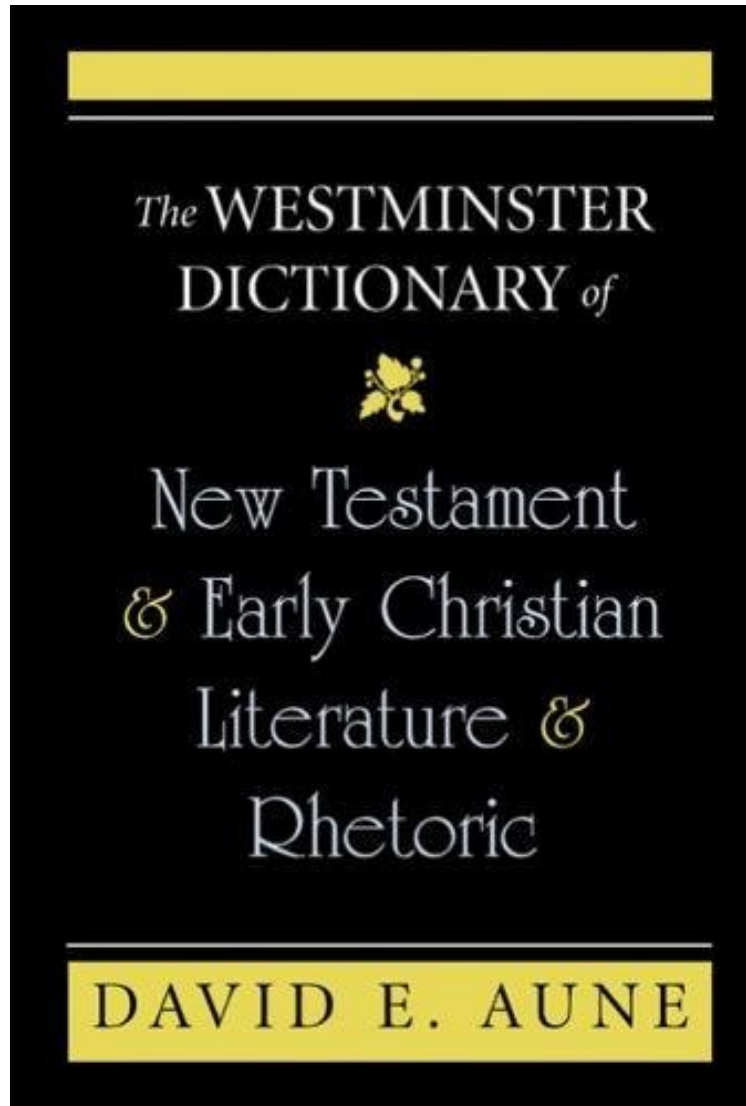


# The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric

David E. Aune

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**David E. Aune : The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I highly recommend this dictionary to students of the New Testament and ...By Bob CraftThis work is a simply delightful tour de force written by an acknowledged master of the ancient world of Greece and Rome. Almost all of the articles were written by David Aune and all were vetted by him.

They cover the width and breadth of Greco-Roman literary terminology and tools as they pertain to Christian writers of the first several centuries. I found virtually every article contained food for thought, new connections of Christian writings with the wider literary world, and new ways of looking at the early Christian writings. For example, in a discussion of "Decrees," Aune spends considerable time sketching structural relationships between Greek and especially Roman decrees and the so-called messages of Revelation 2-3. Every article seems to bring this sort of suggestive connection. I highly recommend this dictionary to students of the New Testament and other early Christian writings. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Order one while they are still available. By B. Marold I concur with the earlier reviewer that this may be one of the best single volume references for New Testament and early Christian literature in Greek and Latin. I frequently buy big "dictionaries" on biblical subjects, and rarely refer to them. I don't begrudge that, as long as each book has at least one thing which I can find nothing else. In this book, that one thing may be the 6 1/2 page table of parallels between the gospel of Thomas and the canonical gospels and early Christian writings. I just checked in , and there are no systematic commentaries on this gospel, however there are several books which deal with it in general terms. This dictionary does not limit itself to writings on the canon and the Apostolic Fathers. Notice that the title of the book includes "Christian Literature and Rhetoric". That means Aristotle's book on Rhetoric gets a four page entry, but none of Aristotle's other works get any mention. One important observation is the fact that this is "...the only complete extant Greek rhetorical treatise surviving from the Hellenistic period..." That means, if we want to know the sort of Rhetoric Paul studied, we need to look at Aristotle (even if Paul did not read Aristotle himself.) In contrast, there is no entry for "Plato". On the Latin side of Rhetoric, Cicero gets four pages, including a nifty table of Cicero's Topics, one of his more important books on rhetoric. Oddly, there is no entry for Seneca, one of the few other giants of writing on Latin rhetoric. There is much space given to poetics, even to the classic characteristic of Hebrew poetry, "parallelism". In browsing the topics, I was delighted to find an especially long article on the topic of "boasting". Readers of Paul's letter may often be surprised at how often Paul boasts about something he says. Straight away, the article points out that in both biblical and Hellenistic circles, 'Self-praise or boasting about one's person or achievements was a social taboo throughout the ancient world.' But...Cicero says there is a place for it while Plutarch says its self-defeating. According to the author, Paul was very clever in using self-praise, in that he give the impression that his attackers were forcing him to use an unflattering rhetorical technique simply to defend himself. The matter was so important at the time (notice no one even mentions it today) that John Chrysostom (349 - 407) takes the trouble to defend Paul's use of 'boasting'. I was happy to find a long article on 'chiasmus', the term for a style of rhetoric where the structure of the text follows the shape of the Greek letter Chi. I know what it means, but this is a great source if I ever feel the need to point someone to a good explanation of the term. Another rhetorical term we frequently encounter in writings about Paul is 'diatribe'. Most books on Romans say Paul used that method in the letter. Oddly, I have never found that word in Aristotle or Cicero. Turns out, it is a modern literary term, used to describe conversations with an imaginary antagonist. It was also a style common to the writing of Cynic and Stoic philosophers. The book has concise articles on some of the classical forms of biblical criticism, such as "historical criticism" and "narrative criticism", but nothing on some of the more recent genres like "feminist criticism" although much has been done on feminist criticism of both Old and New Testaments. I was pleased to see different articles on 'apocalyptic literature' and 'revelatory literature', even though the Greek source of apocalyptic means to reveal. The latter deals with the technique of communication with the gods by way of oracles. The former deals with prophesies of a coming earth-changing, millennial event, such as the parusia, the second coming of Christ. The article on apocalyptic makes an important distinction between this word and eschatology, which is concerned with last things regarding the individual, not the entire world order. I am a great fan, in books like this, of Bibliographies. The bibliography in this book is very good, but not great. The publication date is 2003, but I get the sense that most bibliographies are older. For example, Bart Ehrman's translation of the Apostolic Fathers for the Loeb Library is probably the current standard, but the article on the Apostolic Fathers does not mention it, although it does cite other books by Ehrman. There also seems to be important works missing. There is no in the composite Bibliography by Robert Alter, even though he wrote definitive works on both biblical narrative criticism and poetic parallelism. This book has things you simply will not find in other biblical dictionaries, such as the Harper/Collins Dictionary, edited by Mark Allen Powell, even though that edition is as new as last year. Aside from its range, I strongly recommend the tightness of the writing. The author (the editor who wrote almost all of the articles) gets right to the point, in clear language. Highly recommended, especially if you can get a good, inexpensive second hand copy. I must note that while there is a chance that books like this will be put out of business by Wikipedia and other on-line sources. that day has not come, and will not come until all Wikipedia articles authors are known and articles are refereed, attributed to sources, and edited for accuracy. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Best Single Volume New Testament Scholarly Reference Work By Exegetical Nonsense David Aune's Westminster Dictionary of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric is a fantastic scholarly reference work. Astoundingly it is almost exclusively the work of one man (all but 21 articles). David Aune, who is a professor at the University of Notre Dame, covers literary and rhetorical topics pertinent to NT and Early Christian interpretation, amply treating both primary sources and secondary sources. You will find numerous articles related to composition, literary materials,

and ancient rhetoric. For example, there are articles titled: allusions, chreia, dictation, enthymeme, form criticism, midrash, preface, rewritten bible, and many more. For scholars working in the field of New Testament or Early Christian Literature, this may be the most handy single volume reference which exists.

The Westminster Dictionary of New and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric is an authoritative reference that details the various literary and rhetorical forms found in the New Testament and in the literature of the early Christian church. David Aune's extensive study will be of immense value to scholars and all those interested in the ways in which literary and rhetorical forms were employed and how they functioned in the early Christian world.

A staggering achievement, an inestimable contribution to the discipline. This is a work to applaud, recommend, and use --constantly. -- Margaret M. Mitchell, Associate Professor of New Testament, Divinity School Chair, Dept. of New Testament and Early Christian Literature, Humanities Division, The University of Chicago  
Written with grace and clarity, this will prove itself indispensable... -- Paul J. Achtemeier, Herbert Worth and Annie H. Jackson Professor of Biblical Interpretation Emeritus, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia  
About the Author  
David E. Aune is Walter Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the New Testament and early Christianity.