



St. Francis Virtual House of Studies

The Study of THE NEW TESTAMENT



New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire That Illuminate Christian Origins, Edited by Charles K. Barrett. New York: HarperOne, revised and expanded edition, 1995.

This set of translated documents provides a richly textured introduction to the world in which the New Testament writings originated.

Biblica: The Bible Atlas - A Social and Historical Journey Through the Lands of the Bible, Edited by Barry J. Beitzell. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's, 2007.

This enormous book (oversized and 575 pages long) is an excellent atlas, and so much more. The essays on social and economic contexts of the various books of the Bible by some of the most respected biblical scholars around the world make this a valuable resource. One can usually find it for an unusually low price on Amazon.

Marcus Borg, Robert W. Funk, John Dominic Crossan, Karen King, Lloyd Geering, Gerd Luedemann, Thomas Sheehan, Walter Wink, *The Once and Future Jesus*. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2000.

*This is a representative work by the Jesus Seminar, a group of scholars in search of the historically accurate Jesus. The group has gained a great deal of publicity over the last two decades. This bibliographer is not impressed, but feels that they should nevertheless be included—along with a recommendation that the reader also consult Johnson's **The Real Jesus** listed below in this bibliography.*

Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, Edited by R. R. Reno. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005- .

This innovative series has assigned the task of the commentary of each book of the Bible to a leading theologian. The results thus far are exciting and intellectually stimulating. Five volumes relevant to this bibliography have appeared thus far:

Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009.

Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006.

Joseph L. Magina, *Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009.

Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2005.

Risrto Saarinen, *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008.

***The Cambridge Bible Commentary*, Edited by Peter R. Ackroyd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972-1979.**

*This multivolume set of commentaries by excellent scholars is a valuable resource. It will eventually be replaced by *The New Cambridge Bible Commentary*. As of this writing, two volumes have been published relevant to this bibliography:*

Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Christian E. Hauer and William A. Young, *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey into Three Worlds*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 7th edition, 2007.

The "Three Worlds" are literary, historical and contemporary. Hauer and Young thus take into account the texts, the contexts in which they were written, and the contexts in which we read them in our own time. This useful device takes the reader into the world of critical analysis and provides a great deal of food for thought in preparation for serious biblical study.

***The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, Translated and edited by Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg, and Edward M. Cook. New York: HarperOne, revised edition, 2005.**

In addition to the texts of the ancient writings the book contains commentary with an interesting and plausible, if not conclusive, argument that the writings were not produced by the Essene community. The jury is still out on that one, but the commentary does give valuable insights into culture out of which Christianity first emerged.

Timothy Luke Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*. New York: HarperOne, 1997.

Johnson presents a well argued critique of the methods and assumptions of the Jesus Seminar. While this bibliographer agrees with Johnson's assessment, in all fairness I must also point to Borg, et al. volume cited above for a representative example of the scholarship produced by the Jesus Seminar.

Timothy Luke Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Johnson takes his place a long tradition of taking religious experience seriously as a theological category. He develops his argument through insightful analyses of baptism, speaking in tongues, and meals in common as communal experiences. This, according to Johnson, is good news for those who search for escape from isolated individualism. This volume thus places him in good company from Paul the Apostle, through Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Wilhelm Pauck.

***Lost Scripture: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament*, Edited with Commentary by Bart D. Ehrman. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.**

Ehrman has collected a sampling of early non-canonical writings (Christian Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Epistles, and Apocalyptic fragments). Many of them are not part of the Gnostic literature already well known from the highly publicized fortuitous discovery of the material from Nag Hammadi. The commentaries on each of these writings are well informed and informative. A useful feature is a final section discussing the various canons of scripture in the Early Church from 2nd-century Muratorian Canon to the late 4th-century Canon of the Third Synod of Carthage.

Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

The Gospels abound in pastoral imagery, but the first large and systematic Christian missionary enterprise (designed and executed by Paul) was overwhelmingly in urban areas. Meeks provides a fascinating study of the implications of the first urban Christians and the New Testament Church.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

As both biography and intellectual history this book remains unsurpassed for detail and analytical sophistication eleven years after publication.

***The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition*, Edited by Marvin Meyer, Introduced by Elaine H. Pagels. New York: HarperOne, 2007.**

This is a meticulously edited collection of the Early Coptic writings found in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The scholarly commentary is excellent.

***The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, Edited by Jerome H. Neyrey. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991.**

In 1986 a group of biblical scholars formed "The Context Group" to foster and encourage the use of insights from social history, economics, anthropology and sociology in order to more fully understand sacred writings in their socio-economic and cultural contexts. This volume is a collection of original essays by that group. Collectively, they blazed a path that has proven fruitful in biblical studies for almost two decades.

Carsten Peter Thiede, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Jewish Origins of Christianity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Of the hundreds of books that have been published since the 1947 discovery of the scrolls at Qumran, this is the one I would recommend as a thorough introduction to the historical context and implications of this archeological find.

N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992 - .

Wright, a leading New Testament scholar, has undertaken an enormous task that combines a mastery of the New Testament texts and other early Christian writings (in their original languages) with an impressive knowledge of the social, economic, intellectual, and religious political contexts of the emergence of Christianity. This was a projected series of five volumes until the last chapter of the 2nd volume morphed into an 800 page additional book. The now projected series of six volumes will be completed when the volumes on Paul and the Justice of God, The Gospels and the Story of God, and The Early Christians and the Purpose of God are completed. The following are already available:

N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.

N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

The brief book contains some big visions. Wright presents us with four points of productive tension in Paul the person and Paul's writings: Paul as Faithful Jew / Proud Roman Citizen; a narrative of Creation / Covenant; a Messianic / Apocalyptic climax; the dual (and dueling) worlds of Gospel / empire.