

Nancy Klancher

The Taming of the Canaanite Woman

Studies of the Bible and Its Reception



Edited by

Dale C. Allison, Jr., Volker Leppin, Choon-Leong Seow,
Barry Dov Walfish, Eric Ziolkowski

Volume 1

Nancy Klancher

The Taming of the Canaanite Woman

Constructions of Christian Identity
in the Afterlife of Matthew 15:21–28

DE GRUYTER

ISBN 978-3-11-032106-7
e-ISBN 978-3-11-032138-8
ISSN 2195-450X

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2013 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Logo: Martin Zech
Printing: Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
♻️ Printed on acid-free paper
Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

Preface

This book is based upon my Ph.D. Thesis, which was accepted by the University of Pittsburgh in April of 2012. I wish to thank those who served on my committee: Jerome Creach, Kathryn Flannery, and Adam Shear. This study bears the mark of their direction and insight and in particular of a series of stimulating and thoroughly enjoyable tête-à-têtes with Kathryn Flannery. Above all, I am grateful for having had the opportunity to study under Dale Allison. He directed my doctoral work with extraordinary intellectual and personal generosity, scholarship that seemed limitless, and a love of texts, history, and ideas that turned writing into discovery, all of which I will never forget. I would like to thank friends who read portions of earlier drafts, especially Christiane and Don Dutton who helped me appreciate Luther more and Tucker Ferda who was honest enough to ask “so what?” at important points. I am grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for awarding me a Dissertation Completion Fellowship during the 2011–2012 academic year. Finally, I wish to express appreciation to Brill for granting me permission to reprint portions of Chapter 1 which appear in *Biblical Interpretation* 21:1 (2013).

Most important of all, I am grateful for the patience, humor, and support of my daughters, Sophia and Maya, who have listened to my analyses of cultural representations of women from fairy tales and Disney movies to MTV and popular films. I appreciate their questions and critiques, their laughter and their pragmatism. Finally, I dedicate this book to my mother, Mary Adelaide, who, like the Canaanite woman, graced her daughters and granddaughters with loyalty, tenacity, and hope. She is missed every day.

Contents

Introduction — 1

A Genealogy for Reception History — 3

Bedrock Concerns: Exegetical Credibility, Context, Function, and Reader — 4

More Recent Developments Within Reception Studies — 9

The Old and the New — 10

Then and Now — 22

Theory of Reception in this Reception History — 27

Technologies of the Christian Self: Anathema, Exemplum, and Identity — 35

Organization of Readings — 39

Note on Translations — 43

Rapitur Christus: Becoming Christians — 44

An Apocryphal Tradition and a Jewish-Christian Canaanite Woman — 44

Early Polemical Interpretation: Tertullian and Christian Orthodoxy — 48

Early Christian Commentary: Exegesis as Catechesis and Paranesis — 54

Origen: *In Matthaeum* — 55

Hilary of Poitiers: *In Matthaeum* — 58

Hilary of Poitiers: *Tractatus Mysteriorum* — 62

Ephrem of Nisibis: *Commentary on the Gospel* — 64

Didymus the Blind: *In Zacharium* — 71

Jerome: *Commentarium in Matthaeum* — 74

Quodvultdeus: *Liber promissionum et praedictorum Dei* — 76

Conclusion — 80

Sermons and Homilies: Textual Communities and the Call to Lived

Narrative — 82

Ambrose: *Easter Sermon* and *Sermon on Dives and Lazarus* — 82

Augustine: *Sermon 77* and *Sermon 121* — 88

John Chrysostom: *Homily 52* — 94

Conclusion — 100

Necessary Others in Matthew 15:21–28: Race, Class, and Gender — 102

The Racial-Ethnic Other: *Adversus Judaeos* — 102

Ishodad of Merv: *Commentary on Matthew* — 102

Theophylact: *Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew* — 103

Chrysostom: *Adversus Judaeos* and *Homiliae in Matthaeum* — 104

Epiphanius Scholasticus: <i>Interpretatio Evangeliorum</i> —	104
John Hutton: <i>The Proposal of Jesus</i> —	105
Hugh Martin: <i>Jesus and the Gentile Dogs</i> —	107
The Female Other: <i>Mulieres Homines Non Esse</i> —	113
Gil Vicente: <i>Auto da Cananeia</i> —	114
Anon: <i>Mulieries homines non esse</i> ; Simon Gedik: <i>Defensus sexus mulieribus</i> ; Arcangela Tarabotti: <i>Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini</i> —	121
William Jay: <i>Lectures on Female Scripture Characters</i> —	135
John Pilch: <i>Jesus in His Middle-Eastern Context</i> —	142
Clay Nelson: <i>messiahs are from mars; syrophoenician women are from venus</i> —	144
Anon: <i>Encuentros con Jesus</i> —	145
Loren Rossen: <i>The Shameless Hussy of Mk 7:24–30/Mt 15:21–28</i> —	146
Steven Kurtz: <i>Notes on This Week's Lectionary Text</i> —	147
The Impoverished Other: <i>Masters, Men, and Mothers</i> —	148
H. H. Carlisle: <i>The Cry of the Children</i> —	148
Conclusion —	152

Transforming Selves: Reversal, Μετανοια, and Spiritual Ascent — 153

The Soul Encounters the Divine —	153
Anon: <i>Two Anomoean Homilies</i> —	154
Jerome: <i>Vita Hilarionis</i> —	159
Human Faith, Ascetical Striving, and Divine Grace —	164
Plumbing the Canaanite Heart. John Cassian: <i>Conlationes patrum in scetica eremo</i> —	168
Isaiah of Scetis: <i>Logoi</i> —	172
Barsanuphius of Gaza: <i>Letter to a Wounded Monk</i> —	175
Medieval Monastics and Mystics: Human Sinner, Holy Community, and Spiritual Ascent —	179
Anon: <i>Rule of the Master</i> within Benedict of Aniane's <i>Codex Regularum</i> —	179
Bernard of Clairvaux: <i>Sermons 22 and 66</i> —	186
Guerric D'Igny: <i>Fourth Sermon on the Assumption of the Blessed Mary</i> —	191
Julien of Vézelay: <i>Sermon 17</i> —	194
Guigues Le Chartreux: <i>Scala Claustralium</i> —	197
Richard Rolle: <i>Melos Amoris</i> —	202
Gregory of Palamas: <i>43rd Homily</i> —	205
Conclusion —	209

“Not the Gift but the Giver:” Protestant Readers from the Reformation to the Early 20th Century — 211

Luther and Calvin — 211

Martin Luther: *Predigt am Sonntag Reminiscere* and *Auss den andern Sontag nun der fasten Euangelion* — 214

John Calvin: *Commentarius in Harmoniam Evangelicam* — 219

British and American Protestants Interpret the Canaanite Woman — 230

John Trapp: *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* — 231

Matthew Poole: *Annotations on the Holy Bible* — 234

Adam Clarke: *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments* — 236

Francis Augustus Cox: *What Christianity Has Done for Women* — 240

Phillips Brooks: *The Silence of Christ* — 245

Conclusion — 250

Avatars of the Canaanite Woman:

Lived Narratives or Rhetorical Performances? — 251

Claiming the Canaanite Woman’s Wisdom and Authority — 253

Dhuoda of Septimania: *Manual For My Son* — 253

Communal Identification through Prayer — 259

Anon: *Book of Hours of Sinai* — 259

Thomas Cranmer: *Anglican Prayer of Humble Access* — 263

The Canaanite Woman in “Private” Prayer — 266

Gregory of Narek: *Book of Lamentations* — 266

Anglican Devotional Texts — 270

Thomas Bentley: *The Monument of Matrones* — 271

Anne Wheathill: *A handfull of wholesome (though homelie) hearbs* — 273

Conclusion — 276

Epilogue — 278

Appendix — 287

The Many Faces of the Canaanite Woman — 287

Bibliography — 297

Index — 310

Introduction

Biblical interpretation is an essential tool in the inculcation of Christian identity and conduct. Its goal is as much the normative imposition of desired standards and behaviors as the explication of semantic texts. The contentious collision of exegetical arguments and social realities is the subject of this reception history which identifies, compiles, and analyzes the exegetical construction of a wide range of Christian identities and ideals within the reception history of one provocative New Testament passage, Matt 15:21–28 . The encounter between the Canaanite woman and Jesus has often been the occasion for apologetic. The woman is a Canaanite¹; she asks Jesus to perform an exorcism on her daughter who is possessed by a demon. Jesus refuses to help her, uttering the famous “exclusivity logion,” stating that his ministry is intended only for Jews. She persists, whereupon Jesus refers to her as a dog, unworthy of the bread intended for the “children” (the children arguably referring to the Jews as favored children of God). The Canaanite woman then turns the tables, by claiming the rights of a dog to crumbs under the table. Jesus proclaims her faith great and her child healed. The argument between the Canaanite woman and Jesus is an allegory, a performance that dramatizes and purportedly resolves questions about how to define the real-world referents of its allegorical terms: “bread,” “children,” “dogs,” and “crumbs.”

Identity is central to this story of Jesus’ encounter with an argumentative Canaanite woman, a quintessential outsider through ethnicity and religious praxis and an outlier in terms of the gender norms of her time. As reception history, this study examines multiple encounters with this text and the accumulation of traditions and topoi that built up as a result of those encounters over time by analyzing approximately fifty readings of the gospel passage written between the 2nd and the 21st centuries. I describe the relationship of these readings to the cultures and discourses of their own time and place and to preceding interpretations. In doing so, I have found that two interpretive strategies persist, even as their content morphs to fit the questions and concerns of their historically-bound iterations: the figure of the Canaanite woman is used within texts ranging from anti-heretical polemic to devotional literature as either 1) the occasion for anathema or 2) universal exemplum. Questions of inter-religious conflict and ideal Christian identity and conduct have informed the traditions that have developed around the Canaanite woman’s story, hallmarks of the practical and per-

1 As such, she descends from one of the greatest enemy tribes of the Israelites.

sistent prescriptive function of the passage in this cross-temporal and cross-cultural *Rezeptionsgeschichte*.

To study in detail such a broad range of Christian interpretations of Matt 15:21–28 as constructions of a variety of normative Christian identities and codes of conduct is to fully register the rhetorical nature of the interested and situated stories they tell about the new faith and its ideal adherents. The historiographical implications are obvious: nuanced and detailed attention to the constructed nature of early Christian teachings on Scripture precludes a simple reflectionist reading of them as sources of straightforward history.² My interest in mapping textual constructions of Christian identities within the reception history of Matt 15:21–28 is, therefore, less in what they may or may not reveal about actual historical Christian practices, beliefs, or self-conceptualizations, and more in the ideals which the texts construct and how those ideals function within their particular cultural contexts, and in relation to preceding interpretations.

I am interested in the specific types of compliance these exegetical texts openly and explicitly mandate in different settings. I also wish to discern, where possible, the *how* of this process, that is, the exchanges implied in text-reader/listener interactions; in particular, I wish to describe textual devices that interlock paranesis, the internalization of ideals, and the embodiment or enactment of norms.³ The combination of these two foci should produce a greater

2 Cf. Denise Kimber Buell's discussion of "Origin Stories as Authorizing Discourse" in her *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999): "By attending to how early Christians constructed Christianity for themselves, we may be better able to reconstruct Christian history without simply reduplicating the views inscribed in those texts traditionally considered normative." Buell's study of the use of procreative and kinship imagery in the creation of "an authoritative discourse of Christian identity" is a thorough study of a particular historical trope of Christian communal identity.

3 A note on how the notion of "paranesis within exegesis" is developed in this reception history. The following chapters recognize paranesis within a myriad of forms and use the term to signify exhortation which is able to take on the structures and categories of a variety of socio-religious endeavors *in order to further their cause*. Paranesis functions within commentaries, sermons, monastic rules, prayer manuals and more. It transmits wisdom, encourages spiritual discipline, catechizes, anathematizes, baptizes, and so on. It is, thus, best defined as a highly contextual *function*, rather than a decontextualized *form* of general moral exhortation, a function that "interferes in church politics and theological development" in specific and historical ways. Cf. Wiard Popkes in "James and Paraenesis, Reconsidered," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts* (ed. Tord Fornberg and David Hellholm; Oslo-Copenhagen-Stockholm-Boston: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 543–44. Popkes describes paranesis as 1) emerging out of the long-standing Jewish practice of extrapolating practical lessons, primarily of conduct, from Scripture, which is then reinscribed within an early Christian

understanding not only of the prescriptive function of the interpretations of Matt 15:21–28 presented in the following chapters, but also of the *means* by which they prescribe.

At the most basic level, the imposition of evolving ideals of behavior and belief is achieved through contrasts that foster denunciation (anathema) and exempla that encourage imitation (exemplum). These, in turn, largely depend upon literal and historical interpretation on the one hand, and nonliteral strategies of interpretation, such as allegory and typology, on the other. The relationship between exegetical techniques and their paranetic effects within particular historical settings is central to this reception history. This is why the final chapter analyzes several texts that claim to be internalized personal assimilations of the Canaanite woman's persona. In order to portray how dynamic the production of paranetic effects is, then, I have brought into dialogue communication theory, which looks at literary devices, topoi, and structures that texts put into play as transactions between exegetes and audience, on the one hand, and socio-historical theories of texts that focus on the *Sitz im Leben*, textual evidence of historical reading practices, and the social function of literature, on the other.

A Genealogy for Reception History

The field of New Testament Studies has analyzed the reception and interpretation of Biblical texts and evolving Christian traditions for centuries, producing a long history of inquiry into the relationship between historical contexts and religious traditions, texts and peoples. The methods of older Biblical scholarship and newer theoretical developments are equally in evidence in my study of prescriptive exegesis. However, reception history and the theoretical assumptions that inform its practice today govern my thesis and its structure. That is to say, my primary focus is the evolution of textual traditions surrounding Matt 15:21–28 through the lenses of socio-historical function and reception theory. The goal is not to identify the sources of Matt 15:21–28, nor the traditions out of which the gospel text was constructed, nor, most importantly, to interpret the gospel text itself, but rather to understand the cultural history of its later interpretation and reception. I emulate traditional methods of textual analysis in exploring how exegetical Christian texts were pieced together and for what pur-

tradition of neophyte instruction; and 2) informing a wide variety of texts which provide "guidance in situations of transition and decision where clear and reliable advice is needed."

poses, yet recognize the essential differences between older histories of interpretations and what is currently being practiced as reception history.

Reception history, as a subfield of Biblical Studies, is often defined as a new methodological paradigm, categorically distinct from both the reconstructive claims of historical-critical methodology and the engrained theological premises at the heart of traditional histories of biblical interpretation. There are fundamental differences between reception history as it is practiced today and traditional histories of interpretation, chief among them the priority granted to theology, history, text, and culture. Yet, indiscriminate generalizations are rarely as edifying as specific historical textual illustrations. A survey of several histories of interpretation, 16th century to the present, as case studies, focusing on their methods, assumptions, and metacritical thinking will locate this study, not at the evolutionary apex of a growing theoretical sophistication, but poised between the historical utility of biblical interpretations and the means of their effects.

Bedrock Concerns: Exegetical Credibility, Context, Function, and Reader

In 1631, the French Huguenot minister and Bible commentator, Jean Daillé, published a treatise—highly controversial at the time—entitled *De vrai emploi des Pres*. The treatise is an extraordinary and very early negotiation of the Catholic-Protestant divide regarding the value of patristic tradition; it is a rigorous, incisive critique that seeks to rescue the Biblical texts from false interpretation and application. In 1651, it was translated into English by Thomas Smith, Bishop of Carlisle, as *The Right Use of the Fathers in the Decision of Controversies Existing at This Day*. Daillé's principle concern was to discredit patristic exegesis, since many "articles of faith" (most pressing, in his view, transubstantiation and papal authority) were based mistakenly upon "the testimonies or opinions of the Fathers,"⁴ rather than on Scripture itself. Arguing that the New Testament was "the most ancient and authentic rule of Christianity," Daillé proceeded to demonstrate, by reproducing and criticizing the history of patristic interpretation on key doctrinal issues, how corrupted, motivated, and obscure the Fathers could be.

This sort of polemic against Catholic tradition by a Huguenot is not extraordinary in and of itself, but the terms and bases of his critiques are surprisingly

⁴ Jean Daillé, *A Treatise on the Right Use of the Fathers in the Decision of Controversies Existing at This Day* (transl., Thomas Smith; London: William White, 1841), xix.

developed. For example, Daillé analyzes the intentions and aims of patristic exegetical method with particular emphasis on its social and ecclesiological functions. In one instance, he explains the obliqueness and obscurity with which the ancient writers described the Eucharist to new converts as a strategy to manipulate and secure their zeal and commitment to partake:

Observe how Theodoret, Epiphanius, and other ancient writers are, in adverting to the subject of the Eucharist; describing it in general terms only, and such as they only could understand, who had been formerly partakers of that Holy Sacrament. I shall not here take upon me to examine the end which they proposed to themselves in so doing, which seems to have been to implant in the minds of the Catechumeni a greater reverence and esteem for the Sacraments, and for more earnest and eager desire to be admitted to partake of them: fearing lest the laying open and discoursing plainly on the matter and manner of celebrating the Sacraments might lessen these feelings for them.⁵

The focus is clearly on form, style, and function, rather than content.

Daillé also documents the suppression of dissenting testimonies.⁶ Regarding transubstantiation, for instance, he cites a certain Bertram, “a priest who lived in the time of the Emperor Charles the Bald, which is about seven hundred and fifty years since,” who wrote against transubstantiation in his treatise, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*. The book was forbidden, in its entirety, in the Tridentine Index. It was also seriously altered, according to Daillé, with offending paragraphs being removed by “censors of the low Countries:”

These gentlemen, finding that the language of both these passages did very ill accord with the doctrine of Transubstantiation, thought it the best way to erase them entirely; for fear lest, coming to the people’s knowledge, they might imagine that there had been Sacramentarians in the Church ever since the time of Charles the Bald.⁷

Such observations expand in Daillé’s treatise into robust assertions about the diversity of the early church, an acknowledgement often framed as new or “post-modern” within New Testament Studies today:

We must necessarily believe that the opinions of the faithful were in those days altogether as different, if not much more, than they are now. Whence it will also follow that even the

⁵ Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 92.

⁶ This is a critique that remains very alive in New Testament Studies today, for instance, in studies of the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, and myriad apocryphal gospels and traditions. Indeed, accounts of the historical suppression of non-canonical Christian sources, along with their alternative narratives and theologies, has become a mainstay of religious trade books.

⁷ Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 68.

doctors themselves, who lived in those times, could not know all the different opinions of men, much less could they represent them to us in their writings.⁸

Daillé's opinion is the result of the many demonstrations of conflicting pronouncements, "accidents" and "diversity of opinion" among the Fathers that he records.

Daillé follows his observations regarding a diversity of opinions and many conflictual interpretations with a warning against the dangers of a feigned or fabricated consensus. At the most technical level, Daillé objects to the adoption of prior interpretations without any revisions or qualifications, and, equally as often, without attribution: "You may observe out of the expositions of St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, and others, who, robbing poor Origen without any mercy, do not yet do him the honour so much as scarcely to name him."⁹ Daillé complains of not knowing whose opinion he is reading. He is bothered that such methods create the impression of repeated, careful discernments of a single truth, instead of the mutual influence and cultural reproduction of established and conventional "truths."

Further, such readily adopted consensus positions can lead to what Daillé considers the ridiculous. He describes the Fathers almost as lemmings rushing to the sea, noting in alarm that Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, and Africanus all believed that Jesus kept the Feast of Passover only once after his baptism, though they were wrong. With rhetorical flourish, he exposes misreading after misreading, while protesting that they are beneath consideration:

Neither shall I take any notice in this place of that conceit of Athanasius, St. Basil, and Methodius, as he is cited by John, Bishop of Thessalonica, who all believed that the angels had bodies: to whom we may also add St. Hilary, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and very many more of the Fathers, who would all of them have the nature of angels to be such as was capable of the passions of carnal love, of which number is even St. Augustin also....¹⁰

Daillé here protests the power and influence of exegetical tradition to override new and better understandings, a move that skillfully conflates methodological laxity and substantive error.

Last but not least, Daillé observes the constraints of literary form by describing the distortions inherent to polemic, forcing exegetes to take more extreme positions: "dangerous expressions... being urged thereto through the warmth

⁸ Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 163.

⁹ Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 105.

¹⁰ Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 275.

of the dispute.”¹¹ In this, he acknowledges not just the limits of literary formal conventions but the impact of historical, theological contexts upon exegetical pronouncements.

In sum, here is a 17th century Protestant Bible commentator exhibiting awareness of 1) the calculated construction of a “canon” of exegetical traditions through the suppression of dissenting texts; 2) the social, cultural, and religious functions of biblical exegesis, such as imposing religious conviction and commitment; 3) the theological and doctrinal diversity of the early church and the impossibility of establishing one rule of faith from the testimonies of the late Antique period; and 4) the way in which the conventions of literary forms determine what may be said and how. Daillé asserted the superiority of Protestant over Catholic understandings of Bible, church, and doctrine using relatively sophisticated historical and functionalist methods of interpretation. He displays an unabashed factionalism; his text is a complex mix of literacy, urbanity, and polemic. It is a characteristic mix within the field of Biblical Studies—both before and after the advent of the “objective” historical-critical method—as Biblical scholars have analyzed the reception and interpretation of Biblical texts and evolving Christian traditions.

Until very recently, the stated goal has been the correct interpretation of the semantic text, according to which positioned analysis is the natural product of superior exegesis. This understanding of the authentic and substantiated textual basis of “strong readings,” however, is currently challenged; a distinction is now drawn between subjective theologically-informed and objective historically-informed exegesis. It is a distinction that can be difficult to discern at times. A number of factors have contributed to the likelihood of confusion, each with its own history within earlier interpretive practices. For instance, the New Testament texts themselves are appropriations, redactions, and transmissions of prior traditions and forms which, in turn, represent multiple strata of evolving oral narratives. Early Christian sources, whatever the genre, involved reception and interpretation, at the least in their selection and presentation of disparate materials.

In addition to recognizing that local and situated reinscriptions of Christian traditions are the inevitable byproduct of cultural transmission, it is important to recall a few key turning points in the history of Biblical interpretation and reception. One of the better-known examples of such a turning point, for instance, was the Reformation rejection of “Catholic antiquity,” of the long history of authoritative (patristic) exegetical Tradition. In its place, Protestants proffered a pur-

11 Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 98.

portedly less interested, less institutionally complicit interpretation of Scripture (as is vividly clear in the case of Daillé above).¹² This claim was to reach its full expression in the historical-critical method three centuries later, a method which aimed to replace a theological exegesis bound to the interests of institutional power with the objective evidence of historical scholarship. Current reception studies owe a clear debt to this shift in paradigm.

Another influential turn was the form critical attention to the historical *Sitzen im Leben* of synoptic pericopes. Looking for the rhetorical context and the light it shines on rhetorical subtext—even if not exactly conceived of thus by Bultmann et al.—has become a fundamental premise for reception historians, as they seek deeper discernible socio-cultural agendas behind theological and exegetical apparati.¹³ Similarly, redaction criticism often identified dogmatic ideas and theological conceptions at work in gospel redactions.¹⁴ Martin Dibelius, for instance, rejected the notion of the gospels as purely historical witnesses and instead explored their form as preaching and exhortation “to convert unbelievers and confirm the faithful,”¹⁵ even as he sought whatever historical glimpses were afforded by early church texts.

These early shifts in foci represent bedrock moments when rhetorical *context* began to be understood as social and ideological *function*. Form and redaction criticism provided rigorous scholarly answers to reception and reader-response questions about gospel traditions. They delineated rhetorical strategies and theological premises and reconstructed historical audiences, socio-religious utilities, and trajectories of textual traditions. They have in common the study of the historical nature and transparency of gospel traditions, including discerning who their historical readers or listeners were. As such, they have provided a model for the practice of reception history now in which the documenting of the situatedness of individual texts, whether small units such as pericopes or large units such as sermons or treatises, may cease to look backward to origins and begin instead to situate them among a range of evolving readers and social, political, and theological contexts and functions.

12 The Protestant move towards direct, implicitly less “political,” interpretation of Scripture, sans institutional mediation, was surely based on theological factors, but should also be understood against the violent backdrop of burning Lutheran books, heretics executed at the stake, and churchmen appointed and fired over theological differences. A purportedly purer form of Scriptural interpretation could function as a kind of shield, rhetorical and political.

13 Such agendas need not be understood according to the old terms of authorial intention, but rather in terms of the rhetorical aims and implied authors represented within texts.

14 Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 12.

15 Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to the Gospel* (transl. Bertram Lee Woolf; London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934).

This is today presented as the crucial twist, the fundamental difference between older histories of interpretation and current reception history. Traditional histories of interpretation remained intent upon discerning the correct original meaning of each Biblical text, whether the gauge was theology or historical antiquity. These earlier, essentially theological, inquiries were interested in biblical texts as divine, or historical, revelations to be deciphered.¹⁶ In the latter case, the role of antiquity was akin to the role of divine inspiration; it denoted authenticity. Proximity to the source—spiritual or historical—was the key to the texts. It is in this light that the reception and interpretation of Christian texts and traditions have been analyzed, explained, and evaluated—authorized, critiqued, or denounced—since the very beginning. For better or worse, current reception histories have developed out of this long history of theological, exegetical and historical-critical methods.

More Recent Developments Within Reception Studies

Most recently, the transmission of culture at the heart of reception studies has acquired new labels, such as *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history or history-of-influence), *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (reception history), and *Rezeptionsästhetik* (reception theory).¹⁷ These are framed as a departure, a new paradigm, in

¹⁶ Cf. Mary Chilton Callaway's 2004 SBL San Antonio talk, "What's the Use of Reception History?" (Cited 14 January, 2012. Online: <http://bbibcomm.net/reception-history>) for a cogent summary of the contrasts I am delineating, though she draws the lines much more sharply than I do between "theological" histories of interpretation and "historical and cultural" reception histories. This may be because I engage the texts at the level of methodology more and consider individual case studies, as below, while she remains at the level of theory and generalization.

¹⁷ These three methods are differentiated variously; sometimes they are intentionally conflated. For instance, in a recent volume of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* dedicated to the place of reception history and theory in New Testament studies, Mark Knight *Wirkungsgeschichte, Reception History, Reception Theory* defines *Wirkungsgeschichte* as "the story of how a text has been applied and understood" in any number of media, *Rezeptionsgeschichte* as "concrete examples of reception without always being drawn into the consequences that these might hold for our understanding of interpretation," that is, for our understanding of the original text's "real" meaning and *Rezeptionsästhetik* as the aesthetics of reception or reader-response criticism, both of which focus on readers, the process of meaning-making, and the determinative role of interpretive communities in the generation of meaning (Mark Knight, "*Wirkungsgeschichte, Reception History, Reception Theory*," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33:2 (2010), p137–146 (141). In contrast, David Parris follows Robert Holub in using the term "reception theory" as an umbrella term for "a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader... [that] encompasses empirical research and the tra-

order to differentiate them from prior theological inquiries. The older preoccupations with original meanings, preserved, if hidden, within traditions and discoverable through the study of textual origins and influence, have given way to more recent interests in idiosyncratic appropriations and reconfigurations viewed through the lenses of local or regional politics, social stratification, and cultural hegemonies. It seems a neat and clean break, indeed. But what of the overlaps and interconnections? These are surprisingly instructive. They are, as should be clear from the case of Dailé above, suggestive and thought-provoking.

The Old and the New

Most recently, Oxford University Press has published *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, May 2011, a 752-page two-pronged synthesis of traditional exegetics and current reception studies. The *Oxford Handbook* is concerned to acknowledge the specific historical, socio-cultural, and religious contexts of both traditional and newer biblical interpretations without reducing either to the accidental status of context alone. That is, the editors aspire to more than a collection of curious historical interpretations.

Then, too, both J. C. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) and Blackwell Publishing have recently offered multivolume series that feature scholarly histories of the interpretation and reception of a variety of biblical texts: the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese* series, 1955–, and the *Blackwell Bible Series* (“Through the Centuries”), 1998–. Likewise, De Gruyter has recently embarked on its *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, 2010–, to be offered in printed and online formats, which will “move into new terrain,” documenting the history of the Bible’s reception “not only in the Christian churches and the Jewish Diaspora but also in literature, art, music, and film, as well as Islam and other religious traditions and current religious movements.”¹⁸ The breadth and reach of the de Gruyter *En-*

ditional occupation with influences” (David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 107 (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 118). Thus, Parris places *Wirkungsgeschichte* (the impact of a text), *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (the history of reception), *Wirkungsästhetik* (the aesthetics of effect or response), and *Rezeptionsästhetik* (the aesthetics of reception) all under the one rubric of “reception theory.” This homogenizes the very different preoccupations and aims of these methods. In particular, the phenomenological issues that dominate within the aesthetics of reception and the historical and political questions that arise within the history of reception and effects are not always mutually edifying.

¹⁸ DeGruyter Project Description, *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, <http://www.DeGruyter.de/Cont/Fb/Th/Ebr/Ebrprojecten.Cfm>

cyclopedia will no doubt exceed older efforts, yet the inclusion of intercultural and interreligious responses to biblical texts is not without precedent.¹⁹

In addition, there are the slightly older series, such as the 530 volume *Sources Chrétiennes* collection, published by the Éditions du Cerf *Sources Chrétiennes* and founded in 1942 by Cardinals Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac, and Father Claude Mondésert. Their aim was and remains to collect, edit, and commend the most important texts from the first 1400 years of the Church, including apologetics, biblical commentary, sermons, treatises, letters, liturgies, poems and hymns, dialogues, ascetic writings, Church canons and history. This series, spanning almost 70 years, reflects aims and methods that date back to the early 19th century, yet more recent volumes display increasing affinity with current theoretical concerns. How do these recent efforts compare with the older histories?

Looking back at the variety of histories of interpretation and reception within Biblical Studies, one quickly discovers familiar differences, disagreements and arguments, along a continuum on which the ideals of “higher criticism” and academic scientism lie on one end and ecclesiological, denominational, and doctrinal emphases and applications, on the other. This tug-of-war is in play in many different sorts of histories, whether collections of ancient writings, metacritical meditations on interpretive methods, debates about the significance of particular parts of Scripture in the life of the Christian church, or histories of the exegesis of particular biblical passages and/or interpretive cruxes. Methods and claims are myriad.

For instance, the range in approaches may be demonstrated through contrasting Daillé’s methods in his 1631 *Treatise* with a very different presentation of patristic writings, published some 200 years later in England. The *Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church: Anterior to the Division of the East and West; translated by Members of the English Church, with Notices of the Respective Fathers, and Brief Notes by the Editors, Where Required* was the first corpus of translations of patristic texts into English. Published between 1836 and 1881, it was a multi-volume undertaking begun in the summer of 1836 by the Tractarians of the Oxford Movement, specifically E. B. Pusey and John Henry Newman.²⁰ It gathered together patristic homilies, commentaries, and treatises into a compendium of late Antique biblical exegesis and doctrinal exposition. It would eventu-

¹⁹ Cf. discussion of Jane T. Stoddart below, 34

²⁰ Richard W. Pfaff, “The Library of the Fathers: The Tractarians as Patristic Translators,” *Studies in Philology* 70:3 (June 1973), p329–344 (329).

ally develop into the *Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series, still in considerable use today.²¹

The *Library* emerged, like Daillé's *Treatise*, as a negotiation of Protestant-Catholic division, doctrinal and ecclesiological; its aims are discernible most visibly in the preface to the series. There the editors, Pusey and Newman, asserted the untainted authority of the Fathers. They provided twelve reasons for publishing the series, most of them straightforward and practical, such as providing a broad array of patristic texts in translation to those whose knowledge of the ancient languages was limited. Some reasons, however, were more pointed, even polemical, such as combatting the "contracted and shallow" perspectives of different Christian "bodies" and the disrespect for "Catholic antiquity" evident in "modern and private interpretations of Holy Scripture." This was a struggle to be accomplished through the "translation" and "circulation" of "a body of ancient Catholic truth, free from the errors, alike of modern Rome and of Ultra-Protestantism."²²

Editorializing was kept to a minimum throughout the series, but the stated motives of the editors in circulating patristic texts for the edification of tradition-besotted Romanists and maverick Protestant "private interpreters" were nonetheless inflammatory. A review in the *Dublin Review* of August 1839 written by a Catholic was particularly caustic, 1) pointing out that Catholics, far from needing English access to the Fathers, had been well-versed in their writings, through an endless supply of "public libraries and private collections" where the Fathers could be found translated into French and Italian (thus deriding the inflated importance Pusey and Newman seemed to assign to *English* translations, as though there were no other prior translations into "modern languages") and 2) objecting to the facile aim of the editors of the *Library of the Fathers*, viz. the ahistorical and reductive assumptions of "the first and main object of the editors, to present to the public a body of doctrine [out of 'only a portion of the documents of antiquity'] on which their faith is to be grounded."²³

However, such protestations were soon enough no longer required. With the movement of several of the series' editors into the Roman church, beginning with Newman in 1844, the larger claims with which the project began became

²¹ The *Ante-Nicene Fathers* was originally published by T&T Clark as the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* between 1867 and 1873 in Edinburgh and then edited, simplified, and published in the United States by the Christian Literature Company as *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. And the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series was published simultaneously in both Europe and America between 1886–1900 by the same two publishing houses.

²² Review of *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*, *Dublin Review* 7:13 (1839), 2.

²³ Review of *A Library*, *Dublin Review*, 18.

decidedly more modest. Pusey's appeals for new subscribers around the year 1852, in the wake of the fragmentation of the Oxford movement, simply "stress the utility of the series as a collection of scriptural commentaries and other homiletical aids rather than buttressing the claims so confidently advanced fifteen years earlier."²⁴ So, in the end, the Library that Pusey had first envisioned in a letter to Newman as a "'Quinque-articulated' Library (Practical, Doctrinal, Historical, Anti-Heretical, Expository)"²⁵ reverted into a practical and historical resource.

An interesting postscript to these early efforts exists in the 1998 publication of Christopher Hall's *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, itself the introductory volume to InterVarsity Press' new *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* series. Hall encourages Protestants to reconnect with patristic writings, though they may believe that "much of church history" appears to be "a barren wasteland, a desert of error strongly characterized by the absence of the Holy Spirit's guidance and discernment."²⁶ They should do so, he argues, so that they can escape their current state of being "rootless and drifting in a barren secular and ecclesiastical landscape, largely because they have forgotten their Christian past."²⁷ This "long journey home" requires a dismissal of post-Enlightenment biblical criticism and theology as well as its myth of an objective, autonomous interpreter. Because we do not interpret in a vacuum, we may concede the cultural and religious blind spots of the Fathers and ourselves, affecting a kind of mutual correction in the process. Thus, Hall's answer to his own question—"Can the Fathers be trusted?"—is affirmative. He cites Dale Allison regarding the early exegetes' superior intertextual knowledge and hermeneutical proximity to the Biblical texts as one argument. He depicts "conceptual and ethical bridge-building" between the Fathers and Christians today as a kind of transhistorical identification with enduring human struggles, like Augustine's against lust. He urges his readers to emulate the Fathers' synthesis of biblical exegesis and spiritual formation. It is a far cry from Daillé, whom we might imagine turning over in his grave; but Pusey and Newman would likely have been well-pleased.

If ecclesiological and denominational concerns have played a role in the construction and evaluation of histories of interpretations, so too have the ideals of "higher criticism" and academic scientism. During the 1830s and 1840s, for

²⁴ Pfaff, "The Library of the Fathers," 329–344 (333).

²⁵ Printed in H. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1893), 420–22.

²⁶ Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 13.

²⁷ Hall, *Reading Scripture*, 14.

instance, T&T Clark of Edinburgh published a series entitled *The Biblical Cabinet; or Hermeneutical, Exegetical, and Philological Library*, a series of translations of German Biblical criticism. The series was primarily intended for the edification of theology students. It showcased the relatively new “higher criticism,” featuring studies of genres, such as the messianic Psalms, individual epistles, discourses such as the Sermon on the Mount, and smaller pericopes such as the Lord’s Prayer. It also published volumes on biblical geography, philological studies, historical accounts of such things as “the planting and training of the Christian Church,” scientific descriptions of biblical botany and minerology, and even one biography of Cornelius the Centurion!

The series was widely praised by contemporary journals and newspapers for its presentation of “the best works of the best divines of our German neighbors,” its “analytical investigation,” its “contribution to the science of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation,” its “critical study of the Sacred Scriptures:” “no work which has appeared in this country has given a greater stimulus to the study of those accurate and settled principles of Scripture interpretation.”²⁸ It was quickly commended not only to theology students, ministers, and preachers, but also to parents to aid them in the enlightened instruction of their children.

In this instance, the history of interpretation became a useful tool, buttressing the scientism of “higher criticism,” sometimes to authorize long-held interpretations, sometimes to illustrate the superior rationality of new findings. Dr. A. Tholuck, professor of Theology in the Royal University of Halle, wrote the sixth volume in the *Biblical Cabinet* series; it provides a particularly good example of this technique. Tholuck organized his introduction to his *Exposition, Doctrinal and Theological, of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, According to the Gospel of Matthew* according to “the history of the views which have been held upon” a number of interpretive cruxes which he confronted in the gospel renditions of the Sermon on the Mount.²⁹ Tholuck thus created a history of interpretation organized by particular exegetical questions.

For instance, wishing to harmonize Matthew’s and Luke’s versions of Jesus’ sermon, he cited Augustine’s early explanation (*De Consensu Evangelistarum*) that Jesus first delivered an extensive version of the sermon on top of the mountain (which appears in Matthew’s gospel) and then descended to the plain to de-

²⁸ This sampling of contemporary responses to *The Biblical Cabinet* series comes from reviews in *The Church of England Quarterly Review*, *Davidson’s Biblical Criticism*, *The Eclectic Review*, *The Church of Scotland Magazine*, and *The Congregational Magazine*, all cited in a one-page advertisement at the back of *Clark’s Foreign Theological Library*, 20 (1851): 401

²⁹ A. Tholuck, *Exposition, Doctrinal and Theological, of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, According to the Gospel of Matthew* (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1835).

liver an abridged version to the crowds of people there (the discourse recorded in Luke's gospel).³⁰ Tholuck then proceeded to trace the development of the question in a number of "harmonists," including Andrew Osiander (1537), John Calvin (1555), Faustus Socinus (1574), Cornelius Jansenius (1571), Abraham Calov (1676), Caspar Sandhagen (1688), Rheinhard Rus (1727) as well as (nearer) contemporaries such as Johann Herder and Johann Eichhorn.

In all of this comparative analysis, Tholuck did not represent the history of interpretation as an inexorable march of progressive revelation; for instance, he judged the structural analyses of the sermon by contemporaries Rau and Jentzen as "far from coming up to such of their more ancient predecessors in the field as Chrysostom and Bengel,"³¹ and he lamented that "Eichhorn's splendid hypothesis of a primitive gospel has disappeared without a trace."³² Other cruxes that provoked Tholuck to a review of historical opinions include whether or not Jesus was a new Lawgiver and what to make of the Lord's Prayer. Yet, while Tholuck's introduction concludes with the rehearsal of historical approaches to the Sermon on the Mount from the Reformation to the present day (1835), his version of the reception history of Matt 5–7 is far from a catena.

Throughout, Tholuck arbitrated the methods and conclusions of his predecessors and, more important still, he narrated the historical development of Biblical exegesis as encompassing the gains won through higher criticism as well as the dangers of theological blind spots evident in the work of prior Biblical critics. In this he was not alone, not when such a mainline figure as Frederic William Farrar, Archdeacon of Westminster Abbey and later Dean of Canterbury, could frame his comprehensive presentation of the history of Biblical interpretation, delivered as the Bampton Lectures at Oxford University in 1885, as "a history of errors," progressively rectified through the "teaching of the Spirit of God in the domains of History and Science."³³ Farrar incisively declared,

We shall see system after system—the Halakhic, the Kabbalistic, the Traditional, the Hierarchic, the Inferential, the Allegorical, the Dogmatic, the Naturalistic—condemned and rejected, each in turn, by the experience and widening knowledge of mankind.... The original Hebrew of the Old Testament was for many ages unknown.... Religious controversy went to Scripture not to seek for dogmas but to find them.... Mysticism placed the interpreter above

³⁰ Tholuck, *Exposition of Christ's Sermon*, 2.

³¹ Tholuck, *Exposition of Christ's Sermon*, 12.

³² Tholuck, *Exposition of Christ's Sermon*, 12.

³³ Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation: Bampton Lectures, 1885* (New York: E. Dutton, 1886; repr., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), x–xi.

the text.... A scholastic orthodoxy developed elaborate systems of theology out of imaginary emphases....³⁴

Farrar identified not just exegetical systems but their historical causes. Unlike Tholuck, he stated outright that his role was apologetic; his aim was to “rob of all their force the objections of infidels and freethinkers... [and] the stock-in-trade of the freethought platform and the secularist pamphleteer.”³⁵ This was possible, he said, if one regarded the Bible “as the record of a progressive revelation divinely adapted to the hard heart, the dull understanding, and the slow development of mankind.”³⁶ So Farrar’s lectures were metacritical; they criticized historical methods of exegesis rather than describing the history of interpretation of particular passages or particular exegetical questions.

Both Tholuck and Farrar felt authorized to historically contextualize earlier Biblical exegetes and their interpretations, to qualify established exegetical methods, and often to emphasize the associated limitations and errors of the Church Fathers. In this, they continued in the tradition of ancient disputations on the *correct* reading of Scripture, as much as they typified the rationalism and scientism of the higher critical thought of their time. Their exposure of errors and their historical qualifications remained in the resolute service of the sure establishment of the semantic text, that is, upon arriving at a correct exegesis of whatever text was before them.

Their emphasis on the limitations of patristic exegesis and historical explanations for those limitations, however, does not work in the same way as Daillé’s opposition of patristic traditions to “ancient and authentic” New Testament texts, for these “newer” histories of interpretation opposed the methods of early exegetical traditions to higher critical findings. An early metacritical instance of this newer focus on historical-critical methods may be found in T. K. Cheyne’s 1893 review of the founders of Old Testament criticism.

Cheyne begins with the pronouncement that “it is not unimportant to notice how the intellectual phases and material surroundings of a writer have affected his criticism. We may see thus how natural and inevitable his course was, and how pardonable were his errors; we may also gather from his life both warnings and encouragements.”³⁷ He tracks the development of “methodical criticism” from English precursors such as Warburton, Lowth, and Geddes, to Eichhorn,

³⁴ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, xi.

³⁵ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, x.

³⁶ Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, x.

³⁷ T. K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism: Biographical, Descriptive, and Critical Studies* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893), vi.

Ewald, Hitzig, Bleek, Reuss, and finally to Robertson Smith, G.A. Smith, and A.H. Sayce. The book reads at times like an annotated bibliography that advocates strongly for the “free but reverent Biblical criticism” that he deems is under attack in England at the time of writing. Of interest is Cheyne’s list of contemporary accusations against the higher criticism, specifically that it was immature, unproven, foreign (too German), too rationalistic, and too narrow in its methods. Weighing the relative values of various methods and arguments—concerning the Documentary Hypothesis, philology, comparative ethnic-psychology, naturalism, and historical-critical methods, among others—Cheyne concludes that “England is no longer so adverse as formerly to a free but reverent Biblical criticism,” that “such a criticism is becoming more and more necessary for the maintenance of true evangelical religion.” He advocates for “a firmer treatment of all parts of the grave historical problem of the origin of our religion.”³⁸

Similarly, Otto Bardenhewer’s *Geschichte der Altkirchlichen Literatur*³⁹ (1902) is concerned, *inter alia*, with the impact of historical, ecclesiological, and dogmatic contexts upon patristic writings. This multi-volume, rigorous, and comprehensive presentation of early Christian literature covers Christian writings from the Church Fathers to the 5th century, East and West, including Syrian and Armenian authors, as well as Jewish and “heathen” literature that feature later Christian redactions and interpolations. The collection, due to Bardenhewer’s historical, philological, and source-critical erudition, remains a scholarly resource to this day, reissued as recently as 2008.⁴⁰ In the 1880s, Bardenhewer served as professor of New Testament exegesis and Biblical hermeneutics, first at Münster and then at Munich. He viewed the Christian texts that he studied less as literature per se, and more as repositories and reproductions of dogmatic conclusions and struggled to keep historical context to the fore in his discussions. Bardenhewer emphasized the dogmatically-oriented reception of early church writings, that is, their consistent reception in terms of content rather than form:

Die Kirchenschriftsteller stets dem Inhalt den Vortritt einräumten vor der Form... Im Mittelpunkt des Inhalts der altkirchlichen Literature aber steht natürlich immer wieder die Lehre der alten Kirche, und diese war nichts anderes als die rein und ungetrübte forgepflanzte Predigt der Apostel.. Denn diese Literature ist der Ausdruck oder Niederschlag

³⁸ Cheyne, *Founders*, 372.

³⁹ Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der Altkirchlichen Literatur* (5 vols., Berlin: Freiburg Im Breisgau Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1902–1932).

⁴⁰ Already in 1962, the Scientific Paper Company published a special edition of the “Bardenhewer,” based on the 1st and 2nd Freiburg editions. In 2008, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft reissued the 2nd edition, unchanged, with an extended introduction by the Münster Patristics scholar, Alfons Prince.

nicht der Kirchenlehre, sondern des Denkens und Fühlens, Glaubens und Hoffens, Leidens und Streitens aller derjenigen, welche sich zur Kirche bekannten.⁴¹

The church writers always privilege content over form. In the center of the content is of course always the teaching of the ancient church, and this was nothing but the pure and unadulterated already established preaching of the Apostles. For this literature is neither the official expression nor the distillation of church teaching, but rather of the thoughts and feelings, faith and hope, suffering and strife of all those who confessed to the church.

Bardenhewer's acknowledgement of the historical particularity and individuality of early Christian exegesis was noticed. In an 1896 review of his *Patrologie*, his definition of Patrology as "the science of the life, writings, and teachings of the Fathers" and his blazing of a *via media* between the old Patrology of Roman Catholicism and the new Protestant practice of literary-historicism were noted and appreciated: "Bardenhewer, though not free from traditional and confessional influences, is very much in touch with modern things."⁴²

Histories of interpretation and reception dating back over the last two to three centuries, however, have consisted not only of negotiations, such as these, of the competing claims of historical method and doctrinal argumentation. There has been an abundance of explorations of historical exegesis and its influence within the life of the church. These run the gamut from theological disputations to anthologies to testimonies of the personal reception and spiritual impact of Biblical texts.

An interesting and understated instance of the latter that perhaps comes closest to what we consider reception history today appeared in two volumes in 1913 and 1914 in England, both written by Jane T. Stoddart and entitled *The Old Testament in Life and Literature* and *The New Testament in Life and Literature*. Stoddart was a member of the editorial staff of *The British Weekly* and author of a dozen or so books, including private devotionals, historical biographies, illustrated Psalms, as well as an "impartial inquiry" into "the new Socialism."

The two volumes on Biblical passages "in life and literature" are compendia of situated readings, testimonies to the spiritual impact of key biblical passages. Together they comprise an amazing mix of academic and existential responses to the Old and New Testaments, that is, comments by more traditionally authorita-

⁴¹ Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der Altkirchlichen Literature*, viii–ix.

⁴² Ernest C. Richardson, "Reviews of Recent Historical Theology, including Bardenhewer, *Patrologie*," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 7 (Philadelphia: MacCalla & Co, 1896), p544–45 (545).

tive voices as well as humbler more personal responses and free associations by friends and acquaintances of Stoddart. She thus weaves together Biblical readings by Augustine, Erasmus, Luther, diverse Biblical Studies professors of her day, priests and rabbis, with stories told by Chinese teachers, English lords and ladies (Lord Acton, Frances Baroness Bunson), mothers, dentists, lady diarists, poets (Blake, Coleridge), novelists (George Eliot), which in turn voice resonances between the Biblical texts and Japanese legends, Jewish prayer books, and quotations of the psalms in the Qu'ran (which a sheik had pointed out to Stoddart),⁴³ to name but a few.

Stoddart assembles these myriad confessions of relationship to the Biblical texts, verse by verse, book by book, desiring, she writes, not so much to build up an anthology or encyclopedia, but rather to gather “from day to day some fresh line for that ‘vast palimpsest’ of Holy Scripture, which... is ‘written over and over again, illuminated, illustrated by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and nations.’”⁴⁴ Stoddart’s ease with the reinscription of the Biblical texts that continually takes place in the minds and cultures of human beings belongs to the kind of existentialist hermeneutics and faith in the salutary impact of encounters with Biblical revelation that undergirds Christian devotional discourse. Thus, she demonstrates no interest in rehearsing long, authoritative traditions on each verse. She is quite direct about the sort of reception she is documenting: “This is not a field in which any newcomer needs to glean after others.”⁴⁵ Therefore, while she may devote a chapter of her New Testament volume to the thoughts and readings of “the men who gave it [the New Testament] to Europe,” she gives equal space to the impressions of less famous readers. In this, she anticipates some of the democratic and particularist impulses of current reception histories.

Several more recent volumes of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese* series take up similar strategies. Mohr Siebeck began publishing the series in 1955 under the title, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der neutestamentlichen Exegese*. The first volume, Lukas Vischer’s *Die Auslegungsgeschichte von 1. Kor. 6, 1–11*, was edited by Oscar Cullmann and Ernst Käsemann, but the series quickly broadened its scope to biblical exegesis by the time the second volume, *Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l’exégèse*, appeared.⁴⁶ Selections from the *Beiträge* series il-

⁴³ Jane T. Stoddart, *The Old Testament in Life and Literature*, 3rd ed. (London, New York, Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), 242.

⁴⁴ Stoddart, *Old Testament in Life*, vii. The quote is from Stoddart’s contemporary, Dean Stanley.

⁴⁵ Stoddart, *Old Testament in Life*, vii.

⁴⁶ Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l’exégèse*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 2 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1959).

lustrate the emerging preoccupations through the early 1980s that looked backward to the likes of Tholuck, Farrar, Cheyne, and Bardenhewer, yet also served as stepping stones to the interests of current reception studies.

For instance, Pierre Prigent's 1959 history of the interpretation of the 12th chapter of the *The Revelation to John* developed and expanded earlier appreciations of the way historical context determines exegetical content by including his own analyses. Indeed, his and the following examples from the 1970s and 1980s might best be described as "histories of exegesis" focused on process and not product, a variant of history of interpretation, but not yet reception history. That is, they focus more on exegetes and their historical and theological contexts than on their readings of the text itself or its theology, yet they do not yet ask directly or expressly about impact or social function.

Prigent presents his exegetical history chronologically, so that the exegetes he discusses may be judged fairly, "in an appropriate light" given their historical moment, and he organizes that chronology by "les grands types d'interprétation," e.g., spiritualist, historical-prophetic, eschatological, mystical, literary, history-of-religions, and even Mariological. Within these divisions, the book reads like a catena, featuring each exegete's name followed by a description of his exegesis. Throughout, he expresses his desire not to let his own theology or exegetical method determine, even unconsciously, how he defines "high points" in the history of exegesis or "dominant proofs." Likewise, he distinguishes only between Catholic and Protestant exegetes when their interpretations appear to be clearly governed by *a priori* dogmatics. Prigent's is a careful historicizing of exegetical assumptions and agendas.

Three volumes in the *Beiträge* series published in the 1970s and considered here continue to share a common preoccupation with historical exegetical assumptions, which they attribute variously to eisegesis, changing schools and methods, and "dogmatic assumptions and interpretive principles."⁴⁷ For instance, in his study of the patristic exegesis of *Hebrews*⁴⁸ Rowan Greer favors a simple descriptive approach to exegetical texts coupled with analysis of the theologies expressed through them. Arguing that a separation of exegesis and theology is anachronistic, Greer considers the "double judgment" in *Hebrews* of Christ as both the stamp of God's person and lower than the angels through the lens of 5th century Christological controversies. The decisive impact of religio-

⁴⁷ Bruce Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7,1–10 from the Reformation to the Present*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 19 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1976), ix.

⁴⁸ Rowan A. Greer, *The Captain of Our Salvation: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 15 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1973).

cultural context on exegetical conclusions is a given for Greer. Very similarly, Hans Gunther Klemm in *Das Gleichnis vom Barmherzigen Samariter: Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert* reviews changing appraisals of the allegorical method in dogmatic treatments of the Good Samaritan parable during the “fertile” period when Humanism and the Reformation stood side by side.⁴⁹

Yet, still, in some cases, the use of historical contextualization as a vehicle to “a right understanding of the meaning” of passages endured, as in Bruce Demarest’s *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7,1–10 from the Reformation to the Present*.⁵⁰ For Demarest, “old mistakes” instruct new hermeneutics. Interestingly, he divided readings by group identity and theology as much as location, under such group headings as Protestant reformers, Socinian interpreters, Puritan expositors, antiquarian investigations, pietistic expositions, and so on.

The scope of the *Beiträge* reception histories from the 1980s described below narrows even more, attesting perhaps to an ever-increasing sense of the local and particular conditions under which biblical exegesis occurs. Kenneth Hagan’s study of 16th century commentaries on the *Book of Hebrews* covers just 80 years (from 1516–1598).⁵¹ While it confronts the rather large and enduring question of the relationship between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, it adopts a catena format. Worthy of note is Hagan’s focus on the *argumenta* or introductions to the commentaries as reactions to the theological provocations inherent in *Hebrews* itself, including how it treats the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. He presents the exegetical *argumentum* as a means to “get immediately at the commentator’s view(s) of this perennial issue,”⁵² as well as his related concerns about Pauline authorship. Beginning with Erasmus, who raised the authorship question seriously, Hagan moves through the likes of Luther, Oecolampadius, and Zwingli, as well as Catholic commentators, such as Cajetan and Contarini. Hagan is interesting in his resistance to the idea that theological or denominational differences, during a period of violent theological and denominational upheaval, might have determined the positions of these commentators on *Hebrews*. He argues that “the control of the text” trumped such contextual deter-

⁴⁹ Hans Gunther Klemm, *Das Gleichnis vom Barmherzigen Samariter: Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert*, *Beiträge Zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testamenet*, 6 (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973).

⁵⁰ Bruce Demarest’s *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7,1–10 from the Reformation to the Present*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 19 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1976).

⁵¹ Kenneth Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting from Erasmus to Bèze: 1516–1598*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 23 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981).

⁵² Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting*, 1.

minants: “Interpretations differ. Polemics enter in. But in large areas, e.g. authorship, authority of the epistle, Christology, even soteriology, Old Testament hermeneutic, interpretations are not along confessional lines.”⁵³ He finds, for instance, that the Roman Catholic Contarini is the exegete who emphasizes faith most.

If Hagen asserted “the control of the text” in 1981, by 1983 David Brady was moving away from it. In his *Contribution of British Writers between 1560 and 1830 to the Interpretation of Revelation 13.16–18 (The Number of the Beast): A Study in the History of Exegesis*,⁵⁴ Brady drew a sharp distinction between “historical exegesis” and “Biblical exegesis,” declaring that he would make “no attempt to establish a reasoned interpretation of the passage.” His was not an ecclesiastical, nor a theological history. It was simply “discussion of the [exegetical] material... The exegesis rather than the theological superstructure is at the centre of the study.”⁵⁵ Beginning in 1560 with the Geneva Bible marginalia, Brady narrated the shift from historicist to preterist exegesis of the *Revelation* passage, tracing, along the way, antipapal readings, numerological fascinations, realized eschatology and idealist/spiritualist interpretations. While he moved away from the semantic text towards its exegesis, he did not ask *why* different readings became *popular* at different times. That is, he remained focused on the exegete and his historical determinants, rather than on any receiving audience or readership.

Then and Now

The earlier histories discussed above are clearly not as monochromatically “theological” as they often appear to be in current scholarship. They demonstrate awareness of the calculated pursuit of a Rule of Faith or “canon” of exegetical traditions, the suppression of dissenting texts, the social, cultural, and religious functions of biblical exegesis, the exegetical imposition of religious conviction and commitment, the theological and doctrinal diversity of the early church, the impossibility of establishing one rule of faith from the testimonies of the late Antique period, the constraints of literary forms and conventions, the institutional complicity of patristic exegesis, the ideal of objective historical inquiry, clear acknowledgement of the historical particularity and situated na-

⁵³ Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting*, 3.

⁵⁴ David Brady, *The Contribution of British Writers between 1560 and 1830 to the Interpretation of Revelation 13.16–18 (The Number of the Beast): A Study in the History of Exegesis*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese, 27 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983).

⁵⁵ Brady, *Interpretation of Revelation 13.16–18*, 1.

ture of biblical interpretations, and a sense of the impact of biblical exegesis on “the life of the Church,” if not beyond. Here is a sophistication of cultural and institutional critique that should be recognized, particularly since it lies directly behind and within what is being done today. Sustained inquiry into the social, cultural, and religious *functions* of biblical interpretations is not absent, as all of the examples above demonstrate.

It is, instead, the normative role of Biblical interpretation and its effects that goes unchallenged by them. The older exegeses embraced the “applied” side of biblical interpretation, understood as Christian edification, as “a series of ecclesial messages”⁵⁶ to be embodied, and not as reader-oriented historical criticism, effective history, or “the hermeneutics of consequences.” And this view is still extant, as one recent quirky reception history of the Gospel of Matthew illustrates, summing up biblical exegesis appreciatively as “not only a passive field for academic investigation but also an active and creative force in the lives of individuals, in their religious communities, and in the events of history.”⁵⁷ In contrast with the earlier histories, the critique of this “active and creative force” within the most interesting current reception histories involves strong engagement with 1) reception theory, especially the processes of meaning-making in reception (a domain that continues to share significant affinities with more traditional existentialist hermeneutics) and 2) the institutional and political ramifications and socio-historical functions of biblical interpretation.

Consider, for instance, Yvonne Sherwood’s *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (2000). It is representative of a particularly progressive brand of reception history. Sherwood dispenses by page 2 with “the pure and naked original state” of the biblical texts, in favor of the “agglutinative” knowledge and meanings that emerge out of endless recombinations of old and new interpretations of the text, recombinations which she illustrates with relish through a mix of both “loose cultural surplus and proper scholarly activity.”⁵⁸ Dividing her book into three sections, Sherwood presents first “Mainstream” Christian and scholarly treatments of Jonah; secondly, the “Backwaters and Underbellies,” that is, readings that resist containment within scholarly ta-

⁵⁶ The phrase comes from Mark Elliot’s wry commentary on the ecclesiological subtext of the effective history of Ulrich Luz in Mark W. Elliott, “Effective-History and the Hermeneutics of Ulrich Luz,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33:2, 161–173 (171).

⁵⁷ Howard Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), viii.

⁵⁸ Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2–5.