



Volume 64 | Issue 2

Article 27


12-1-2021

Burke's "New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures" (book review)

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Recommended Citation

Ellis, Alec K. (2021) "Burke's "New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures" (book review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 64: Iss. 2, Article 27.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.2309>

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Book Reviews



Burke, T. (Ed.). (2020). *New Testament Apocrypha: More noncanonical scriptures (Vol. 2)*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. 655 pp. \$75.00. ISBN 9780802872906

The second volume of *New Testament Apocrypha (MNTA)*, edited by Tony Burke, continues the goals of the first volume. Namely, to increase the scholarly publication and conversation of apocrypha and pseudepigrapha in English. This includes works that have never been published in English, such as the *Healing of Tiberius*, a text popular in the Middle Ages, and the *Life of Mary Magdalene*, as well as translations that simply needed updating based off new manuscript sources. This volume contains 29 works and there are hopes to continue publishing a third and fourth volume in the coming years.

The book is divided into five sections and expands the definition of apocryphal literature both in terms of genre and date. Traditional interest in the apocrypha has revolved around how the works reveal the development of early Christian thought. The traditional genre and date range have thus reflected this with earlier apocryphal collections primarily concerned with works created before the closing of the canon, or at least before the start of the Middle Ages. Likewise, the genres and forms have followed those found in what became canonized in the New Testament. The MNTA expands the discussion by first adding the new genre “church orders” to the traditional four: gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses. In terms of the date range, for many of the manuscripts in the volume, the precise date is undeterminable and often even the century is hard to ascertain. However, works such as the aforementioned *Life of Mary Magdalene* and others such as the *life of Judas* push the date range to the High Middle Ages in the 12th or 13th century.

Each translated text is preceded by a thorough introduction that includes a synopsis of the work, a discussion of the manuscript evidence and provenance, including the best estimate of the original date and language of the text, as well as placing the text within its literary and theological context. In addition to a bibliography that accompanies each introduction, the translations themselves are heavily footnoted with additional sources and commentary.

MNTA checks all the boxes for a book in this genre. Its target audience would appear to be the scholarly community but given that the texts are translated into English and so much background information is provided, this work is also appropriate

as a textbook, a reference work, or even for use by an armchair historian. The book concludes with indexes of modern authors and scripture and ancient texts. Whomever the reader is, this book accomplishes its goal of bringing apocryphal literature to a larger audience.

One final comment, to accompany this volume and since the publishing of vol. 1, the newly formed North American Society for the Study of Christian Apocryphal Literature (NASSCAL), created an online supplement to the published translations. Updates to scholarship will be added to the database as new manuscripts and scholarship is released. Although readers of *MNTA* are encouraged to consult the online resource at NASSCAL.com, there are no translations in the database and thus the *MNTA* still needs to be consulted by the English reader.

Reviewer

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