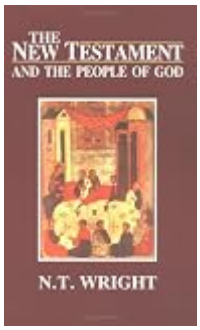
# THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

*Posted on December 30, 2008 by Eddie*

**Category:** Reviews




I've got a few books earmarked for reading over my Christmas break, of which, this is probably the biggest and most difficult. It is the first (and slimmest) volume of a trilogy on Christian Origins. I'm not sure when I'll get round to the other two volumes but I will - next Christmas perhaps?

I'm not going to try to review the whole book; I'll just give a few highlights from my own perspective.

Part One is a relatively brief section which introduces the study as a whole. The second section is much longer and is at times very difficult to follow. Essentially Wright is getting to grips with what it means to read a text and to say that we believe it. This sounds very esoteric, but it is well worth wading through the detail to get to grips with the concept. I was most amused at the way in which Wright draws a paralell between traditional ways of reading the Bible which concentrate on what God is saying to me today, rather than looking at the original context and postmodern theories which dispense with the author's intent when reading a text. 'Strange bedfellows' indeed.

The second section is a long look at the background and beliefs of first centuary Judaism. This was easier going and very interesting. However after a while, I started to wonder why he didn't just dispense with all this history and get into looking at Biblical texts. However, when he did get round to looking at the Bible, it all started to make sense. Opening up the Gospels in the light of first century Jewish belief rather than from a modern, or even reformation, perspective is enlightening. As someone who has tried to share the Gospel cross-culturally for years, I appreciate the need to see Scripture in context - but funnily enough, I've never really thought much about the original background context to the Gospels.

The final section takes a look at the practices and beliefs of the early Church from which I stole this quote.

A couple of things stick out from the book for me. The importance of understanding the context in order to fully understand the Scriptures and the need to see the whole story of the text in order to follow it, rather than treating it as a series of atomised sayings.

Make no mistake, this is a scholarly book. Not everyone is going to enjoy it and you need to give time and attention to it, but you don't need to be a theologian to read it. Unless this is a field you are very interested in, then there are probably other books you should read first (Surprised by Hope by the same author, for example). However, if you are a historian and you would like to see how your academic field is essential in understanding the Scriptures then this is well worth your time. Equally, I would suggest that anyone who has a responsibility to teach or communicate the New Testament Scriptures in some way should be familiar with what Wright has to say.