may indeed have contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity.

Andrew J. Byers's "Johannine Readings of the Johannine Gospel: Reception Theology and Practice in John's Epistles" concerns the hermeneutics involved in reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine letters. Byers argues that the Johannine hermeneutic is intended open-ended; that is, the gospel narrative invites its reception to go beyond itself (16:12). The narrative, however, also guides its reception, and this normativity is a "relatively early, component of Johannine reception" (201). While the letters employ terminology from the gospel, which they expand and alter the meaning of, these new meanings are confined within the broad "conceptual trajectories and narrative patterns of the normative Gospel" (203).

"Severus of Antioch on Gospel Reading with the Eusebian Canon Tables," by Matthew R. Crawford, concerns Severus of Antioch's appeal to the Eusebian Canon Tables in solving the problem in Matt 27:49, where Jesus, in some manuscripts, is stabbed, with water and blood coming from his side *before* he screams and dies. Severus argues that, since Eusebius placed John 19:34 in Canon X (the material unique to John), the side-piercing was not in Eusebius's manuscript of Matthew and should thus be regarded as scribal. Crawford considers three modern assessments of this variant reading: intrusion from the margin, antidocetic interpolation, and original in Matthew. Crawford refrains from settling the question but notes that the rewriting of the gospel in all cases was occasioned by gospel reading. Eusebius's Canon Tables thus became a tool to revert assimilations of one gospel to another (also for Jerome; 230–33) and therefore to stabilize the text.

An afterword by Simon Gathercole considers how the Gospel of Philip reads the Jewish Scriptures, canonical and noncanonical gospels, and other New Testament materials. The gospel was received negatively by patristic authors but perhaps positively in *Pistis Sophia*. Finally, Gathercole considers what reading a gospel like that of Philip does to a modern reading of the canonical gospels. Its very different soteriology and utopian nature highlight the locative nature of Mark's account and its narrative-grounded soteriology (242–43).

The book is well-edited and succeeds in creating a coherent volume where the different perspectives and materials all point to the receptionary nature of the gospel. The contributions illustrate how the gospel has been read and received from the time of Jesus to today's scholarship. Its relevance extends beyond biblical studies, and I highly recommend it.