

a wider audience. First of all, the introduction by Stewart and Bandy frames the theological perspective for the entire book in a bold and compelling way by resisting the irrational claims of critical theory and all of its postmodern children. In a day when so many professing believers (and scholars!) bow the knee to woke agendas and Critical Theory, it is refreshing to see calm, but resolute resistance. As Stewart and Bandy boldly declare, “Christian readers do not need to be ashamed of Revelation; it is not an ethical embarrassment” (3).

Canonical issues are always helpful to revisit, which makes chapter 2 (“Should John’s Apocalypse Be in the Canon?”) such a helpful contribution. The history of Revelation’s reception and interpretation through the early centuries of the church is alone enough to make the book worth having.

Chapter 6 (“Was John a Male Chauvinist?”) by Külli Toniste was among the best examples in the book of exposing the noxious postmodern assumptions lurking behind the charges of Revelation as being sexist or chauvinistic.

Finally, G. K. Beale’s nearly 60-page survey in the afterword on how scholars understand John’s use of the Old Testament was particularly helpful, informative, and even gripping. Every page of Beale’s treatment of the subject will not only deepen your understanding, but even sharpen your own convictions on a complicated interpretive issue (whether or not you fully agree with all of Beale’s views). In the end, Beale proves yet again that the scholarly world has been better with him in it.

In the end, although *The Apocalypse of John Among its Critics*, will find few in the pew who will ever read it, I do recommend it as a tool for pastors to give to their parishioners who may struggle with the book of Revelation. At the same time, some pastors will also find parts of the book helpful as they work through the challenges of interpreting and preaching through Revelation. The greatest benefit of this book, however, will be to scholars whose role in the Great Commission is crucial as they train leaders and preachers for local churches. As a whole, this book injected my heart with both hope and courage as I read it—hope, because many great scholars in the world (like the ones who contributed to this book) still hold fast the Word of God, unwilling to compromise; and courage—courage to preach and teach the book of Revelation without shame or fear, knowing that the crown of life awaits those who overcome (cf. Rev 2:10).

Jerod A. Gilcher
Christ Community Bible Church, Arlington, TX

Canon Formation: Tracing the Role of Sub-Collections in the Biblical Canon, edited by W. Edward Glenny and Darian R. Lockett. London: T&T Clark, 2024. xix + 348 pp. \$108.00.

Christians have always recognized the various groupings of books in

the Old and New Testaments of their Bibles. Jesus himself noted at least three of these groupings in Luke 24:44 when he referred to the Old Testament as the "Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms." In 2 Peter 3:15–16 the apostle Peter mentioned a group of Paul's letters, indicating an awareness of a Pauline letter collection that was apparently already well-known at the time Peter was writing (c. 65).

Evidence suggests that "a crucial step in the process of canonization of the biblical texts was the coming together of discrete canonical sub-units" (1) like these mentioned by Jesus and Peter. In other words, well before Athanasius's Festal Letter in 367 (the first known complete listing of the 27 books of the New Testament), sub-collections of inspired books circulated in the early church including the four gospels, the Pauline letters (plus Hebrews), and the General or Catholic Epistles (usually with Acts at the head of the grouping).

Ed Glenny, Professor of New Testament Studies and Greek at the University of Northwestern-St. Paul, and Darian Lockett, Professor of New Testament at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, recognized the need for a study of these canonical sub-units, and they have garnered the services of fifteen other canonical scholars to produce a volume that provides "a state-of-the-question discussion of the various canonical sub-collections" (2). To the editors' knowledge no "other collection of essays...so comprehensively introduces the reader to the details of canonical context for biblical interpretation" (3). This fact alone suggests the importance of the volume for tracing the historical and theological significance of these canonical sub-collections in the field of canon studies.

Indeed, the main point of the book and basic presupposition of this field of canonical studies is that "most of the biblical texts made their way into the canon as part of a collection rather than as individual books" (1). This idea is confirmed by the Foreword written by Lee Martin McDonald. Regardless of whether or not one agrees with all of McDonald's statements there, he provides forty questions regarding the study of Old Testament and New Testament canon formation, a goldmine of possible avenues students could travel in studying the canon.

The sixteen essays of the book are organized under four general categories. First, "The Bible as a Whole and the Old and New Testaments as Canonical Units" (four chapters) has an initial article which "summarizes the early phase of Christian scriptural canon formation," followed by three essays on the canonical shape of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint), and the New Testament. Second, "Old Testament Canonical Sub-units" includes seven essays on the Torah, the Psalter, Wisdom books, the Megilloth, Prophets, and two articles on the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets). Third, "New Testament Canonical Sub-units" has four essays on the four-fold Gospel, Acts and the Catholic Epistles, the Pauline Corpus, and Revelation. Finally, "Hermeneutical Considerations of Canon" contains one essay which focuses on the importance of the canon for interpretation.

Since space constraints prohibit a summary of each chapter, this review will seek to extract the significant points about canonical sub-collections made throughout the book. Section One covers the Bible as a whole. Here we learn that the Hebrew Old Testament had a tripartite structure seen in “the earliest external evidence for the Hebrew Bible that is available” (37). This tripartite structure includes the Torah (Gen–Deut), the Prophets (the Former [Josh, Judg, 1–2 Sam, and 1–2 Kgs] and the Latter [Isa, Jer, Ezek, The Twelve]), and the Writings (Ruth, Ps, Job, Prov, Eccl, Song, Lam, Dan, Esth, Ezra/Neh, 1–2 Chr). It appears that the majority of early Christians used the Septuagint, and that the canon of the Greek Old Testament depended on the Hebrew canon for its contents. However, the order of books and structure of the LXX differed from its Hebrew counterpart. The LXX was arranged by genre and contained Historical (Gen–Esth), Poetic (Job–Song), and Prophetic (Isa–The Twelve including Dan) sections, thus changing the way people read their Old Testaments as their Bibles ended with prophecy and eschatological expectation rather than with history (1–2 Chr) as in the Hebrew Scriptures (76). In regard to the canonical shape of the New Testament there are three approaches: 1) the *minimalist* view sees no real significance to the shape of the canon; 2) the *post hoc* position suggests that the shape of the canon does have hermeneutical significance even though the biblical authors shared no intentions with regard to its canonical compilation; and 3) the *maximalist* school believe that the “shape of the books both within specific corpora and between all four major corpora [e.g., Gospels, Acts and Catholic Epistles, Pauline letters, and Revelation] is due to authorial, editorial, and/or redactional intention” (83). While all four of the essays in Section One were helpful, Stephen Dempster’s “The Canonical Shape of the Hebrew Old Testament” (Chapter 2) was exceptional.

Section Two deals with Old Testament sub-units, and the vast majority of the contributions in the section are quite beneficial. These include the essays on the Psalter (Nancy deClaissé-Walford), the wisdom writings (Craig Bartholomew), the Prophets (Christopher Seitz), and two on the Twelve (Don Collett wrote on the Hebrew version and Ed Glenn on the Greek version). These articles by Collett and Glenn spotlight one of the main values of the book by showing how canonical shaping between the major sub-units of the Old Testament as well as the different ordering of the books within the Twelve itself (219–20) help to influence the way readers perceive the Old Testament message. For example, placing the Twelve in the central section of the Hebrew Bible with the Latter Prophets as opposed to the end of the canon in the LXX has the effect of emphasizing the historical working of God in Israel’s history rather than enhancing eschatological expectation of the coming Messiah when the Twelve present the final words of the Old Testament (187–88). Incidentally, the essay on the Pentateuch (Stephen Chapman) suffers from the assumptions of source and form critical origins for the Torah, creating an insufferable dissonance when compared to all the other fine articles in the book.

The New Testament sub-units are treated in Section Three, and all four essays brim with useful interpretative help. These include (1) the four-fold Gospel (Greg Lanier); (2) Acts and the Catholic Epistles (Darian Lockett); (3) the Pauline corpus (Randolph Richards); and (4) Revelation (Küllü Töniste).

Ched Spellman's essay, "Hermeneutical Reflections on Canonical Sub-Collections: Retrospect and Prospect," is the lone article in Section Four. Spellman "examines several concepts native to canon studies, including the context of canon, the coherence of canonical intentionality, the notion of canon-consciousness, and the relevance of the biblical canon to the task of biblical theology" (3). His closing sentence well summarizes his chapter and the book as a whole: "In my view, the canonical approach in general and the analysis of canonical sub-collections in particular have a strategic role to play within the broader field of Old and New Testament studies" (329).

Oh, that I had more space to give favorite quotations from this book! While the high price might cause hesitation for the parsimonious, the value gained from the insights therein will replace those doubts with appreciation. I highly recommend *Canon Formation*.

Jon Pratt
Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Plymouth, MN

Five Views on the New Testament Canon, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Benjamin P. Laird. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2022. 280 pp. \$24.99.

When I took my first teaching post nearly thirty years ago, I was assigned to teach New Testament Introduction. As I sought to find a textbook on the formation and theology of the NT canon, my choices were so limited that I chose to cover the subject in my lectures without assigning a text on the subject. Thankfully, the situation has dramatically improved.

Five Views on the New Testament Canon (FVNTC) provides perspectives on this vital subject from a unique array of scholars: (1) Darian Lockett from Talbot School of Theology supports the conservative Evangelical perspective; (2) David Nienhuis from Seattle Pacific University and Seminary supports the progressive Evangelical perspective; (3) Jason BeDuhn from Northern Arizona University supports the liberal Protestant perspective; (4) Ian Boxall from The Catholic University of America supports the Roman Catholic perspective; and (5) George Parzenios from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology supports the Orthodox perspective.

How can such a diversity of perspectives on the canon provide a meaningful and productive discussion? Answer: by relying on the responses to three canon questions provided by the editors of this project.