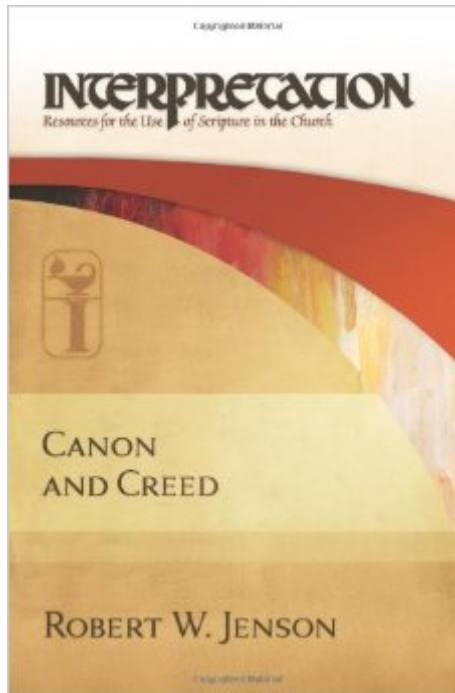


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Canon And Creed: Interpretation: Resources For The Use Of Scripture In The Church



Synopsis

How does the church understand the relation between its Scripture and its creedal formulations? No one is more qualified to address that question than Robert W. Jenson, who shows how canon and creed work together and interact and that neither is an adequate or sufficient to guide Christian faith without the help of the other. His book will enable contemporary interpreters and teachers, pastors, and laity to deal with the questions and tensions that are always present as the church seeks to hold canon and creed together.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the more compact books in the INTERPRETATION series, with 12 short chapters. While the chapters are easily read and clarity is brought to the relationship between canon and creed, this is a very erudite book and I have to admit, much of it went over my head. But the author does expound on some subjects that make for fascinating reading. His explanation for instance on the Parable of the Sower in Chapter 6 is nothing short of brilliant. And Chapter 3, CREED AND THE OLD TESTAMENT, is perhaps the best in the book. I would disagree with only one observation the author makes toward the end of the book, when he writes that most Christians pray to Mary. Most Catholics may, but I would be shocked if any Protestants do at all. This protestant certainly doesn't! Overall, a good teaching tool for pastors and lay teachers.

Insightful discussion by Lutheran theologian, Robert W. Jenson, on how our canon of Scripture needs our creedal formulations and vice versa. Part one looks at Israel's Scripture, creedal statements in the OT and the NT canon as *regula fidei*. Part two looks at the canonical text, dogma, and the episcopacy (also relevant to the discussion). Part three looks at creed as critical theory in the interpretation of biblical texts (Gen 1:1-5; Lk 1:26-38; Mk 14:35-36). In his afterword, Jenson expresses dismay at modernity's compartmentalization of biblical exegesis separate from systematic theology. Not wishing for a repristination of premodern theological categories (e.g., law and grace, free will and predestination), he envisions "all modes of churchly reflection" to be "braided like the branches of an alluvial stream that branches mutually disposed as the momentary flow of discourse suggests. Jenson's book will enable contemporary interpreters (i.e., teachers, pastors, and laity) to deal with the questions and tensions that are always present as the church seeks to retain both scriptural canon and classic creedal statements of faith.

Canon and Creed is well done but requires some theological education. I was hoping to use it for a church school class, but it is a difficult read which requires some biblical and historical background and vocabulary.

Robert Jenson invites us to see questions of canonicity in terms of God's story. Canonization, such that it is or can ever be, is not a static process (ironically, both Protestants and EO/RCC act like it is). He notes, "The Old Testament and the New Testament are Scripture for the Church in different ways" (Jenson 14). The OT was Scripture for the apostles before they were apostles. It is antecedent to the church's formal existence. Jenson suggests that the real question is, "Can Israel's scripture accept this proclamation of Jesus' resurrection and this new movement within Israel?" (20) Jenson further claims that the "new gospel was justified by Israel's scripture, never the other way around" (21, quoting Campenhausen, *Entstehung*, 68). His thesis: "From the beginning the church has read the Old Testament as narrative of God's history with his people" (Jenson 20-21). The most promising thing about this book is the connection between canon and story. Jenson does not develop this in any real detail, but it is a fascinating insight nonetheless. The canon emerges from the narrative. We can tie in with speech-act of God's identity. The narrative (cf Irenaeus on divine covenants' structuring) justifies the claim that the canon emerges as a creation of the divine speech-act.

Jenson details how the adoption of the scriptural canon and the creation of the Creed are circular in

nature. One was dependent on the other historically and the same is true today. The Creed is Christ centered and so must be the reading of both the Old and New Testaments to be faithful witnesses.

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