



Resurrection and Reception in Early Christianity (Routledge Studies in Religion)

Richard C. Miller

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This book offers an original interpretation of the origin and early reception of the most fundamental claim of Christianity: Jesus' resurrection. Richard Miller contends that the earliest Christians would not have considered the New Testament accounts of Jesus' resurrection to be literal or historical, but instead would have recognized this narrative as an instance of the trope of divine translation, common within the Hellenistic and Roman mythic traditions. Given this framework, Miller argues, early Christians would have understood the resurrection story as fictitious rather than historical in nature. By drawing connections between the Gospels and ancient Greek and Roman literature, Miller makes the case that the narratives of the resurrection and ascension of Christ applied extensive and unmistakable structural and symbolic language common to Mediterranean "translation fables," stock story patterns derived particularly from the archetypal myths of Heracles and Romulus. In the course of his argument, the author applies a critical lens to the referential and mimetic nature of the Gospel stories, and suggests that adapting the "translation fable" trope to accounts of Jesus' resurrection functioned to exalt him to the level of the heroes, demigods, and emperors of the Hellenistic and Roman world. Miller's contentions have significant implications for New Testament scholarship and will provoke discussion among scholars of early Christianity and Classical studies.

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