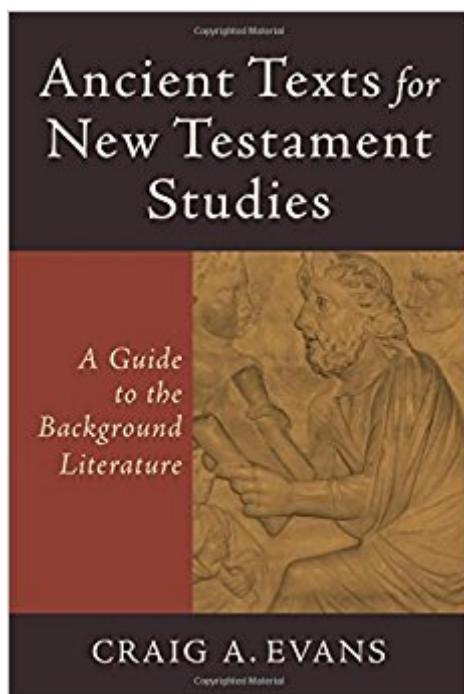


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Ancient Texts For New Testament Studies: A Guide To The Background Literature



Synopsis

One of the daunting challenges facing the New Testament interpreter is achieving familiarity with the immense corpus of related literatures. Scholars and students alike must have a fundamental understanding of the content, provenance, and utility for New Testament interpretation of a wide range of pagan, Jewish, and diversely Christian documents. This thoroughly revised and significantly expanded edition of Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation examines a vast range of ancient literature, masterfully distilling details of date, language, text, and translation into an eminently usable handbook. Craig Evans evaluates the materials' relevance for interpreting the New Testament and provides essential biographies.

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Customer Reviews

"Evans's introduction is more than a map to terra incognita; it is a helpful companion for all who study Judaism and Christianity before the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire."--James H. Charlesworth, George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Princeton Theological Seminary"As someone who has worked in a great number of fields cognate to New Testament studies, Craig Evans is eminently qualified to produce a guide to these various adjacent areas. . . . [He] has clearly done an excellent job of covering a vast amount of material. Each work or corpus is introduced succinctly and clearly and is accompanied by bibliographies of editions, translations, and well-chosen secondary literature. . . . This very comprehensive and clearly written book . . . will be extremely useful to a large number of students and scholars."--Simon Gathercole,

Journal of Theological Studies"Many doctoral students would have loved to have this reference work on their desks during graduate studies. All of the standard exegetical questions (date, provenance, author, historical situation) are answered in a few enlightened sentences. . . . Evans's book is a success, providing vast amounts of information in a minuscule space with extensive leads for further study. His choice of bibliography to continue research is lean and pointed. The very scope of his introduction to Israelite and rabbinic literature make[s] this book worthy of a place on any shelf."--Jerome H. Neyrey, Review of Biblical Literature"This volume encompasses an amazing amount of material, and successfully orients readers to the texts under consideration. It is a major revision and expansion of the author's earlier volume *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation*. . . . Even for those that possess the earlier edition this revised form is worth purchasing for the up-to-date bibliographical references, yet it also provides a more comprehensive coverage of texts. This is an important reference work that should become a standard volume in libraries and on the shelves of scholars and students alike."--Paul Foster, *Expository Times*

Craig A. Evans (PhD, Claremont Graduate University) is John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas. He is a frequent contributor to scholarly journals and the author or editor of numerous publications.

One reviewer said it already - this book shows references that mention, expound on or discuss nearly every verse in the New Testament. This alone is worth the price of the book. If you are interested in what pseudoepigraphical, apocryphal and the early fathers in early Christianity have to say about the New Testament plus a summary description of what many of those sources contain this would be THE book. Besides - Craig A. Evans is a WONDERFUL New Testament scholar.

Awesome resource

I had to have this book. I do a lot of deep studying concerning the Scriptures, Judaism, Christianity, and etc. Outside of the extra biblical Christian writings, there are also scores of Jewish writings to sort through. Dr. Evans does a great job introducing these texts.

This was a great reference book for anyone wanting to know more about the documents that make up our New Testament.

good

Review of Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005). 539 + xxxvi pp. [review first published on Timothy Michael Law's blog, with some hyperlinks stripped out] Many thanks to Baker (who acquired this through their purchase of Hendrickson's backlist) for the review copy. I requested the volume because I noticed there was a 2012 revision of the book, but for some reason was sent the original 2005 version. Since I hadn't read the 2005 version anyway, I thought I'd simply review this and do so by way of a thought experiment: if it fell to me to suggest revisions for a second edition, what would I change or include? If anyone has seen the 2012 version, perhaps they can comment on whether any of these changes have been made. First though, it is worth stressing emphatically: this is a massively useful volume that puts an astonishingly broad range of literature (both primary and secondary) at the fingertips of its users. It is a book I will put into the hands of my postgraduate students to help them orient themselves to the dizzying array of texts one is expected to know in order to study the New Testament. As Martin Hengel once famously opined, the one who knows only the New Testament doesn't know even that. So this book is a rich guide to all the byways that will provide renewed vistas of the New Testament and its subject matter, when approached cautiously and intelligently. After a brief methodological introduction, the bulk of the book considers major corpora of ancient writings (chapters 1-11), offers some brief examples of this material in action in sample NT exegeses (chapter 12) and concludes with no less than six appendices, covering the canons of Scripture that include the Apocrypha, a list of quotations, allusions, and parallels to the NT (something worth consulting for those writing on particular NT texts), parallels between NT and non-canonical Gospels (here somewhat awkwardly called 'pseudepigraphal'), a list of Jesus' parables and those of the Rabbis, a discussion of Jesus and Jewish miracle stories, and finally a brief treatment of messianic claimants in the first two centuries CE. The major chapters offer brief summaries of the relevant writings, bibliographies (which are pretty thin on non-English scholarship - a pity since advanced students are those most likely to use the volume, though perhaps a necessary concession to space constraints) and discussion of themes and connections to the NT. Clearly this is a lot of material packed into relatively small space. As I mentioned, my overwhelming reaction to this book is one of appreciation. But since critical suggestions for improvement are a form of the highest compliment to scholarly efforts, in what follows I'd like to briefly make some suggestions in the order of the chapters as they appear in the volume. Many of these are simply suggestions about what has appeared since 2005, though others are more

substantial.1. OT Apocrypha. A very useful chapter, with tables of Ezra and Esdras nomenclature that are worth bookmarking. While the differing canons are noted, 3 & 4 Macc and Ps 151 are treated in the next chapter (as are Jubilees and 1 Enoch, though it is not here noted that they function in some Eastern canons as apocrypha). In general there are very full bibliographies, and one finds (in contrast to some other places in the book) some good non-English language references.2. OT Pseudepigrapha. This is a very good discussion of these texts, with much useful bibliography and helpful (if necessarily brief) orientating remarks. While naturally there are many works that could be added to update the bibliographies, I'll simply focus on one major methodological question here. Robert Kraft's important discussion [esp. chapters 1-2] (review here) of the difficulties in identifying these works as Jewish or Christian (extended by Jim Davila in his book, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha*) could be taken more fully into account: should we assume that a work is Jewish unless proven Christian? Or does the process of transmission through Christian scribal hands suggest that some of these works might in fact be Christian? And isn't it all much more complicated than is often assumed? We can look forward later this year to the publication by Eerdmans of more OT pseudepigrapha, under the revised title *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 1.3. Dead Sea Scrolls. This is one of the longest and most useful chapters in the book, supplying orientation to the contents of the DSS as a whole and also many comments on individual texts. One might simply note that the DJD series is now complete, save the revision of Allegro's idiosyncratic volume V, and that much of the Hebrew & Aramaic texts in the *editio princeps* is available in a six-volume reader's edition. There is also underway a new French edition and translation of the DSS, *La Bibliothèque de Qumrān*.4. Versions of the OT. This is a concise and useful discussion of the versions of the OT and their potential relevance to the NT. A few minor updates: the first ET of the SamPent is about to be published. The New English Translation of the Septuagint has been published as well, and one might here also note the appearance of the Septuaginta Deutsch and the flood of German publications on the LXX. Also missing is any reference to the important French series, *La Bible d'Alexandrie*. One might have expected some discussion of the difference between Rahlfs edition and the larger Göttingen project for which Rahlfs is a stop gap measure. To keep up to date on the project of improving our knowledge of the Hexapla, note this important site (and note that one T. Michael Law is a contributor!). On the *Vetus Latina*, one could note the interesting work being done in Birmingham on the Gospel of John.5. Philo and Josephus. In discussion of Philo, my biggest complaint is that Evans restricts himself to the material published in the Loeb series, and so misses some of Philo's works: *De animalibus*: A. Terian, ed., *Philo Alexandrinus, De animalibus* (Chico, CA,

1981); *De Deo*: F. Siegert, "The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*: First English Translation," *SPhil* 10 (1998), 1-33; *Fragments of the Quaestiones et Solutiones* (many of which are in LCL, but not all, and not all translated): F. Petit, ed., *Philon d'Alexandrie, Quaestiones in Genesim et in Exodus: Fragmenta Graeca* (PAPM 33; Paris, 1978); J. R. Royse, "Further Greek Fragments of Philo's *Quaestiones*," in F. E. Greenspahn et al., eds., *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Chico, CA, 1984), 143-53; J. Paramelle with E. Lucchesi, *Philon d'Alexandrie, Questions sur la Genèse II 1-7* (Geneva 1984); D. T. Runia, "A Neglected Text of Philo of Alexandria: First Translation into a Modern Language," in E. G. Chazon et al., eds., *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone* (Leiden, 2004), 199-207. A few other minor Philonic quibbles: one might have expected some discussion of the various commentary projects that Philo is engaged in; Philo is surely Middle Platonic rather than Neoplatonic; and though the importance of Philo for the interpretation of Hebrews is noted on p. 169, only two references to Philo appear in the appendix devoted to quotations, allusions, and parallels to the NT - an unfortunate oversight (and in general, Philo appears to have been under-utilized in the index). One might also have expected some mention of the helpful Philo bibliographies by D. Runia, et al. and the Brill commentary series, and now one could add the very useful Cambridge Companion to Philo. For Josephus, one might note that three more volumes in Brill's commentary series have now appeared, and an ET of *Yosippon* is apparently in press by HUP (see [here](#)).⁶ The Targums. This is one of the places the volume shines, given Evans's own extensive work in targumic studies. I'd simply note that the Aramaic Bible series has now been completed, and point to two other important volumes on the targums: Paul V. M. Flesher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011) and Martin McNamara, *Targum and New Testament: Collected Essays* (WUNT 279; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). I am perhaps slightly less optimistic about the relevance of the targums for NT study than Evans, but he provides some examples that are well worth consideration. But when we have 30 pages devoted to the targumim and only 9 pages devoted to Philo, this strikes me as a bit disproportional. And a major desideratum here arises: what we need is a one or two-volume *Handausgabe* distilled from the Aramaic Bible series. Couldn't we simply strip the translations of all their notes and compile them so that one could know what Onqelos says without trudging off to a library? It would sell, wouldn't it? I've written to the Liturgical Press to say so, but I'm not sure my email got anywhere. If anyone knows McNamara personally (the editor of the series), perhaps they could suggest it?⁷ Rabbinic Literature. This is extremely useful as a guide to this complex literature. I suppose my major question is about non-Rabbinic Jewish literature that might

have been discussed. Why nothing on the Hekhalot literature and merkavah mysticism, especially given its possible importance for mysticism in the NT (see, e.g., Rowland & Morray-Jones)? One would want, I think, to refer to the works of P. Schäffer on the Hekhalot literature, and to note also the classic work by Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. And while much of this work hasn't yet been translated into English (though apparently Jim Davila is working on it), one could see, e.g., Martin Samuel Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983) or the ET of the *Sefer ha-Razim*.⁸ NT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. In this brief chapter, the focus is mainly on the apocryphal gospels - perhaps understandable given their high visibility, but I wonder if some attention to the apocryphal acts of the apostles (at least the five major ones that may have a claim to be 2nd or early 3rd c.) would be worthwhile? A number of primary source editions could be added: F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain, eds., *Actes apocryphes chrétiens* (2 vols.; Bibliothèque de la Pléiade; Paris: Gallimard, 1997-2005) - this edition is too often overlooked, though it includes much of the excellent work by members of the French AELAC, including the fullest edition of the *Acta Pauli* to date. One might also note the editions of the apocryphal gospels by A. Bernhard and Ehrman & Plese, not to mention the new edition of the first volume of Schneemelcher expected out at any time from Mohr Siebeck, and the Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts series by OUP. As for secondary texts, one might now add H.-J. Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2003); *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), several works on the much disputed Secret Mark (S. Carlson, P. Jeffrey, S. Brown, F. Watson, etc.), and Paul Foster's massive commentary on the Gospel of Peter. Incidentally, in the case study on pseudepigraphy, there is a bit of tension between the leading statement that 'the early church was aware of pseudepigraphy and did not approve of it' and the concluding recommendation of D. Meade's work (which stands in stark opposition to the leading thesis [which is to my mind defensible, though this does not imply that pseudepigraphy did not occur]).⁹ Early Church Fathers. This chapter covers essentially the apostolic fathers (with some surprising gaps in bibliography, it must be said) and extremely briefly, other church fathers. Given the importance of reception history and global reconstructions of early church history for the interpretation of the NT, I wonder if it wouldn't be worth including a bit more on the heresiologists in particular (esp. Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius), as well perhaps as more on Marcion given the way he has functioned recently in debates about the Gospel of Luke in particular. I'm not entirely sure that it would be fair to say that it is customary to cite Migne, when his editions are often so poor. Wouldn't it be better to urge using the *Corpus Christianorum* volumes where available (some of which are now happily being

translated)? Or the Sources chrétiennes or Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller volumes. Anything but Migne, really! It is also worth noting that the Biblia Patristica has now been superseded by the online version.¹⁰ Gnostic Writings. Here one would now of course want to include the Gospel of Judas, but also perhaps some other important primary and secondary sources: e.g., Foerster's two volume collection of texts; M. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism*

Craig Evans describes the book's purpose in the preface, "The purpose of this book is to arrange these diverse literatures [that have been discovered and published in this last generation] into a comprehensible and manageable format" (xi). He divides *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* into eleven types of writings, which form the first eleven chapters: (1) The Old Testament Apocrypha, (2) The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, (3) The Dead Sea Scrolls, (4) Versions of the Old Testament, (5) Philo and Josephus, (6) The Targums, (7) Rabbinic Literature, (8) The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, (9) Early Church Fathers, (10) Gnostic Writings, and (11) Other Writings. Where are the Greco-Roman writings? They have a small section in the eleventh chapter titled, "Other Writings." Evans admittedly only writes "the briefest thumbnail sketches of these writers" (287). For example, Evans's discussion of Pausanias is quite short: "Pausanias (second century c.e.) was the author of *Description of Greece*, a guide with special interest in monuments" (294). More welcome, however, is the short section titled, "Greco-Roman Authors on Jesus and Early Christianity" (298-300), yet this also is too brief, but at least this section includes bibliographies. The question must be raised: Why is Greco-Roman material lacking in this work? It is true that scholars have over emphasized the Greco-Roman background during the early and mid twentieth century, and that shifts towards a greater emphasis on the Semitic background has been made since the publications of works by people like E. P. Sanders. Also, Evans's own works have tended to show more of a preference to Jewish and Semitic sources than Greco-Roman ones. Still I find the downplay of Greco-Roman sources to be a flaw in *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*--especially in light of recent research, namely that of the socio-political background studies of the New Testament. The twelfth and final chapter of the work gives examples of New Testament Exegesis. Here Evans looks at over half a dozen of examples where familiarity with the ancient sources has been strategic to their interpretation. While the first appendix simply charts the inclusion of the apocryphal books in the various canons (i.e., Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and Coptic), the following five appendices are actually quite helpful. I have already put a sticky note at the beginning of the second appendix: "Quotations, Allusions, and Parallels to the New Testament." This is superior to the indices found on pages 887-901 of the USB

Greek New Testament (1994), as it contains a number of biblical and extra-biblical material ordered by the New Testament verse reference. The example from 2 Cor 4.6 reads: "Gen 1:3; Isa 9:2; Corp. herm. 7:2-3; Cicero, Tusc. 1.26; Seneca, Ep. 44.2" (387). The third appendix is also helpful: "Parallels between New Testament Gospels and Pseudepigraphal Gospels." The fourth appendix discusses the use of parables: "Jesus' Parables and the Parables of the Rabbis." The fifth appendix explores the idea of competing miracle workers around the time of Jesus: "Jesus and Jewish Miracle Stories." The last appendix covers the topic of "Messianic Claimants of the First and Second Centuries." A word should also be said about the indices of *Ancient Texts for New Testament Study*. This text is a reference tool; it is unfortunate that so many reference books have very poor indices that make them difficult to navigate. Evans's work, however, does not fall into this category. It is a superb example of indices done right. There are almost a hundred pages for the three indices found in this work. These indices are as follows: Index of Modern Authors, Index of Ancient Writings and Writers, and Index of Ancient Sources. The index of Ancient Writings and Writers is organized to help the reader find references easier (e.g., the Book of Jasher is listed in the Bs under Book of Jasher as well as in the Js under Jasher, Book of). All in all, Evans's *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* is a helpful tool for the beginning student looking to learn more about certain ancient sources, as well as for the experienced scholar looking to locate key bibliographical references. In addition to Evans's volume, there is also an Old Testament counterpart which should be promising as well: Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005).

Craig A. Evans' book fills up a gap in the field of serious New Testament study. It is not just a textbook about all of the standard exegetical questions (dates, provenance, author, historical situation), but so much more. Appendix B surveys through the whole New Testament verse by verse and shows the ancient text from which it is quoted or can be linked to (LXX, OT and NT Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphy, Dead Sea Scrolls, Targums, Rabbinic literature, Early Church Fathers, etc.). The book is worthy of its price just because of this feature.

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