

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(updated 1/08)

There is a vast amount of writing on the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, far more than anyone can read in a single lifetime. It ranges from scholarly work to devotional/inspirational/Biblical self-help. The following list is necessarily selective, though it represents some conservative, as well as moderate and progressive current scholarly/critical ideas. The writers are well-established scholars, many (if not most) of them active Jews or Christians. While you may not agree with the general argument of one or another book, they are all valuable for their ancillary information—surveys of historical situations, summaries, critical and interpretive attention to particular texts. Use them to broaden your sense of the possibilities of understanding and interpretation. The collection of texts in the book we call the Bible is not one-dimensional; it can be interestingly read in a number of ways—this is what makes it literature. Otherwise, it would be simple propaganda and have little lasting value. It has a tendency to become propaganda when used by one or another religious group to further religious agendas.

Most highly recommended: Akensen, Pagels, Ehrman, Friedman, Silberman/Finklestein

Easiest: *Don't Know Much About the Bible*, Kenneth Davis, 1999. Well-researched, in general factually dependable, up-to-date on scholarship, with chronologies, background, capsule summaries of narratives.

General books:

The Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 Vols., available on CD-Rom)
Oxford History of the Biblical World
Cambridge History of the Bible
Oxford Companion to the Bible
 Caputo & Scanlon, eds. *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*
The Postmodern Bible (anthology)

Non-biblical works with reference texts related to biblical studies:

The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures. Ed. J.B. Pritchard. (Shows many connections between Biblical materials and texts from other ancient cultures.)
The Ancient Near East: A New Anthology of Texts and Pictures. Also ed. by J.B. Pritchard
Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament. Ed. W. Beyerlin.

Several excellent introductory lecture series are available through The Teaching Company (www.teach12.com). These “courses” are available as videotapes, audio CDs, DVDs, or audio tapes, so you can watch them or listen to them in the car. The full price is somewhat high, but they all go on sale at various times for a fraction of the regular price. You can also find them on Ebay under “Teaching Company.” The lecturers are established scholars in the field. Courses are also available on a variety of topics other than Biblical studies (especially introductory courses in the ancient world), and there are other Biblical studies courses. Check the website for a full list, including introductions to both the New and Old Testaments.

- Ehrman, Bart. *Lost Christianities* (varieties of Christian belief in the early Christian era as retrieved from texts that did not become part of the Biblical canon)
The Historical Jesus
From Jesus to Constantine (the establishment of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire)
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Paul*.
- Levine, Amy-Jill. *Great Figures of the Old Testament*.
Great Figures of the New Testament.
Introduction to the Old Testament

OF SPECIAL NOTE, since, unless we read Hebrew or Greek, we only have access to Biblical texts through translation (the Hebrew Bible is originally in Hebrew; the Christian Bible is entirely in Greek, with one or two Aramaic phrases—Jesus’ native language was Aramaic):

Wide as the Water, by Benson Bobrick.

The Bibles we read in English today are descendants of what were, literally, ideological wars of translation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the Bible found its way into vernacular languages. In the 150 years or so leading up to the famous King James Version of 1611, Catholics and Protestants in England fought over what kind of language (highly Latinate, keyed to the Catholic Church’s rituals, ceremonies, and theology; or more homespun, simple, and plain, as the “radical” proto-Puritans wanted) should dominate approaches to rendering the original texts into English. Translations depended, also, on the scholarly access to original languages, as opposed to the Latin of the Vulgate Bible, which had been the Bible of the Catholic Church since St. Jerome’s translation in the fourth century CE.

Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why
 Bart Ehrman (2005)

A good companion to *Wide as the Water*. This book is about New Testament textual criticism and sorting out which readings of gospel manuscripts are most likely to be right. Ehrman's premise is that any claim to understand the "True Meaning" of the New Testament (or any other part of the Bible, for that matter--but Ehrman's book is specifically about the gospels), or to know what Jesus *really* said, should be suspect. *All* the original manuscripts are lost, and even the earliest show discrepancies. Ehrman gives a history of major advances in textual criticism and discusses some of the most significant differences: for example, the Gospel of Mark as many people know it has what most scholars now regard as a false ending--it was added some time after the original. In the addition, Jesus makes a number of post-resurrection appearances to various people, "proving" therefore that he did, indeed, come back. In the original, the women find the empty tomb, get scared, and run away. The King James translation has the added ending. More modern translations, like the Revised Standard Version, have the original ending. Ehrman points out that the discrepancies among various manuscripts are so numerous that there are more discrepancies than there are words in the whole New Testament. Most are not significant, but others are intentional and have to do with various theological controversies or beliefs.

HEBREW BIBLE

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (includes material from Christian Bible).

Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God*

(see also other Karen Armstrong books—a major scholar of religion, she has also written on the conflict between monotheisms, on Islam, and on Muhammad)

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *The Pentateuch: an Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*.

Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament : the Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism. (Oxford Bible Series)

Brettler, Marc Zvi. *How to Read the Bible* (2005)

Dundes, Alan (ed.). *The Flood Myth*

Holy Writ as Oral Lit

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Judaism*.

Friedman, Richard Eliot. *Who Wrote the Old Testament?* (excellent summary of authorship issues)

The Hidden Face of God (1997)

Gottwald. *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*

Jacobs, A.J. *The Year of Living Biblically*. A light read, but often entertaining, as Jacobs attempts to live by literal interpretation of both Old and New Testament precepts.

Knight, Douglas A., and Gene M. Tucker (eds.). *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*.

Matthews, Victor H., and Don C. Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories*

- From the Ancient Near East.*
- Meyers, Carol. *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context.*
- Neusner, Jacob, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (ed.s). *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era.*
- Sawyer, John F. A. *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets.* (Oxford Bible Series)
- Shanks, Herschel (ed.). *Bible Review.*
- Silberman and Finkelstein. *The Bible Unearthed.*
- Wiesel, Elie. *Messengers of God.* (Contemporary readings of ancient stories--Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Job, et al., drawing on Midrashic traditions of interpretation.)

CHRISTIAN BIBLE

- Akenson, Donald Harman. *Surpassing Wonder* (about the development of the Bible as a whole—highly recommended for scope, intelligence, gentility, scholarship, vocabulary)
- St. Paul.* (also highly recommended, and for the same reasons)
- Allison, Dale, C. *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (1999)
- Barrett, C. K. (ed) *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire that Illuminate Christian Origins.* (1995)
- Bornkamm, Gunther et al. *Jesus of Nazareth.* (1995)
- Brown, Raymond. *The Birth of the Messiah.*
The Death of the Messiah.
An Introduction to the New Testament
- Brown, Schuyler. *The Origins of Christianity: A Historical Introduction to the New Testament.* (Oxford Bible Series)
- Brown, Stanton. *The Origins of Christianity.* (and other books in the Oxford introduction to the Bible series--all in paperback, including *The Gospels and Jesus*, and *The Prophets*)
- Cahill, Thomas. *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*
- Collins, John Joseph. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature.* (1998)
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Birth of Christianity.*
Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Text. (2001) (With Jonathan L. Reed).
Who Killed Jesus.
The Historical Jesus.
Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography
In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire With God's Kingdom
- Dawes, Gregory W. (editor). *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History*
- Doherty, Earl J. *The Jesus People: Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Jesus? Challenging the Verdict* (A response to Lee Stroebel's evangelical

- The Case for Christ.*)
- Ehrman, Bart D. *Jesus: Revolutionary Prophet of the New Testament.*
Lost Christianities (the varieties of Christian belief in the earliest decades after Jesus)
Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It Into the New Testament After the New Testament (a reader)
Introduction to the New Testament
 (Ehrman is one of the most prolific and rapidly-publishing of the current generation of New Testament scholars; Chairman of the Religious Studies Department at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)
- Ellegard, Alvar. *Jesus One Hundred Years Before Christ*
- Eisenman, Robert. *James the Brother of Jesus* (excellent, detailed, dense investigation of relationships between Paul and many of the figures in the gospels/letters who seem to be just names)
- Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity.* (1993)
- Fox, Robin Lane. *The Unauthorized Version.*
Pagans and Christians (excellent, dense, detailed description of late antiquity, using both texts and archeological evidence—“late Antiquity” refers to the first four or five centuries of the Christian Era, when Christianity was slowly spreading in the Western half of the Roman Empire)
- Fredriksen, Paula. *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*
Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews.
- Freke, Timothy, and Peter Gandy. *The Jesus Mysteries.*
- Goulder, Michael. *St. Paul Versus St. Peter*
- Graber and Kersten. *The Original Jesus*
- Grant, Michael J. *Jesus: An Historian’s View of the Gospels*
- Griffith-Jones, Robin. *The Four Witnesses.*
- Helms, Randall. *Who Wrote the Gospels?*
The Bible Against Itself A recent book in which Helms argues that various books of the Bible can be seen as responses/critiques to other books, so that there is not only little consistent overarching theology, but notable disagreement in tone, content, and style among Biblical books.
- Hopkins, Keith. *A World Full of Gods.*
- Hoover, Funk, et al. *The Acts of Jesus.*
The Five Gospels.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Real Jesus.*
The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation. (1999)
- Johnson, Paul. *A History of Christianity.*
A History of the Jews.
- MacDonald, Dennis R. *The Homeric Epic and the Gospel of Mark*

- Mack, Burton. *Who Wrote the New Testament?* (excellent overview of the dating and authorship of the gospels, the impact of the destruction of the 2nd Temple in Jerusalem, 70 CE)
- Meeks, Wayne. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul.* (1984)
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (1991)
(Meier is one of the foremost New Testament scholars)
- Pagels, Elaine. *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent.* (Very interesting discussion of how the interpretation of the Adam and Eve story changed from a celebration of human likeness to God, to a warning that humans are inherently flawed because of Eve's transgression)
The Gnostic Gospels. (Pagels' primary field: discussion of Gnostic Christian writers whose works were discovered in the 1946 cache of manuscripts from Nag Hammadi, Egypt)
The Origin of Satan (traces the history and growth of Satan as a character from early mention in Deuteronomist writers, through Job, into the polemical battles of early Christian period)
Beyond Belief (discussion of the Gospel of Thomas)
(All of Pagels' books are short and very readable—she is a well-known Christian Bible scholar and Princeton University professor.)
- Price, Robert. *Deconstructing Jesus.*
- Ranke-Heinemann, Ute. *Putting Away Childish Things.*
- Rubenstein, Richard E. *When Jesus Became God.*
- Sanders, E.P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus.* (1996)
- Spong, John Shelby. *Liberating the Gospels.*
The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?
- Stanton, Graham N. *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford Bible Series)
- Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity.*
- Stegemann, Ekkehard W. *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century.* (1999)
- Stroebel, Lee. *The Case for Christ.* (included in this bibliography because it is a best-selling book claiming the absolute Truth of evangelically-oriented Christianity. If you're going to read it, read *Challenging the Verdict* as well, by Earl Doherty, who examines critically the claims Stroebel makes and the people he interviews. Stroebel is not recommended as a scholarly work.)
- Vermes, Geza. *Jesus the Jew.*
The Changing Faces of Jesus (New York: Viking, 2000)
- Wenham, David. *Paul: Follower of Jesus, or Founder of Early Christianity?*
- Wenham, John. *Redating Matthew, Mark, and Luke.* (revisits the dating of the gospels, argues that they are early—before Paul's writings, not after)
- Wise, Michael. *The First Messiah.*

Wright, N.T. *The New Testament and the People of God. Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Vol. I (1996)
Jesus and the Victory of God (Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2)