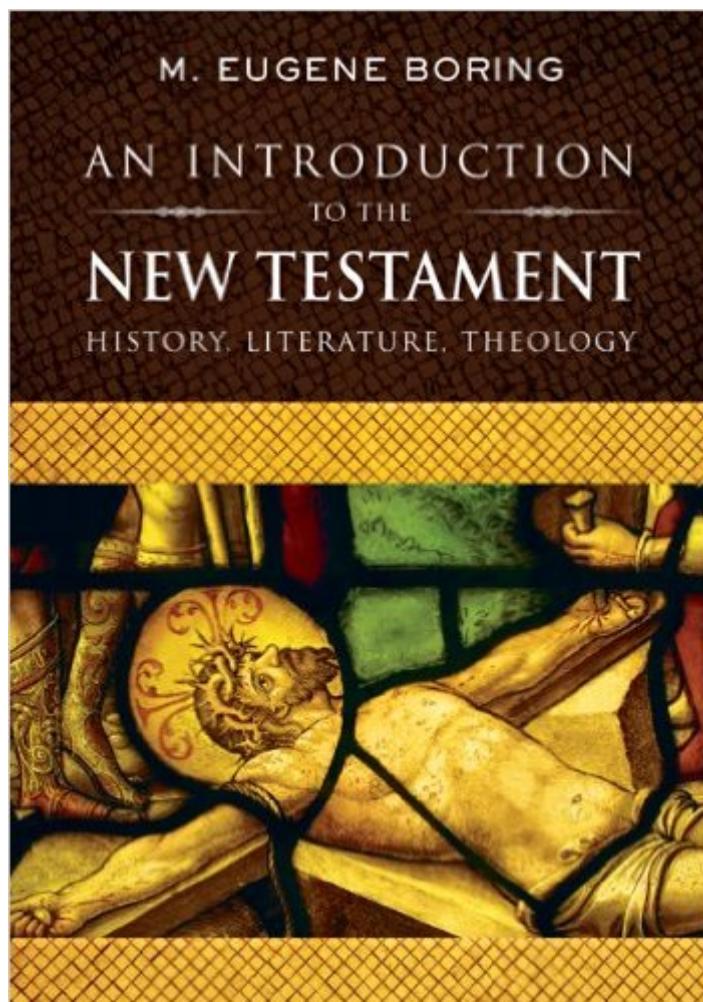


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# An Introduction To The New Testament: History, Literature, Theology



## Synopsis

This thoroughly researched textbook from well-respected scholar M. Eugene Boring presents a user-friendly introduction to the New Testament books. Boring approaches the New Testament as a historical document, one that requires using a hands-on, critical method. Moreover, he asserts that the New Testament is the church's book, in that it was written, selected, preserved, and transmitted by the church. Boring goes on to explore the historical foundation and formation of the New Testament within the context of pre-Christian Judaism and the world of Jesus and the early church. He then examines the individual books of the New Testament, providing helpful background information and methods for interpretation, and revealing the narrative substructure found within each of the Gospels and Letters. This volume includes helpful illustrations, charts, notes, and suggestions for further reading. Sections are laid out in a well-organized manner to help students navigate the content more easily.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a heavyweight textbook. With 28 chapters, more than 50 figures, multiple textboxes of illustrations of key points, over 760 pages, this book covers the entire New Testament and more. Written with three different perspectives, of historical, of literature, and various theological angles, it stems from a conviction that the New Testament interprets the events of history as "revelatory acts of God" for the salvation of the world. Through the Church, the book is appreciated from the

perspective of community. Through history, the New Testament is reflected through the life of Jesus and his disciples, and the early Church. Written with the beginner student in mind, this book leaves very few stones unturned. Boring weaves in many historical contexts, the literary styles, as well as the theological ideas framed inside the 27 books of the New Testament. Words like "testament," "narratives," "covenant," "gospel," "epistle," "textual criticism," and many other technical terms needed for a decent study of the New Testament are introduced and described in ways that first timers can appreciate. Abbreviations are stated. Bibliographies are included as a way to encourage further research by the eager student. This book is particularly strong in the historical description and the sources. From the land of Palestine in the early centuries (0-30 BCE), the Apostolic Era (30-70 BCE), the sub-Apostolic Period (70-100 BCE), and covering the Roman, the Greek / Hellenistic eras, and beyond, the author breathes life into the historical facts, archeology, and the artifacts. In textual criticism, readers are introduced to the early manuscripts, how it came about, how it was used to preserve the ancient texts, explaining the critical apparatus, the more than 5000 Greek manuscripts, the LXX, the invention of printing to the modern digital age. Care is also taken to describe the early beginnings of English translations, from the KJV to modern editions like the NIV. Boring also provides descriptions on interpretations, how the Church interprets, how the Jews, and modern techniques like higher criticisms. I was delighted to find a mini-listing of the different biblical criticisms as well as the different kinds of theological studies described. The later parts of the book touches on the gospels, the epistles, and the interpretation of them all. The author meticulously highlight recent developments too. Like the Quest of the Historical Jesus, the different schools of interpretation, hermeneutical theories, and many more. As expected, there is ample coverage of the individual gospels and the epistles. Like a typical NT introductory book, Boring touches on the authorship, sources, traditions, dates, its historical, social, and cultural contexts, its theological themes, as well as how modern readers can study and appreciate the texts for contemporary eras. With helpful structures and outlines, students will find the book a very convenient reference book. For students at an advanced level, this book works well as a good refresher course. This book has nearly everything a beginner student of the New Testament needs. I give strong marks for The historical sketches help modern readers understand the historical period. The outlines give its historical sketches, a good framework for learning the key themes of each book, and of course, the very accessible way it has been written. The illustrations and textboxes give tired eyes a break from the texts. The bibliography is strong. The description of the various people groups (Sadducees, Zealots, Hellenists, etc) gives readers a useful insight into life in Palestine during Jesus' time. For an introductory level book, this book is hard to beat, for it has set a high standard for clarity, for

comprehensiveness, and for concise descriptions of all things New Testament. Rating: 4.75 stars of 5. conrade This book is provided to me free by Westminster John Knox Press and NetGalley without any obligation for a positive review. All opinions offered above are mine unless otherwise stated or implied.

Boring's "Introduction to the New Testament: History, Literature, Theology" clearly reflects a lifetime of learning, and jointly, that Boring is anything but. The book, which some have called a "library in one volume," is comprehensive and cohesive, a veritable journey from foundations and presuppositions and approaches to interpretation and application of everything New Testament (NT); and it is these elements that distinguish it from other NT introductions. Literally, all that goes into interpreting the NT is explored: from a Hellenistic world and Jewish culture/background to early church history and the texts themselves. Even the outline of the book reflects the history and development of the NT, with the books presented in the order they were most likely written and other historical events being listed within the appropriate portion (as note, there is one division: the letters are present first, with the Gospels and Acts intentionally placed second...more on that shortly). On this merit alone, Boring's intro proves unique, but he also included some other distinctions that set his work apart. Secondly, from an interview on the book, Boring says that he is really endeavoring to teach a critical method for studying the NT through this book, as he critiques other options along the way. In other words, he isn't just spoon-feeding the reader facts; he is showing them how to critically interpret: something fairly bold to do in an introductory work. With that, there are probably some red flags going up from Evangelical/traditional exegetes. Personally, I find myself in this group, and so am less willing to always come to the conclusions Boring does regarding the historicity of certain biblical events. This is one of the reasons Boring puts the Gospels after the letters; he believes students are more willing to allow for flexibility in Paul's writing than in regards to Jesus. So, become a critic of Paul first, and you're more likely to be a critic of Jesus later. Slightly slippery methodology from my perspective. I appreciate what form criticism has brought to the exegetical discussion (e.g. genre distinction) but would not by any stretch consider myself onboard the critic ship. Consequently, this aspect, as a non-denominational yet more Reformed believer, was less appealing. More mainline denominations will probably have less reserve with this approach to the NT. In his defense, Boring usually provides an explanation for the conclusions he comes to when they are more of a "Christ of faith" persuasion as opposed to a "Christ of history" one; and in noble scholar fashion, he also tries to present what others have determined about a text. Lastly, and most interestingly, in the distinction department, Boring also integrates a good bit

theology into this introduction, which is not altogether common. Intros are usually concerned with the who/why/when/to whom-original historical contexts and don't venture too much into theology, save for perhaps mentioning key themes. Here, each section on the portion of the NT under examination ends with an "Exegetical-Theological Precis," a sort of commentary summarizing the essentials of the text on a section by section basis (usually 10-15 verses at a time, but it depends on the text). What I find particularly helpful and compelling is Boring's interbiblical connections between NT texts. For example, in his chapter on James, Boring posits that James was writing his letter to make sure Paul's epistle to the Romans was not misunderstood. He then correlates James 2 with Romans 3 and 4. The exegetical insight here was definitely enriching, as Boring outlined the similar thought-lines between the two texts. Additionally, Boring emphasizes that the NT is the Church's book, so it must be understood in the aforementioned early Church context. But, drawing on Barthian dogma concerning the Word of God, he links that ancient, historical aspect to today's Church and ecclesiology. Yes, the Bible was the early Church's book, but it is also the book of the modern Church and thus rightly serves as a theological and confessional work. From my own doctrinal positions, Boring's view is interesting and appreciated. His book recognizes the holy aspect of the NT; as important as historical context is, that isn't all there is. I say brav0! I want to again emphasize the level of detail here. Boring spends over 200 pages before getting to the first treatment of a New Testament text, and all of it is crucial; but I think Boring may go too deep for most undergrad survey classes and perhaps not deep enough for grad work. It's all very useful but what environment will allow this book's treasures to be discovered? Who then is his audience? The layman will hardly have the fortitude, the undergrad may seek to skim some riches, and the grad might look deeper on each issue specifically. Perhaps the working pastor/teacher would best benefit from what this book is as it is (Boring had the first year seminary student in mind). All in all, I would still recommend the book to students, regardless of their level. Boring's Introduction will certainly prove to be a valuable secondary source across many classes derived from NT literature (Mission and Message of Jesus, Acts, Pauline literature, general epistles, etc.). The book is technical but readable, even enjoyable. So, in the grand scope of things, I think the book is a worthy addition to any student's library, if not especially for those theologically inclined Boring's way. For those looking for a table of contents, you can check it out over at cbd.com, as it is suspiciously missing on 's listing. As a note, I received a free copy of this book via NetGalley, courtesy of Westminster John Knox Press.

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in theology or New Testament history, especially

those who are new to the subject. This is something that would probably work well as an undergraduate textbook. It's written in a way that those with no previous background in the subject can follow along. It gives a good overview of the history of the New Testament without going into an immense amount of detail, and is very readable. Boring's book is not boring. For those who want to know more, the author conveniently provides sources for extra reading at the end of each section.

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