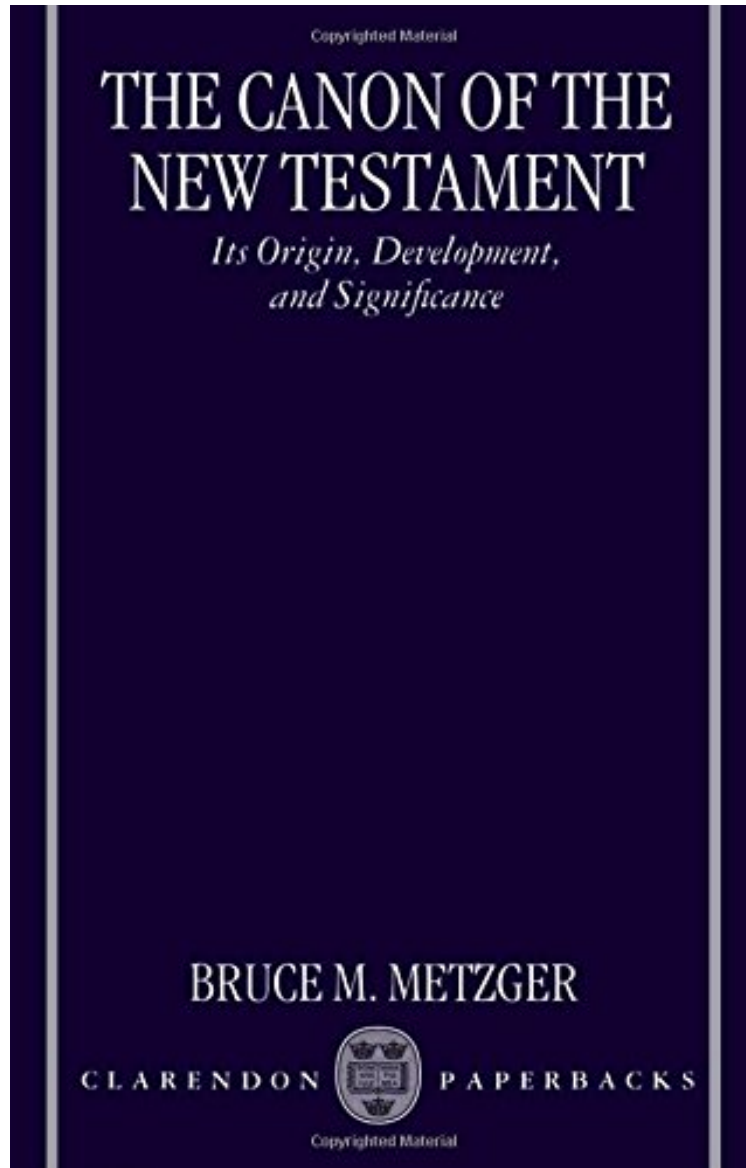


The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance

Bruce M. Metzger

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Bruce M. Metzger : The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Metzger - a scholar par excellence - honest if a bit apologetic
 Misanthrope
 B. M. Metzger is a scholar well suited to the task of discussing the history of the canon of the New Testament, the NT being his specialty. He spends the first portion of the book talking about the literature that has been published on the subject prior to this work, then goes into the history starting with the apostolic fathers. After the fathers, he goes into various heresies that had effect on the development of the canon, but he really does not give enough attention to this portion, seeming to play down the effects of differing ideas. After this, he talks about the development of the canon in the East and West, discusses apocryphal literature and why they did not make it into the canon, shows some early lists of canonical books, and discusses attempts to close the canon in the East and West. He closes with discussions of problems confronting the Church with regard to the canon, and adds many materials such as several important canonical lists back to the Muratorian Fragment and up to when the current state of the New Testament was settled almost 400 years after Jesus. While there is slight mention of issues with the canon not being the same with the sections of the Church all over the world, even today, and just as slight mention of questions of canon even up until today, he brushes over many of these problems and just gives the assumption from a theological point of view that the canon is settled and was settled completely by divine providence. In this respect, I believe the book by F. F. Bruce on the Canon of Scripture, where he discusses to some extent the entire Bible, rather than just the New Testament is a slightly better read. The latter scholar leaves it up to the reader to deduct what he or she will. Most scholars agree, nevertheless, that the books officially contained in the Bible are the most accurate (though that is not stating they are completely accurate...only that they are closer to the events, and are more likely to contain a better historical perspective than books not included). Metzger mentions in some places the embarrassment that the fathers commonly felt in regard to attacks by nonbelievers on the internal inconsistency of the biblical books, and that Celsus found many REAL and imagined contradictions (pg 200, n27). Though he is perfectly aware of many of the problems within scripture and the disagreement many passages have with each other, and gives examples of it, Metzger defends it and states "certainly the differences among the traditions within the New Testament must be acknowledged, and artificial attempts at harmonization should be resisted. At the same time, however, it is legitimate to ask the question why the New Testament should have to be consistent in all its parts. Why should all the writers have to think alike on all subjects in order to be included in the canon?" (pg 278) Four stars for the accumulation of information appropriate for a true scholarly account, one being subtracted for the unrequested conclusion that may or may not make sense.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Scholarly But Accessable - Well Written And Worth The Read
 By David Sorensen
 This book is scholarly but accessible. Well written from a highly regarded scholar this is a fascinating read. Bruce Metzger - a highly regarded scholar - is also an excellent writer. This book is worth your time if you really want to know about the canon of the New Testament. I highly recommend it.

18 of 20 people found the following review helpful. Great start for further study.
 By Ken Smith
 The breadth and depth of Metzger's scholarship is little short of amazing. In this book he has gathered together nearly all the early patristic references which relate to the formation of the NT canon. If you have any questions about how the Church's canon came to be formed, this book will answer it for you. He covers the apostolic fathers, traces separately the growth of the canon in the eastern and western churches, and provides a detailed analysis of the earliest lists (such as the Muratorian canon, Athanasius' Festal Letter of 367, and so forth). Some of the details he provided about the "flexibility" of the canon with respect to certain "antilegoumena" well into the post-Reformation period were entirely new to me. (Prior to Luther, every German edition of the Bible had included the spurious "Epistle to the Laodiceans", for instance.) My only critique is that the first two chapters of the book, while providing an excellent bibliography, are rather poorly written. In these chapters, Metzger tries to survey the post-Reformation and 20th century theological literature relating to the canon. Some of the information is valuable, but by the time he gets to 20th century authors, it degenerates into, "So-and-so said this; and then so-and-so said this." Unless you've read these authors, the description is so short as to be meaningless; and if you *have* read them, why do you need Metzger's one sentence summary? Scholars tend to do things like this, and I've never understood why: my theory is that they're showing off, but you may have your own.

Completing his New Testament trilogy, eminent theologian Bruce Metzger provides information from Church history concerning the recognition of the canonical status of the several books of the New Testament. Canonization was a long and gradual process of sifting through scores of gospels, epistles, and other books that enjoyed local and temporary authority--some of which have only recently come to light. Metzger discusses the external pressures that led to the fixing of the limits of the canon as well as Patristic evidence that bears on the development of the canon, not only in the West, but also among the Eastern churches. He also considers differences as to the sequence of the books in the New Testament.

"This beautifully produced volume...will take its place with the earlier two as the standard treatment of its subject, indispensable for instructors and students alike."--Princeton Seminary Bulletin
 "A masterpiece of careful and lucid scholarship, certain to be the standard treatment of the NT canon well into the next century."--Religious Studies About

the Author Bruce M. Metzger is at Princeton Theological Seminary.