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Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. xxxvi + 539 pp. Hardcover, \$34.95.

Craig A. Evans is Payzant Distinguished Professor of NT at Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University, in Nova Scotia, Canada. His highly productive NT career has witnessed a plethora of publications. Among the most recent ones, he coedited with Stanley E. Porter the *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (2000); wrote *Mark 8:27–16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary series (2001); and authored *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (2003) and *Fabricating Jesus* (2006).

Evans, a highly credible scholar, has put together an important reference book that will become a standard volume in the libraries of scholars and students alike. He recognizes two principal difficulties with those who aspire to NT exegesis. On the one hand, they have to master the biblical languages and, on the other, they have to become “familiar with the myriad of cognate literatures” (1). The purpose of this volume “is to arrange these diverse literatures into a comprehensible and manageable format (xi). *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* is a substantial revision and expansion of an earlier work by Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (1992), that had a similar purpose. In addition to his volume, there is also an OT counterpart: Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (2005).

The title under review is divided into eleven *types* of writings that also constitute the first eleven chapters of the book: “Old Testament Apocrypha,” “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,” “The Dead Sea Scrolls,” “Versions of the Old Testament,” “Philo and Josephus,” “The Targums,” “Rabbinic Literature” (Talmudic, Tannaic, Amoraic), “New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” “Early Church Fathers,” “Gnostic Writings” (also covering Mandaean material), and “Other Writings” (Greco-Roman, Corpus Hermeticum, Papyri, Inscriptions, coins, and ostraca). The last chapter, “Examples of New Testament Exegesis,” examines the practical side of these diverse materials, in which Evans applies what he has claimed so far, namely, that these sources are important and illuminative in doing exegesis. He provides the reader with several examples of NT passages that are informed by these sources. For example, there is an essay on the “Parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants” (Mark 12:1-11 and its synoptic parallels). While Isaiah’s parable (Isa 5:1-7) is directed against the “house of Israel and the men of Judah” (Isa 5:7), Jesus’ parable is directed against the religious authorities of his time. Evans asks: “How could the chief priests (cf. Mark 11:27) so readily perceive that the parable was directed against them? . . . The explanation is suggested by *Targum Isaiab*, which inserts ‘sanctuary’ and ‘altar’ in place of tower and wine vat. This would seem to indicate, that in the time of Jesus (for *Targum Isaiab* clearly contains traditions that derive from the first century), Isaiah’s ‘Song of the Vineyard’ had come to be understood as directed against the temple establishment” (333).

To all of these different classes of writings (e.g., OT Apocrypha, OT Pseudepigrapha), Evans provides the reader with brief introductions, as well as brief summaries to many individual writings within these classes (e.g., “Tobit,” “Apocalypse of Adam”). Furthermore, the author offers secondary source treatments of the classes and the individual works themselves under the headings: “Texts,” “Survey,” and “Critical Study/Commentary.” In other words, the book is a treasury of secondary literature to these various writings. Finally, the book contains nearly 200 pages (341-539) of quality indices that are worth noticing: “Comparative Canons” (charting the inclusion of the apocryphal books in the various canons, i.e., Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox,

Russian Orthodox, and Coptic); “Parallels between the New Testament Gospels and Pseudepigraphal Gospels”; “Jesus’ Parables and the Parables of the Rabbis” (more than two dozen parables of Jesus that closely parallel rabbinic parables have been identified by H. K. McArthur and R. M. Johnston); “Messianic Claimants of the First and Second Centuries”; “Index of Modern Authors, Ancient Writings and Writers”; and “Ancient Sources.” Appendix 2 is worth mentioning individually because of its “Quotations, Allusions, and Parallels to the New Testament.” The appendix is organized by NT verses in canonical order. It is superior to what one is used to in the UBS *Greek New Testament* (1994) on pages 887-901. For example, the column adjacent to 2 Tim 3:8-9 reads: “Exod 7:11, 22; Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 7:11; 1:15; Num 22:22; Tg. Ps.-J. Num 22:22; CD 5:17-19; L.A.B. 47:1; *Jannes and Jambres* (frgs.); Numenius of Apamea, *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.8; Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 30.2.11.” This is undoubtedly a most helpful index.

The shortcoming of the book seems to be the underemphasis of the Greco-Roman sources compared to the details accorded to the Jewish literature. One will find a list of philosophers, poets, and statesman sometimes very succinctly mentioned. For example, “*Alciphron* (second or third century C.E.), a Sophist, was the author of *Letters*” (288). More space and larger bibliographies have been allocated for Greco-Roman authors who had a bearing on Jesus and/or early Christianity. This succinctness, however, can be explained by the fact that in the last century NT studies has received an overemphasis of Greco-Roman background material. The pendulum seems to swing in the opposite direction. Modern scholars such as Evans and Sanders seem to place greater emphasis on Semitic background material, which has its legitimacy. Another lapse to be mentioned here relates to the mentioning and commenting on *Midrash Shemuel* and *Midrash Mishle*, Amoraic Midrashic Literature (243-244), while failing to mention them in the charted list of Rabbinic Literature (216).

Overall, the serious NT student and scholar will find helpful information and useful bibliography on the whole range of noncanonical texts pertinent to biblical interpretation from the OT and NT Apocrypha to Qumran to early Rabbinic and Greco-Roman materials. This is a most valuable asset in the library of every serious exegete.

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Hoffmeier, James K., and Alan Millard, eds. *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. xviii + 385 pp. Paper, \$19.95.

The Future of Biblical Archaeology is the result of a conference held in August of 2001 at Trinity International University in response to what many have seen as *the* crisis in biblical archaeology. Starting in the 1970s, a discussion was begun by William Dever (*Archaeology and Biblical Studies: Retrospects and Prospects* [Seabury-Western, 1974]) over the relationship between archaeology and the Bible that indeed even challenged the appropriateness of biblical archaeology as a discipline. Its practitioners, up to that point in time, tended for the most part to be biblical scholars without formal training in field archaeology, who had a positivistic agenda that often yielded unwarranted conclusions in terms of the correlation between archaeological data and the Bible. While the discussion, which continued throughout the 1980s, was fruitful, ultimately producing better-educated practitioners and a more theoretical bent to the discipline of archaeology as practiced in the Near East, the problem of interpreting material culture in such a way that it has a possible biblical connection still remains a thorny issue. One tendency has been to ignore the problem by merely changing the name of the discipline and its publications to Syro-Palestinian or Near Eastern Archaeology and producing