

NEW TESTAMENT CANON

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Introduction

The debates over the existence of such a component as a *New Testament Canon*, or simply a *Christian Canon*, has occupied Christian theologians ever since Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 130-200 CE. Irenaeus was a Christian theologian who considered that *some category* of *approved* Christian writings should be *recognized* by faithful Christians.

During the first decades, or centuries, of the Christian faith most disciples were *to some effect* literate, if not, why write gospels and epistles to them? Scholars recognize that it was the early oral traditions that bound families and people together, but this took place mostly within defined ethnic or cultural groups. As the faith spread across demographic and cultural lines the power of oral tradition declined, hence oral traditions became written traditions. Written traditions were more reliable in *normalizing* or *explaining* the faith in a *culturally diverse world*.

Irenaeus’ book, *Against Heresies*,¹ obviously sets the scene for such a “canon” or “yard-stick.” Some standard for determining a “*norm*” for Christianity was becoming necessary to succeed the “apostolic” teaching of the faith. The early 2nd century CE document, *Didache, The Lord’s Teaching through the Twelve Apostles*, ca. 110 CE, obviously addressed such a need.

Early *indications of canonization* can be seen in the recognition of the existence of a *fourfold-gospel*

¹ The Scriptures are said to have divine authority for they are called “divine Scriptures” (AH 2.35.4; 3.19.2). The Bible is called “the ground and pillar of our faith” (AH 3.1.1). It is “the Scripture of truth” as opposed to the “spurious writings” of heretics (1.20.1). For “...all Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent” (AH 2.28.3). He affirms that “...even the Gentiles present perceived that the Scriptures had been interpreted by the inspiration of God” (AH 3.21.2). Indeed, the apostle Paul’s words came from “the impetus of the Spirit within him” (AH 3.6.7).

tradition being harmonized as a “sub-canon” as in Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, a 2nd century 180 CE document, *Fourfold Gospel Tradition*. This harmonization served to set the literary boundaries of Jesus’ ministry. This provided some form of Gospel norm that could combat heretical Gnostic gospels that were appearing in upper Egypt and elsewhere. Peter recognized some form of *Pauline Corpus* as early as the 80’s, CE at 2 Pet 14-17, including Paul’s writings as *Scripture*. Similar nascent norms began appearing in the later New Testament writings like 1, 2, 3 John, and 1, 2 Peter.

Three Primary Definitions to Canonicity

As we explain the primary views of canonicity there are *three brief definitions* we need to understand. The *first* is the definition of **canon** or **canonicity**. The *second* is identified by scholars as an **intrinsic** approach. The *third* is an **extrinsic** approach.

Canon or Canonicity

By **canon** we mean developing *a standard*, a “*yard-stick*,” or *normative principles* by which Christians can determine an *authoritative, set of rules*, by which we can determine *uniformity of faith and practice*. In other terms by which we as Christians can determine which is “*inspired Scripture*.”

2 Tim 3:14-17, “¹⁴ *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it* ¹⁵ *and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁶ *All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*”

Intrinsic Approach

The intrinsic approach to establishing canon implies that the resource for determining canon derives *from within the doctrine, practices, articles* involved in *establishing the life of the church*. To express this simply in regard to *establishing the church* or the *Christian faith*, it involved the *preaching and teaching* of the founder of the church and Christian faith, *Jesus Christ and his ministry*, and the *preaching, teaching, and writing* of the *ones chosen by Jesus, the Apostles, and apostolic persons*, to be part of the foundation of the faith and church.

Practically explained, it implies that *the canon of the faith and church* must be established on or out of the founding Scriptures of the church.

Extrinsic Approach

The **extrinsic** approach implies that the standards of features of the canon are determined from values *extraneous* to the church such as *church conferences, Ecumenical Conferences*, or other values *external to the doctrinal life of the church*.

An Intrinsic Approach to Canonization

Scholars are agreed that some form of *intrinsic canonization*² of the New Testament writings may be recognized, dating from the early *second to fourth centuries*, CE, as certain apostolic manuscripts or doctrines were being recognized and used as *normative authoritative scripture*.

However, Hans Von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, drew attention to the fact that *mere use of a text* should not be equated with its *acceptance into a canon* of Scripture.

We need to understand that most of the *debate* regarding the *canonization* of the New Testament began *intrinsically* within post-apostolic *second century churches*, as they searched for standards of

² *Intrinsic* implies a recognition *from within the life of the church* recognizing the value of some Christian texts or doctrines.

behavior, both doctrinal and moral, that *Christians should believe and obey*. At this early point no universal codification of church doctrine had become standard. The only “codified standard” available was the growing acceptance of *what was apostolic*, the Pauline, Johannine, Petrine, and Gospel traditions that were beginning to surface among churches over a widespread geographic Christian world. Eventually, after a period lasting decades, possibly centuries, through the writings and teachings of the *Apostolic Fathers* or *Anti-Nicene Fathers*; Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, *et al*, a collection of accepted Apostolic Epistles became standard among the burgeoning Christian church. Documents like the *Didache* and Tatian’s *Diatessaron* began to be part of the *Christian church’s traditions*.

Scholars are broadly agreed that by the *late second, third, and fourth centuries* a Christian Canon of New Testament documents had become a *tentative standard canon!*

From citations and references in the Apostolic Fathers, c.a. 95 – 150 CE, we note that although the Apostles were respected, and their teachings mostly recognized as *normative*, it was the Gospel narratives, discussing what Jesus had said and done, that formed most of the “authoritative” references to the 1st and 2nd centuries by the “apostolic communities” and then the Apostolic Fathers. Although the authority of Scripture was recognized, Metzger points out that for this period of church history, the *words of Jesus were taken as supreme authority*. Cf. Clement of Rome CE 95; Ignatius of Antioch CE 100; The *Didache* c.a. CE 115; Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis c.a. CE 130; Polycarp of Smyrna c.a. CE 135; Hermas of Rome [possible author of *The Shepherd of Hermas*] c.a. CE 100-130.

Our Four Gospels form a natural unit of teaching and narrative relating to the life and teachings of Jesus. Although they date after the Pauline Epistles, c.a. CE 65-80 and 90 in the case of John, their references to the Words of Jesus form an early source of Christian authority in the period CE 95 - 150.

A related questions to this study might be, “Why do we have *only* four gospels in our canon when we know there were others circulating early?” Marcion of Sinope’s early heretical canon and the emerging “gnostic” gospels were a serious challenge to the unity of the church. Tatian’s *Diatessaron* became the benchmark for defining Jesus’ gospel traditions. The mixed narrative stories of Jesus’ ministry manifest in the many heretical “gnostic” Egyptian Coptic gospels contributed to the recognition of the four-fold “diatessaron” gospel traditions which manifest considerable unity within the four-fold narratives. The geographic and demographic unity within the four-fold tradition resulted in the recognition that they were reliable *universal gospel narratives*, unlike the Egyptian Coptic gospels, *at least contributed to the eventual acceptance of a “unified” four-gospel narrative*.

Justin Martyr of Rome, c.a. CE 160, was one of the first church writers and teachers to adopt the general approach to a four-fold gospel tradition.

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon in Gaul, c.a. CE 180, *firmly accepted only four Gospels*, and for him, the four-fold gospel canon was set at the four-fold traditional Gospels.

Tatian of Rome, Syria, and Cilicia, c.a. CE 180, *recognized only four Gospels* in his *Diatessaron* (meaning *through four*) which was a harmony of four Gospels in a one-gospel form. The *Diatessaron* was a major determinative in the acceptance of only the four Gospels of our canon.

Another question might be, “Why is it that we have multiple gospels and not only one? If they are so similar and tell the same story, why did the church not settle on one Gospel?” The Gospels *tell the same story* of Jesus’ ministry and teaching, but *the recipients of the Gospels were different!* They were spread over geographically and ethnically wide world. The diverse population over a wide geographic and ethnic region needed the mystery of Jesus to be explained to them in their own geographic and political and ethnic contexts. Matthew was written for a predominantly Jewish audience. Mark focussed on Roman audiences. Luke was concerned for a Greek readership, with John writing for an Asian Greek philosophic readership centered mostly around Ephesus.

The Christian world after the third and fourth centuries, with the shift of Roman power from Rome

to Constantinople with Imperial support, was rapidly becoming a diverse religious and mission arena. Christians, and churches, needed a *normative authoritative foundation* to define the Christian religion, not a Jewish, Egyptian, Coptic, Alexandrian, Gnostic, foundation, but a *Christ-centered*, multi-ethnic world-wide unified faith.

Hence, the 5th to 11th century ecclesiastical conferences were summoned that produced *extrinsic* rules of faith to define the Nicene type creeds of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches. Later as a result of Protestant Reformation, Luther's 95/93 theses, Calvin's Rules, Zwinglian, and the Church of England's Westminster Confession of faith appeared. New credal, canonistic traditions appeared to define the numerous Christian viewpoints.

The *Extrinsic* Approach to Canonization

Ecclesiologically, in time, the *intrinsic* process became *extrinsic* standards across major church fellowships, accepted by major ecclesiological synods and conferences, in an effort to standardize the Christian faith against heretical movements such as Marcion of Sinope, the Roman Catholic heretic bishop, and other "gnostic" style churches as with the Coptic *Nag Hammadi Tractates* of Northern Egypt.

The development of early Roman Creeds, the Apostolic Creed, and Nicene Creed were all formulated by *church conferences to standardize what the true faith should be*.

Likewise, the Greek Orthodox Churches at their *First Ecumenical Council of Nicea*, 325 CE, approved the *Nicene Creed* as their foundational doctrinal standard.

In each of these major church movements, as well as the majority of Protestant churches, the process is determined *extrinsically* when the church decides from external contexts such as *church synods and ecclesiological conferences*, what the canonical standards should be *for church unity*.

The Councils of Hippo, CE 393 and Carthage, 397 and 419 were pivotal in *affirming the Roman Catholic canon*. These North African councils, attended by bishops like Augustine, produced lists of sacred books. These decisions were not new, but were *confirmation of widespread practice*. The councils were responding to confusion caused by competing heretical practices and canonical texts. These were local councils, not universal, but their influence spread widely. Rome later at the Council of Trent endorsed similar lists. The canons they affirmed became standard in the Roman Catholic Western Church.

The Roman Council of Trent, CE 1545–1563, decided what the limit to Scripture should be for the Roman Catholic church. The Council was prompted by the *Protestant Reformation* ca 1540. Became the most impressive embodiment of the ideals of the *Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation*. A decree from the Council's fourth session, April 8, 1546, issued an *anathema* on dissenters of the books affirmed in Trent.

Regardless of which process the scholars debate, either *intrinsic* or *extrinsic*, the vast majority of Protestant Christians accept or adopt a simpler *extrinsic* canon! They simply decide to use the King James Version, the New American Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the English Standard Version, or the New International Version as the bible or bibles of their congregation or fellowship. Or their Denomination Conference has pronounced which Bibles are *canonical* and to be used. All of these choices are an *extrinsic approach to canon*. Although this is a *laissez-faire* approach, *it is what works* in most cases! In the church, or congregation, where I have my membership the leaders have chosen the *English Standard Version* as the *Church Bible*! However, the teachers have the freedom of choosing the best translation *for the age-group of their class*! Again, an example of a *laissez-faire extrinsic* choice with little attention to which translation is chosen and why other than it works best!

The Pauline Corpus

Very few manuscripts containing the Pauline Epistles contain the entire New Testament, (59 out of 779).

One reason that early codices (books) did not include all of the NT writings was that it was difficult to precede large books in the NT time, and very large books became heavy, awkward, and expensive.

Most manuscripts of NT writings, therefore, contain only part of the NT.

The procedure of the manuscripts broke the NT down into four units. Thus we do not find any manuscript of only one letter of Paul, for the Pauline writings seem to have been gathered into Pauline Corporuses.

Modern collections of Paul's writings are based on the work of Erasmus, 1516, who followed a late Byzantine manuscript tradition of gathering the Pauline Corpus.

Paul's letters were the first NT documents written, and the first to be collected into some form of a corpus (collection of writings). They form an obvious collection or corpus.

Paul apparently did not indicate that he is writing Scripture. However, he wrote as one who identifies the authority of his writings due to his being an apostle; and he claims apostolic authority and thus the right to command obedience. However, as Gamble points out, the letters were unlikely candidates at first to be classified as Scripture sin they were sent to individual congregations, and initially had individual congregational relevance (an exceptions to this may be the letters to Ephesus and Colossae). It was only later that Paul's writings gained "global" acceptance in the church and could thus be considered by the church as "scripture".

From what we can learn from early church writings, the early church struggled with how many of Paul's letters should be regarded as "scripture". One numbering system indicated that Paul wrote to 7 churches, the reference to the special number 7 (complete), thus considering his letters universal letters, not simply letters addressed to individual churches.

Some scholars (Neils Dahl) indicate that possible textual problems in Rom 1:7 and Eph 1:1 (regarding the addressees) reflect a "catholicizing" (universal) tendency by some who projected the letters from particular church letters to universal letters.

Whatever difficulty or uncertainty we might have regarding how the early church perceived or received Paul's writings, we do nevertheless see a tendency toward a canonical process in: Paul's claims to apostolic authority

The call to exchange Paul's letters (i.e. circulate them Col. 4:16). The fact that early they were circulating as a group and are called *graphé - writings - Scripture* (2 Pet 3:15, 16).

Marcion, heretical and excommunicated Christian in Rome (c.a. AD 150) knew of a Pauline corpus of 10 letters.

Early collections of Pauline letters varied in sequence:
some were arranged according to the length of the letter
others were arranged by chronology

Hebrews was included as Pauline in *papyrus* 46, and listed after Romans. In the oldest manuscripts Hebrews was included after 2 Thessalonians. Then in some manuscripts Hebrews is listed after Philemon as in our canonical listing.

Finally, regarding Paul, Gamble notes that Paul was not widely quoted by early to mid-2nd century church writers. He was referred by them, but not widely quoted. We can only surmise as to why this may be.

The Catholic (General) Epistles.

These were the last NT writings to coalesce into a corpus form. Only 1 Pet and 1 Jn had much currency in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The rest (Jas, 2 Pet, 2-3 Jn, Jude) were used only regionally. It is

from Eusebius (c. a. CE 300) that we first learn of "catholic" epistles as group. Strangely enough, Acts always appears listed with the Catholic Epistles. (Trobisch says the logic of this collection is that Acts presents the major characters of the Catholic Epistles.)

The point we make here is that the Catholic Epistles were originally only regionally accepted, and experienced some difficulty in gaining the final form of canon.

We noted above that some of the Catholic Epistles were not included in the Syriac canon.

Acts and Rev.

Acts was early separated from Luke in the early church tradition, and had separate history from the Gospel. The first to acknowledge Acts as normative was Justin Martyr (c.a. CE 160).

Revelation, although widely known by the early church in the 2nd century was not widely accepted.

A major reason that Revelation was suspect was that it was a favored text of the charismatic Montanists in Phrygia whose prophetic predictions claimed that Jesus would return within the life of their leader, Montanus, and that this would take place in Pepuza, located about 20 miles north east of Hierapolis.

In time, however, Revelation was included in the canon, but not in the Syriac canon since the churches in Syria were suspicious of the Montanists association with Revelation.

The Other Early Christian Writings

The History of canon was selective; the canon which eventually emerged contained only a fraction of the early Christian literature.

Many other Christian writings (gospels, acts, letters, and apocalypses) achieved wide currency and attained considerable status without becoming canonical.

For example, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the Shepherd of Hermas were clearly less popular than Revelation in the 2nd century CE; the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter* were reckoned by some to be no less authoritative than any other gospel; the letters known as 1 Clement and the Epistle of Barnabas were esteemed and quoted as scripture by many writers in the 2nd century CE; the Acts of Paul was held in high esteem in some areas, as was the *Didache*.

For Several Reasons the Formation Process of the Canon was Fairly Widely Known and Accepted in the Early Church.

We see early "canonical" lists such as the Muratorian Canon which dates from c.a. CE 200. (The Muratorian Canon is found in a fragment of a very early manuscript. It was discovered by an Italian Historian and Theologian and published in 1740. The authorship and original date of the manuscript are widely debated, but the general consensus is that it was very early) This fragment lists most of the books found in our modern bible with the exception of 1 and 2 Peter, James, and Hebrews.

The early manuscript known as p46 (c. a. CE 200) bears testimony to the early collection of the Pauline Epistles of the New Testament into one codex.

Athanasius (c.a. CE 367) acknowledging such canonical practices in his day, includes a long series of lists, both Old Testament and new Testament, the list for the New Testament including the Gospels, Acts, 7 Catholic (General) Epistles, the Pauline Epistles including Hebrews, and the Apocalypse (Revelation).

The Development of the Canon in the Eastern and Western Churches

We include this discussion of the development of the canon in the Eastern and Western churches to demonstrate that the concept of Canon developed independently in both the East and Western Churches.

In the East: Syria, Greece, Asia

In the West: Rome, Africa

Summary of Canonization

As early as c.a. 140 CE the church reflected a broad theological interest over a wide spread

geographic area. This helped determine which writings were being considered as normative, and for a variety of reasons, engaging in various attempts to define what was “apostolic” and therefore definitive of Christian faith and behavior.

Initially, these concerns were visible merely in references to the different books of the New Testament, without any serious attempt to determine canon.

Then for a variety of reasons the writings of the Gospels became the chief source of reference. This resulted in a fourfold corpus of Gospels, initially reflected in Tatian's *Diatessaron* (c.a. 170 CE).

Eventually, Paul's Epistles and other New Testament writings were included in a variety of ways, and cited as normative.

Finally, a concept of canon appeared, more from usage than as a serious attempt to regulate canon.

Motivating reasons to some degree in some cases were the heretical impulses of Marcion, and the Montanist's whose supposed Holy Spirit inspired predictions and prophecies raised questions among “orthodox” churches. We should note, however, but development of canon was not simply an attempt to respond to and control heresy. More probable was the desire to proclaim the message of the faith, and to define what was normative to faith as a catechetical resource.

Canon developed slowly, practically, and differently in various regions until eventually an approximate universal concept of canon surfaced.

It might be better to say that the early church merely recognized in the canon what was normative, rather than to see the process of canonization as the church determining or defining what was canonical.

Additional Considerations Relating to the Development of the Canon

Common answers or suggestions to the development of canon:

Marcion formed an early rudimentary canon.

Montanists furthered the practice by claiming a new revelation.

Other heterodox movements began to spring up necessitating a view of canonicity.

Gamble argues that none of these arguments alone is valid, they do not describe the real history of the process. Marcion was not a “first cause” of canon formation, but a case of arrested development, since Paul's letters had already been collected by Marcion's time. Heterodox movements used as many of the same books as everyone else. .

Chief determinants in the development of canon were the historical origins of the church's faith and the traditional usage in the church's worship and teaching. Since Christianity vested revelatory and redemptive significance in a particular historical person and a specific historical period, the church had always to hark back to Jesus and the events of his life, death, and resurrection, and to the teachings of the Apostles and apostolic persons. Written materials came to be valued as the apostles faded from the scene. The writings of the Apostles were viewed in the same light as the appearance or presence of the Apostles.

Gamble observes, “The question, as to which documents provided this access (to the events and original witness), and therefore were authoritative, was answered by reference to the actual experience of the church with this literature. Those writings which proved, over time, to be most useful in sustaining, informing, and guiding the church in its worship, preaching, and teaching came to be the most highly valued, and gained a special authority in virtue of their usefulness.”

Factors that conditioned the history of the canon were

Sponsorship by well-known personages; i.e., Origen and Athanasius, Jerome and Augustine were responsible for the sponsorship of specific books

Doctrinal issues, i.e., Hebrews and the possibility of a 2nd repentance ran into the debate in western penitential practice; Revelation was questioned in the east because of use by millennialists.

The religious experiences of certain leaders raised questions regarding which books they favored

and which books should be saved.

The development and use of the codex determined the size of book. Not until 4th century were books large enough to hold various writings in a single book. [cf. Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* [1983].

Criteria for Determining Canon

Apostolicity: Can the teachings of the doctrine be traced back to apostolic teaching; was it in keeping with apostolic tradition?

Catholicity: Was the document used by the church at large, was it relevant to the “catholic” universal church? Was the use of the document spread over a wide geographic region or something favored in only a small section of the church?

Orthodoxy/Rule of Faith: Are the teachings of the document in agreement with the simple apostolic faith.

Traditional Church: Was it referred and commonly used by the church.

Gamble maintains that these criteria were not applied consistently.

What about Inspiration as a criterion for canonicity?

From citations in documents of early church history we can safely assume that inspiration was not a criterion used in determining canon.

Cf. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, pp. 254ff. “Though this silence (about inspiration) may at first sight seem to be strange, the reason for it arises from the circumstance that, while the Fathers certainly agreed that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were inspired, they did not seem to have regarded inspiration as the ground of the Bible’s uniqueness. That is, the inspiration they ascribe to the Scriptures was only one facet of the inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit in many aspects of the church’s life... the *Epistle of Diognetus*: “If you do not offend this grace, you will learn what the Word (logos) talks about through those through whom he wishes to talk, when he pleases. (Quoting from a sermon attributed to Constantine by Eusebius we read: “May the mighty inspiration of the Father and of the Son ... be with me in speaking these things.”

The point being made here is that inspiration was claimed by many whom the church did not consider to be “canonical”.

Some comments regarding the use of the word or concept of *inspiration - theopneustos - theopneustos* in early church.

Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, p.256: “In short, the Scriptures, according to the early Fathers, are indeed inspired, but that is not the reason they are authoritative. They are authoritative, and hence canonical, because they are the extant literary deposit of the direct and indirect apostolic witness on which the later witness of the Church depends.”

We conclude this brief discussion with the observation that in the 2nd century canonicity was based primarily on apostolicity and not on inspiration which could be claimed by anyone, and which was and is difficult to prove!

Some Theological Problems Regarding the Canon.

Higher Criticism: We begin with the distinction between the understanding of canon as commonly regarded in church, and one that comes as a result of higher criticism. Higher criticism calls for us to hear the text on its own terms; actually to disregard the notion of canon and to treat all texts alike as early Christian literature. However, a more traditional canonical reading calls for us to read Scripture in light of Scripture.

We might second-guess the decisions of those who shaped the canon. Do the books survive according to the criteria of the process by which they were determined to be canon criteria?

Is the canon closed, or should it be considered open to new discoveries and criteria?

What has authority? Is it the church that has authority, or does authority truly reside in the Bible?

The Protestant view is *sola scriptura*. The Bible is authoritative.

The Catholic view is that the church gave us the Bible. Hence, the church stands over the Bible and interprets the Bible.

Churches of Christ accept the *sola scripture* point of view (“We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent”), in practice we draw lines along *our interpretation of Scripture!*

To what extent is canon really normative for the life of the church? How much does church tradition contribute to faith and practice?

Does the canon offer a unified basis for doctrine and life?

- i. In practice it has not resulted in a unified understanding of doctrine. Church doctrine, which often with claims to be based on the Scriptures or *sola scriptura*, is extremely diverse! This is true even in Churches of Christ!
James Dunn: “Canon witnesses to diversity, but places limits on diversity.”
The Protestant principle: There exists a canon within the canon; i.e., justification of the ungodly by grace through faith. Cf. Martin Luther who limited his understanding of canon to this “canon within a canon” of righteousness, “That which really preaches Christ is what matters”.
- ii. Gamble, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, “The canon as we know it resulted from a complex interplay of contingent factors, and from a historical point of view its limits seem fortuitous. It is easily conceivable that the canon might have been larger or smaller, and that it might have contained other documents instead of or in addition to those that stand in it.”

Canonical Criticism

Brevard Childs: No document should be read in isolation. A text or a doctrine should be read in the context of *canonical Scripture*. Canon functions as norm when read in the context of the canon.

E. P. Sanders: We should pay attention to the canonical process, the way traditions are appropriated. Scripture should be interpreted within those traditions.