The Apocryphal Gospels: A Very Short Introduction
Paul Foster

The Apocryphal Gospels: A Very Short Introduction explores their origins, discovery, and discusses how the various texts have been interpreted both by the Church and beyond. What are the apocryphal gospels? How do the apocryphal gospels reflect the diversity that existed within early Christianity? To what extent can they be used to reconstruct an accurate portrait of the historical Jesus? These non-canonical texts, considered in the correct context, offer us an important window on the vibrant and multi-faceted face of early Christianity. They do have important limitations, however, and these are set against the limitations of using the New Testament gospels.

The Bible: A Very Short Introduction
John Riches

The Bible: A Very Short Introduction looks at the importance accorded to the Bible by different communities and cultures. Why has the Bible generated such a variety of uses and interpretations? How was it written? What is the canon and what role does Biblical criticism play? This VSI explores all these issues as well as examining why the Bible has been such an influence on Western culture and why it continues to exert an enormous influence over many people's lives. It also considers how the Bible has been appropriated by high and popular culture and its use for political ends.

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Very Short Introduction
Timothy H. Lim

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Very Short introduction discusses the cultural significance of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the religious, political, and legal controversies during
the seventy years of study since they were found. It looks at the contribution the scrolls have made to our understanding of the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, and the origins of early Christianity. Exploring the most recent scholarly discussions on the archaeology of Khirbet Qumran, and the study of the biblical texts, the canon, and the history of the Second Temple Period, it considers what the scrolls reveal about the communities closely associated with the scrolls and sectarianism in early Judaism.

Luke Timothy Johnson

The New Testament: A Very Short Introduction locates the New Testament in its historical and literary context and explains why the religious experiences of the first Christians forced them to reinterpret their Jewish and Greek heritage and reshape their symbolic world. It provides the broad conceptual and factual framework for the New Testament, describing the process by which distinct compositions became a sacred book as well as providing a detailed examination of specific compositions that have had a particularly strong influence, such as Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Romans, the four Gospels, and the Book of Revelation.

The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction
Michael D. Coogan

The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction explains the differences between the Bible of Jewish tradition and the Old Testament of Christianity, and also examines the different contents of the Bibles used by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Protestants. It explores the use of invented dialogue and historical fiction in the Old Testament, and the presence of mythic elements in apparently historical accounts. The Old Testament's idea of divine justice is examined, as well as biblical understandings of prophecy. The way non-biblical evidence, such as archaeological data and texts, has placed the Old Testament in a larger and more illuminating context is discussed.