

Book Reviews

Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997, 234 pp., paper, \$14.00) reviewed by Charles E. McLain

Longman introduces his volume as "a dream come true. . . . The book's purpose is at the core of my passion: to reflect on God's Word and teach how to read it correctly—not just for intellectual knowledge, but for spiritual transformation" (p. 9). In bringing his dream to reality, Longman has managed to intertwine his personal testimony of relationship with God together with his intellectual and academic acumen. The result is a readable and challenging book. I found this volume both challenging to my practical daily walk with God as well as to my proper understanding of God's Word.

Longman organizes this volume around four topics. First, the *Bible's transforming power*. He approaches God's Word as a transforming agent for human minds and hearts. "The Bible is the seed that grows the character of Christ within us; it is also a mirror that reflects what is already there, what *needs* to be transformed" (p. 12). Second, the *receptive heart*. As powerful as God's Word is, "it is not a coercive power. . . . Our hearts must be receptive to God's Word in the same way that soil must be rich and conducive to the development of deep roots and luxuriant growth" (p. 12). Third, the *understanding mind*. These chapters deal with the Bible's integrity and the reader's response to its authority and

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genuineness. "The better we understand the nature of His Word, the more clearly and accurately we will hear God" (p. 13). And fourth, the *literary cornucopia*—a survey formulated around the *literary genres* of God's Word. The Bible is rich in a variety of literary forms—law, parable, letter, prophecy, poetry, narrative and more. "We must understand the characteristics of each genre to know how the writers are speaking to us. An apple is not a tomato. An orange tastes different from a pear" (p. 13). Thus to rightly handle God's Word we must be able to rightly distinguish and properly interpret each literary type He chose to use in revealing Himself to man.

Too often in the discussion of hermeneutics the "intellectual knowledge" facets of the field dominate and spiritual implications and prerequisites are left for the homiletician and/or pastor. Longman's contribution is a balanced blend of both sides of the field. To walk with Longman through God's Word is to follow a path of conviction, challenge, and discovery. His illustrations are pertinent and personal. He finds us in the world in which we live and impresses upon us the multi-facetedness of God's Word. A fathomless resource of comfort and guidance, challenge and conviction—everything we need for our daily walk. The greater we see our need for God's Word, the greater should be our passion to be able to rightly plumb its depths.

This book would make a valuable addition to the library of any pastor or layman. Its format allows for multiple uses from introducing the new convert to God's Word (introductory survey) to offering the seasoned saint a review of the wonders he or she may think they are familiar with (introspective review) to academic challenge for the student struggling with interpreting God's Word. The book provides devotional and intellectual challenges.

Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, xiv + 241 pp., paper, \$26.00) reviewed by Charles E. McLain

For many students of Hebrew the marginal notes (the Masorah) in their Hebrew Bibles amount to no more than an *Alice in Wonderland* collage of letters, dots, phrases, numbers, and symbols. They represent an unsolicited, inaccessible challenge supplying mystery not meaning for the average student of the text. Consequently, any value that might be gained from the marginal notations remains untapped like gems in their natural state buried under yards and yards of rock and earth. Unfortunately, this wealth is too great to leave unexplored and unclaimed. Because of the "veritable library of information" (p. xi) contained in the Masorah, the authors have set out to make it more accessible. Their aim is threefold: "to help students understand the significance of the study of the Masorah, to acquaint them with the tools necessary for such a study, and to demonstrate the use of these tools in deciphering a wide range of Masoretic notes" (p. xi). Thus the book is introductory in nature being written for the beginning student who lacks the tools and skills to access technical works on the Masorah.

The first four chapters (pp. 1-68) of the book provide an overview of what is involved in the field of Masoretic studies. Chapter 1 provides a ground level introduction. Chapters 2-3 survey the history of the Masoretic text and the Masorah. Chapter 4 introduces the student to how the notes work. The student is introduced to the types of Masoretic notes and then given an explanation of how they work. Clear illustrations are provided. If the book ended at this point the student would have been left with his appetite wetted and vision stirred, but without the necessary tools to explore the

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riches of the Masorah on his own. Chapters 1-4 answer the question "*Why?*" giving clarity to the opportunities and potential contained in the Masorah. However, they provide very little "*how*" to unlocking the mysteries.

The continuing value of the book is found in chapter 5 (pp. 69-193) which answers the question "*How?*" by providing a glossary of Masoretic terms. This chapter provides the *means* by which the student may explore and reap on his own. Perhaps this chapter would be better referred to as an *expanded* glossary. Each entry contains seven elements: First, the term in question is listed. Second, a definition or several definitions of the term, at times with cross references is given. Third, one or more examples actually found in the *BHS* are provided. Fourth, a translation of the Masoretic note from *BHS* follows. Fifth, the Mm (Masorah Magna of the upper and lower margins) number used in Weil's *Massorah Gedolah* is given for further reference. Sixth, an explanation of the Mp (Masorah parva of the side margins) note usually with implications is provided. And seventh, reference sources containing further explanations of the term allow the student to expand his tools.

This volume is obviously not for every student. However, it is highly recommended for the serious student who possesses a knowledge of Hebrew or is just beginning his study of Hebrew. Acquaintance with and ability to work with the Masorah of the Hebrew text will unlock thousands of years of insight into that portion of our Bible we call the Old Testament. The authors are to be commended on their effort to make the wealth of information contained in the Masoretic notes available to beginning students of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible.

Lindley, Susan Hill, *"You Have Stept Out of Your Place": A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996, 500 pp., paper, \$25.00) reviewed by Michael S. Jones.

The role of women in the church is a popular topic of discussion today. Within those participating in the discussion there is a great diversity of opinions. Yet for all the differences that exists, it is safe to say that there is one point on which all agree; namely, that women are a vital part of ministry in the local church.

Women were also vital and had prominent roles in the New Testament. A woman was the mother of our Savior. Women were among His most loyal followers (perhaps they were His most loyal followers, Matt 27:50-61). It was a widowed woman who gave us the example of true selfless devotion to God (Mark 12:41-44). Women were the first to find the empty tomb (Matt.28:1-8). They were prominent in the early churches (see Acts 9:36, 18:26, Rom.16:6, Phil.4:3, II Tim.1:5). Women served as deaconesses (Rom.16:1), teachers (Acts 10:18, Titus 2:4), and prophets (Acts 21:9, I Cor.11:5).

But women have been strangely overlooked in classic accounts of religious history. Church history texts usually focus on the great movements and the men who led them: Paul, Tertullian, Constantine, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, etc. Texts on North American religious history usually focus on men as well: the "pilgrim fathers," Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, James McGready, Joseph Smith, the Princeton theologians, Abraham Heschel, Reinhold Niebuhr, etc.

Thus one might conclude that women have not played a significant role in the history of religion as it has played out in America, or that the roles they have played, while significant, are in some way not of interest to religious historiography. Coming to such a conclusion would be a mistake. Susan Lindley's book, *"You Have Stept Out of Your Place": A History of Woman and Religion in America*, is representative of a recent movement

among historians to do justice to the contribution of women to America's religious history. Lindley demonstrates that women have at many times and in numerous ways played an important role in American religious history.

Lindley's purpose in writing this book is two-fold: to re-discover important women and the importance of women in American religion, and to investigate how religion has been both a tool of women's repression and a tool of women's self-expression (p. ix). In order to accomplish her goals, Lindley relates the history of American religion in two ways: by providing general summaries of movements and periods, and by interspersing close-up accounts of individuals who are important to an account of the history of women in American religion.

The individual woman whose religious activity Lindley spends the most time on is also the woman with whom she chose to open the book: Anne Hutchinson. Anne was a devout Puritan woman of the Massachusetts Bay colony. She taught a women's Bible study to which many men, and eventually even some of the leaders of the colony, were attracted. For reasons that appear to have been both political and theological, Anne was tried by the colony (and later by her church) and expelled. A statement by one of her opponents, which Lindley has made the title of her book, indicates that gender was one of the main issues, "You have stept out of your place, you have rather been a Husband than a Wife and a preacher than a Hearer; and a Magistrate than a Subject" (p.5).

There is a pattern established in this first chapter that seems to be thematically repeated throughout the book: women of religious conviction and service, incremental movement on women's issues, and resistance from traditional culture and the predominantly male establishment. The bulk of the chapters trace this pattern in the arena of America's dominant religious tradition: white Euro-American Protestantism. Several chapters are devoted entirely to religious traditions outside of the mainstream: Native-American women (chapter 12), African-American women (13), Roman Catholic women (14), Jewish

women (15), and alternative religions (16). Additionally, sections within other chapters deal with sects and quasi-religious movements such as Mormonism and "the New Religious Right". Chapters 18 through 21 describe roles played by women in American religion during the twentieth century, and chapter 22 attempts to foresee the developments of the 21st century.

Many portions of the book will be of particular interest to evangelical Christians. Lindley usually uses the term "evangelical" in the broad sense of those who "share a common heritage and core convictions about the supernatural and authoritative nature of the Bible, the centrality of conversion,...and the importance of evangelism and missions" (p.324, see also footnote 4 in chapter 19). Chapters 3 (Puritanism in America), 5 (The Great Awakening), 7 (The Second Great Awakening), and 8 (the Foreign Missionary Movement), discuss groups and movements that are direct antecedents to today's evangelicalism. Portions of chapter 10 (Women's Religious Leadership in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries) discuss the considerable role that women were allowed in early modern evangelicalism. Chapter 19 (Women's Religious Leadership in the Twentieth Century: Ambiguity Among Evangelical's and Mormons) is largely devoted to the narrowing of this role in late 20th century evangelicalism. In the latter chapter Lindley steps beyond her usual role of 'historian as narrator of events' and offers explanations for the progressiveness of evangelicalism on women's issues in the earlier part of the 20th century and the conservative attitude that has prevailed more recently.

When reading any book, it can be helpful to be aware of the persuasion of the book's author on relevant issues in order to better beware of bias on the author's part. Lindley is aware of this, and does her readers the favor of locating herself as a "white, middle-class, Christian 'reformist' feminist". By "reformist" she means "one who is critical of the Church's historical patriarchy and sexism but who embraces that same Church as a source of meaning and hope" (p. x). By this

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statement, Lindley indicates her desire to separate herself from the mistakes of her tradition while at the same time remaining within that tradition and working to strengthen it. Baptists are in a similar position. While most theologically conservative Baptists believe that the Bible teaches that there is a patriarchal order of authority under God, they too oppose the sexism and extreme patriarchy that has tarnished Christendom throughout most of history.

As a professional historian, Lindley strives to present the material of history as objectively as possible. The degree to which she succeeds is remarkable. She repeatedly presents the several sides of an issue using language that does not incriminate or prefer any one view. Furthermore, and perhaps despite her feminist sentiments, she acknowledges that women have played important roles in religious history both when they have challenged the status quo and when they have accepted it. Nonetheless, there are times when her own prejudices seem to break through her objectivity. One example of this is her remark about women's repression and the subsequent discussion of whether a person can be both a Jew and a feminist or a Christian and a feminist (ix). Lindley has already made the subjective evaluation that feminist values are in a women's best interest. Whether or not she is right, her remarks reveal that even as careful a historian as Lindley needs to be read with a discerning eye towards the historian's own interests.

Another criticism of the book is Lindley's depiction of an evangelical (especially non-feminist evangelical) interpretation of the Bible. On page 349 she seems to imply that non-feminist evangelicals do not consider it "legitimate" to "address issues of context, interpretation, and consistency." On page 352 she characterizes conservative evangelicalism's approach to scripture as "rigid" and "mechanistic", and states that "Biblical criticism and interpretations that take into account the Bible's human element and culturally specific application were viewed with alarm and suspicion of apostasy" by conservative evangelicals. In fact these negative characterizations are true of some

conservative evangelical Christians, but they are certainly not true of all.

Lindley's book fills an important gap in the historiography of American religion. It would be an excellent supplement to a standard text for classes on American history, American church history, and history of religion in America. It will be of interest to pastors and laymen who want a greater appreciation for the potential of women for the cause of Christ. It will be useful to laywomen to reassure them that they, too, are historically significant and can play important roles in serving Christ. As is the case with any book, one must read it with discernment. But this being said, Lindley provides a wealth of historical data with remarkably little bias and in a readable format. Considering the importance of women to Christianity, and the lack of treatment of important women in standard texts on the history of religion in America, this book deserves to be in the library of every church and religious school.