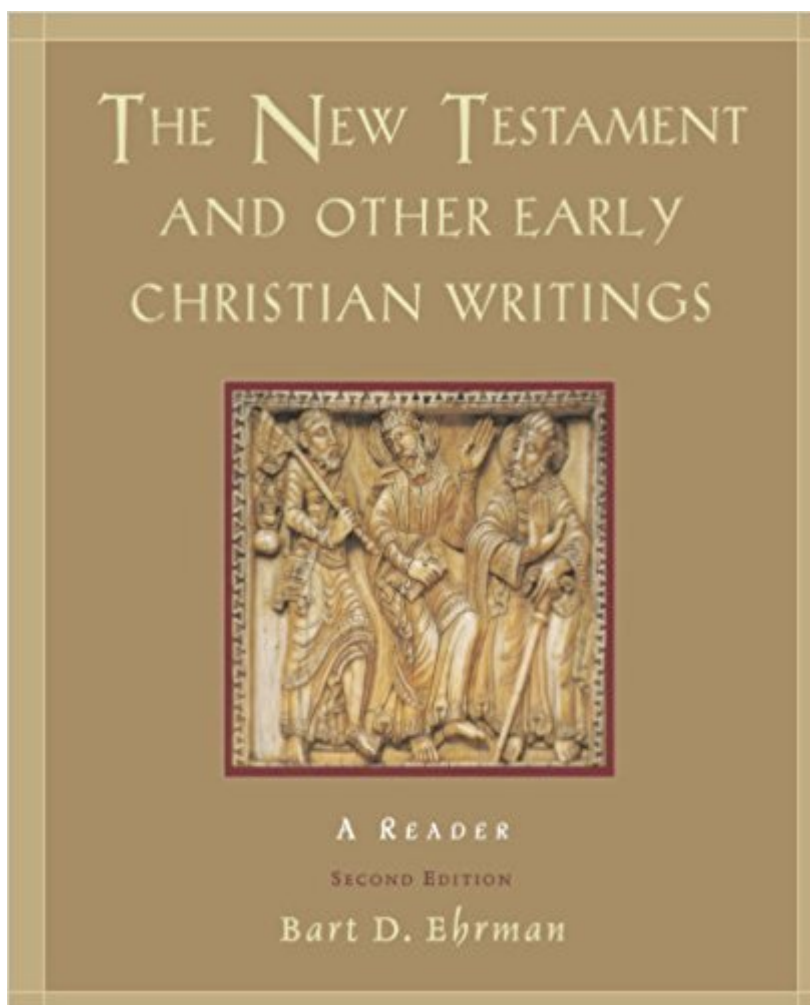


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# The New Testament And Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader



## Synopsis

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were not the only writings produced by early Christians. Nor were they the only ones to be accepted, at one time or another, as sacred Scripture. Unfortunately, nearly all the other early Christian writings have been lost or destroyed. But approximately twenty-five books written at about the same time as the New Testament have survived--books that reveal the rich diversity of early Christian views about God, Jesus, the world, salvation, ethics, and ritual practice. This reader presents, for the first time in one volume, every Christian writing known to have been produced during the first hundred years of the church (30-130 C.E.). In addition to the New Testament itself, it includes other, noncanonical Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses, as well as additional important writings, such as those of the Apostolic Fathers. Each text is provided in an up-to-date and readable translation (including the NRSV for the New Testament), and introduced with a succinct and incisive discussion of its author, date of composition, and overarching themes. This second edition adds *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, an important text that will enhance the collection's utility in the classroom. It also features Ehrman's new, accessible translations of many of the noncanonical works and provides updated introductions that incorporate the most recent scholarship. With an opening overview that shows how the canon of the New Testament came to be formulated--the process by which some Christian books came to be regarded as sacred Scripture whereas others came to be excluded--this accessible reader will meet the needs of students, scholars, and general readers alike. An ideal primary text for courses in the New Testament, Christian Origins, and Early Church History, it can be used in conjunction with its companion volume, the author's *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 3/e (OUP, 2003).

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## Customer Reviews

"At last! A coursebook that sets the New Testament documents in the context of other Christian literature from the same period. Ehrman's collection presents the New Testament in a truly 'historical' way and is a worthy companion to his *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. Ehrman's collection should obviate the need for professors of the New Testament to assign several books of documents for their courses."--Elizabeth A. Clark, Duke University --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Bart D. Ehrman is at University of North Carolina.

I am a big Bart Ehrman fan. I have most of the popular books and text books he has written and I just can't get enough of his historical look at Christianity. Ehrman has a wonderful writing style and has focused his writing to present the context at the time the books of the New Testament and the other writings were written including the traditions of the time, what the authors were trying to tell their audience, where the texts were originally written and what was happening at the time they were composed. Ehrman approaches all of his books as a historian not as a theologian. He states what can historically be said from a historian's perspective. He also states that he is not trying to discount doctrines and dogmas of the church but noting what can be stated from the historical perspective. I think it is clear that for those interested in a historical perspective, this is the book to buy!

I meant to review this when it came in, so apologies for such a belated review. My book came in ridiculously fast- I think just three days after I ordered it. The book was in perfect condition and looked almost like new besides the highlighter marks- which ended up being more helpful than anything. I even got a personalized note on the receipt. In short, thanks for offering such a cheap product in such good condition for being "used". I'm going to keep it even though I'm done with the class I needed it for. Thanks!

Interesting read, helpful when used with the other book which explains this one.

For me, the most interesting part are the non-NT texts. It would be nice if there was a bit more commentary and explanation, but Ehrman has a lot of other great books that fill this void.

It was what the description said it was. It came in good condition and I use it for my class with Dr. Ehrman.

love this book

Let's suppose you already own a satisfactory copy of the canonical New Testament in English, and that you're considering this book for its ADDITIONAL material. In that case, Ehrman's "Lost Scriptures," at two-thirds the price or less, contains the same texts (plus a couple dozen extra texts), with the exception only of Ignatius, Polycarp, and the fragments of Papias. If Ignatius and Polycarp are too sore a loss for you to bear, use the money you save to grab Ehrman's "The Apostolic Fathers: Volume I" (Loeb Classical Library, bilingual Greek-English edition). If you want a COMPLETE text of the Shepherd of Hermas, you'll need Volume II of the Loeb as well, since BOTH of Ehrman's English anthologies present only "extracts...representative of the whole."

I bought this book to learn more about the events and issues of early Christianity from the actual texts that have survived from that period. The book includes up to date translations of the 27 books of the New Testament and of 26 other non canonical books which are believed to have been written within a hundred years of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. There is a brief 6 page introduction on the development of early Christianity, followed by the translations themselves. These are divided into sections which are consistent with the order of the books in the New Testament itself. That is: \* Early Christian Gospels - the 4 New Testament books followed by eight others \* Early Christian Acts - Acts of the Apostles followed by two other writings \* Early Christian Letters attributed to Paul - the 13 canonical epistles plus one other epistle \* General Epistles & Other early Christian writings - the 8 canonical epistles plus 13 others \* Early Christian Apocalypses - Revelations plus 2 other much loved apocalyptic books of the early period Each book is provided with a brief introduction describing the content and purpose of the book, and identifying the purported author and probable date of its writing. The 27 books of the New Testament are from the New Revised Standard version Bible of 1989, while 17 of the 26 non canonical books are translations by the author himself. 8 books are from the Apocryphal New Testament translated by J K Elliott and published in 1993, and one, the Gospel of Thomas, is from the Nag Hammadi Library translated by Thomas Lambdin and published

in 1988. My reactions in reading this book are decidedly mixed. On the one hand, I wanted something which was readable, which it certainly is, and I certainly wanted to read the texts which were unfamiliar to me and to gain some understanding of the context of the times in which they were written. But on the other hand, I also wanted some explanation of what it was that I was reading. This book was certainly successful in illuminating my mind on the first goal, but much less so on the second. Perhaps I should have chosen one of the other books by Professor Ehrman - either "The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings" or perhaps "Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It Into the New Testament". Be that it may, I certainly got many benefits from reading the book. In order to understand what I was reading, I really had to read the books from a different perspective. For example, I had never noted the many similarities and differences in the Gospels and in the Epistles before, with respect to the events as well as the issues which the Apostles had to address in establishing the new faith in the cities of the Middle East, Asia Minor, and other parts of the Roman Empire, and I had never really properly absorbed the content of Revelations. I found it absolutely necessary to have my own Bible close at hand, and to develop a workfile on my PC to summarize the content of each book, to list the people mentioned in these books, and to check the text of biblical quotations against the actual text in the books to which they were supposed to refer. In this last item, I was surprised at the extent to which many quotations differed from the original. My motivation for this approach was that I wanted to understand the development of early Christianity in the context of what had gone before, particularly with respect to Mosaic Law, and the messages of the Prophets. I also wanted to understand more on how the early church interpreted the actual sayings of Jesus Christ, and how these were further developed by the later institutions of Christianity, since it seems to me that His message of love and forgiveness is rather different from the preaching (and actions in the name of Christ) of the historical and modern institutions of Christianity, be they Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, or Protestant denominations. I would have liked to have read something more about the provenance of these books, particularly the non-canonical ones, but the introductions did not cover that particular topic. I would have liked to see some titles and headings for the chapters and various sections within the chapters - but the book did not provide that either. I would have also liked to have seen notes on some of the hidden meanings of the more obscure statements within the texts. So for this information I had to go to my Jerusalem Bible for the canonical books, and to various Internet websites containing the late 19th century translations of texts of the books by the Ante-Nicene Fathers. That turned out to be very helpful, but it did mean that I spent rather more time on reading and rereading this book than I expected. Nevertheless, I am happy I bought the book, and the

translations were certainly easy to read. For those people wishing to study the surviving texts of Early Christianity, they should first decide what is the important information they wish to learn about. If it is mainly for the texts themselves, then this book certainly provides that.

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