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This introduction differs from several outstanding New Testament textbooks that emphasize "a theological or literary perspective" by discussing extracanonical "Christian literature through the early second century," applying "a rigorously comparative approach to all of these texts," modeling "a variety of methods for the study of ancient literature," and introducing a variety of critical issues "by showing why scholars say what they say" (xix). The first chapter illustrates the diversity of early Christianity evidenced by second century Adoptionist, Marcionite, Gnostic, and "Proto-Orthodox" Christians, and suggests the likelihood that the New Testament itself reflects a substantial variety of perspectives. A strength of the second chapter, "The World of Early Christian Traditions," is the attention devoted to Greco-Roman materials. After discussing oral traditions behind the Gospels and arguing that these writings fit the literary genre of biography (chaps. 3–4), Ehrman turns to Mark (chap. 5), the Synoptic problem (chap. 6), Matthew and Luke-Acts (chaps. 7–9), the Fourth Gospel (chap. 10) and the Johannine Epistles (chap. 11). To each of the aforementioned New Testament writings he applies a different method of study: for Mark, literary-historical; Matthew, redactional; Luke, comparative; Acts (and later, Romans), thematic; John (also 1 Thessalonians), socio-historical; 1–3 John, contextual.

The author then surveys other Gospels like Thomas, Peter, and Tatian's Diatessaron (chap. 12) before introducing the problem of the historical Jesus (chap. 13) and offering an excursus on "The Historian and the Problem of Miracle" (chap. 14). Having argued that Jesus himself was an apocalyptic prophet (chap. 15), Ehrman sketches some preliminary reflections on Christian origins (chap. 16). Subsequent chapters study the life and teaching of Paul (chaps. 17–21); the Deutero-Pauline and Pastoral Epistles (chap. 22); attitudes toward women in early Christianity (chap. 23); other New Testament epistles and extracanonical writings – the latter include Ignatius' letters, Barnabas and Didache (chaps. 24–26); Revelation, Hermas and the Apocalypse of Peter (chap. 27); and Ehrman's specialty, textual criticism (chap. 28). The volume includes annotated bibliographies at the end of most chapters, a glossary of terms and an index of persons and subjects.

In pursuing such an ambitious agenda, Ehrman, who teaches at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, speaks adroitly to undergraduates who may have no prior knowledge of the Bible. My students in New Testament Survey not only find this book accessible, but also are encouraged to think through a variety of issues themselves before coming to class. I especially appreciate how Ehrman introduces critical questions and debates among scholars — usually in boxes of "Some More Information" or "Something To Think About" interspersed throughout the chapters — without losing focus on the ancient writings themselves. In short, I would use this textbook again, heartily recommend it, and only wish there were a corresponding volume for the Hebrew Bible.

With this in mind, I offer a few criticisms in the hope that a future edition will prove even more useful to students and educators. In the opening chapters the discussion of the Hebrew Bible is paper thin, leaving unclear that Ehrman saves an introduction of Second Temple Jewish history and messianism for chapter 15. Moreover, students unfamiliar with customary biblical abbreviations may not understand what writings "1 Cor." and "2 Pet" designate. Many fine individual points of exegesis in the comparative analysis of Luke leave a fragmented impression in that one cannot grasp this evangelist's overarching presentation. Form Criticism and Rhetorical Criticism should be introduced somewhere, perhaps when introducing Matthew and Galatians respectively. Finally, Ehrman's discussion of pseudonymity in antiquity would profit from mentioning this long-established practice among many Jewish authors of the Second Temple period. Other quibbles could be mentioned, but I refrain out of respect for all that Ehrman has packed into this single, affordable volume ideal for a semester-long class and yet easily supplemented with material of particular interest to the instructor.

Also noteworthy is Ehrman's companion volume containing the NRSV New Testament and English translations of some twenty-five other texts: The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader (Oxford University Press, 1998; iv + 412 pages; $23.50). Ehrman's Introduction does not assume the Reader, but the publisher offers the two together at a discount ($54.50). Rather than requiring purchase of the Reader, I placed it on reserve in the library because it does not contain the Jewish scriptures, and I did not want to oblige students to buy both a Bible and the companion volume. At some future point, however, I may reconsider and stipulate that those who do not already own a Bible acquire one in addition to Ehrman's two volumes.

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In a slim but wide-ranging volume intended particularly for students of comparative religion, Martin Jaffee describes the "religious worlds of the first Judaic millennium," 450 B.C.E.—650 C.E. Jaffee is meticulous in his use of terminology; beginning with "religion" and "world," he defines the words he uses and shows how the definitions he employs are crucial to the enterprise he undertakes. Indeed, this degree of critical precision is one of the signal strengths of this volume. Jaffee not only explains why he chooses certain terms and definitions but why he rejects other ways of speaking, for example, of "Judaism" or of the time period he is addressing (which he calls "early" rather than "ancient," "middle," or "late" Judaism). Students reading this textbook will, I expect, benefit significantly from this demonstration of the methodology of critical comparison and reasoned argument.

Method, however, is not the only outstanding element of this book. Jaffee covers the period of his investigation