

Review: The New Testament in its World


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The New Testament in Its World:

An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians

By N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird (Zondervan Academic)

N.T. Wright is a name I keep seeing and hearing. My pastor is often quoting him—as are other Baptist pastors. Baptist seminary and university professors cite him in classes, articles and blogs. Wright even will lead a four-day seminar this summer at [Truett Seminary](#).

I have read numerous articles by and about Dr. Wright, and I'm always  impressed by what I read. But I had not read any of his 80-plus books. So, I've been asking, "Why are so many Baptists enthralled with this Anglican professor and bishop?"

This book answers my question. It will also let you know why this Anglican theologian can be counted as "one of us"—moderate, conservative and biblical. He is a theological fellow evangelical.

The content is akin to being "The Best of N. T. Wright," condensing a lot of his major books into one source. Reading it could also be a way of

experiencing a good survey of important seminary classes in a Master of Divinity degree program.

The book's content includes the cultural and historical background of the New Testament times, the life of Jesus and the theology of Paul's writings. More than half of the book is a short commentary on all the books of the New Testament. The reader will observe Wright's support of traditional claims about the divinity of Jesus, a genuine resurrection, the nature of salvation, etc. And the book properly ends with a section on how we should live out the New Testament's calling on our lives.

At almost 900 pages, the book might look like a daunting challenge. It needn't be viewed that way. It would make a great addition to the library of any serious preacher, any devoted Bible study teacher, or anyone wanting to learn more about the New Testament. It could be a reference book, using the detailed index to research themes and passages. Or, taking it in small sections, one at a time, it would be worth working through the whole book.

The book somehow manages to be for everyone. It doesn't fear entering deeper puzzles, like authorship questions. Nor does it read like a textbook that will bog down the average reader. Instead, its parts are fast and fun to read. Most pages have a photo, a graph, a map, or—most fun—frequent “email” exchanges between a professor and an earnest student.

“N. T.” may not stand for “New Testament” (it stands for Nicholas Thomas, and he goes by “Tom”), but it could. He clearly is one of the most brilliant Christian minds of the day, and this book is worth your time.

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