

Longman, Tremper, III. *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. 312 pp. Hardcover, \$21.99.

Tremper Longman III is Professor of Old Testament at Westmont College. He is a well-known writer, having authored or coauthored several books (e.g., *Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT [Zondervan, 1998]; *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* [NavPress, 1997]; and with D. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* [Zondervan, 1995]); and numerous scholarly articles.

Several preliminary but important features occupy the first forty pages of this book: a useful "Series Introduction," the "General Editor's Preface," the "Author's Preface and Acknowledgments," "Abbreviations," "Introduction" to the book of Daniel, "Outline" of Daniel, and a well-balanced but obviously not exhaustive "Bibliography."

The signal purpose and aim of the NIV Application Commentary Series is to enable the reader to understand both what the text *meant* and what it *means*. It brings the "ancient message into a modern context" (9). To this end, Longman has been admirably successful.

Longman systematically explores each of the twelve chapters of the book of Daniel under three rubrics (the format of the commentary series):

"Original Meaning" seeks to explain the meaning of the biblical text as it was received by its first audience. All the elements of traditional exegesis are employed here: literary, linguistic, historical, and theological analyses. For example, in dealing with chapter 1, Longman provides a structural analysis or outline of the chapter (42), presents a concise discussion of historical background along with its problems of chronology (43-47), and discusses key words and their significance to the text. Among consideration for key words, he points to the subtle distinction and use of *Adonai*, "Lord," rather than *YHWH* (the personal name of Israel's deity) in 1:2 in order to express the theme of divine control: "The former emphasizes God's ownership, his control" (46). In this section, Longman commands the reader's attention with his profound commentary, which is written in simple language, while maintaining dynamic dialogue with other scholars.

"Bridging Contexts," as the name suggests, builds a bridge between the first audience and the present audience. This focuses on specific, concrete situations at the time of writing and how they are universally applicable. For example, in dealing with chapter 6, Longman indicates that the same violent political threats and challenges that Daniel faced may be unleashed against God's people today. Daniel's colleagues became envious of "his meteoric rise in Darius's estimation" (166) and could find nothing in his character or the discharge of his duty with which to undermine his reputation, so they resorted to framing him. This possibility is likely even today.

"Contemporary Significance" deals with the relevance of the biblical message for today. For example, in commenting on the struggles and their resolutions in 11:2-12:13, the author points out: "While it looks as if life is going to hell, God is working behind the scenes to bring about good, often more than good—he accomplishes his people's rescue, their salvation" (298).

Several factors are noteworthy in this volume. Throughout his work,

Longman maintains with incredible balance that the central theological motif of the book of Daniel is the sovereignty of God. He believes that chapter 1 not only introduces us to the main characters, but "also illustrates the overarching theme of the book: In spite of present appearances, God is in control" (42). This theme appears in every chapter. He concludes: "God is in control, and because of that we can have boundless joy and optimism in the midst of our struggles" (299). This emphasis on God, who reveals himself in dynamic relationship with his people, is rather refreshing in a commentary on Daniel.

Subordinate to the theme of God's sovereignty, Longman demonstrates the importance of human characters in the book of Daniel, especially in the first six chapters. After all, the book is set in the play and interplay of divine and human affairs. God is not abstract. He is intimately involved in the lives of human beings.

In discussing the setting and date of composition, Longman is straightforward about the problems inherent in any interpreter's discussion of these matters. While there is no dispute that the setting of Daniel is the sixth century B.C., there are two camps regarding the date of composition: sixth or second century B.C. He cautions the reader to "resist the temptation to turn this issue into a simple litmus test" (23). However, he takes the risk of placing his position in the foreground: "In view of the evidence and in spite of the difficulties, I interpret the book from the conclusion that the prophecies come from the sixth century B.C." (23). In doing so, he departs from a long tradition of scholars who advocate a second-century provenance (L. F. Hartman, A. A. DiLella, J. E. Goldingay, W. S. Towner, J. J. Collins). He is to be respected for his courage.

The commentary evidences thorough research with convenient footnotes referring to some of the finest studies in Daniel; however, I have some misgivings regarding this commentary. In dealing with a book that is distinctively apocalyptic, Longman provides only three pages of discussion regarding this genre. This is inadequate. Basic approaches to apocalyptic literature (e.g., preterist, futurist) should have been discussed, with the author indicating his stance. While he is correct that "apocalyptic celebrates God's victory over the enemies of the godly" (177), he is so driven to keep the central theme in focus that he inadvertently downplays the emphasis placed on the "end" in the book of Daniel (see J. Doukhan, *Daniel: Vision of the End*).

While Longman's discussion on "The Nature of Apocalyptic Literature" (176-179) is useful, it seems out of place, positioned as it is just before the discussion on chapter 7. Since genres apply to whole books, this description would be more appropriately placed in the introduction to the book of Daniel as a whole.

The characteristics of the book of Daniel (e.g., the two-language phenomenon, the sequence of four empires in chaps. 2, 7, 8) should have been put in one section instead of being scattered throughout the work. This would have helped the reader to see the cohesiveness in the unfolding drama of the book. Here Longman falters by not presenting discussion on such crucial issues as the unity of the book, the reversal motif, or concentric parallelism in the structure of Daniel.

Sometimes Longman takes no position regarding a debated issue. For example, while he clearly identifies the first beast of chapter 7 as Babylon, he makes no such specific identification for the second, third, and fourth beasts. He claims that "this is an intentional effect of the imagery of the vision" (185), in

order to make “a theological statement about the conflict between human evil and God” (ibid.). But if one is identified historically, why not the others? Why are they only “theological statements”?

Longman writes with the passion of a pastor and the care of a scholar. While I do not agree with several of his positions (e.g., that the timetables of Dan 8 and 9 “are impossible to penetrate” [178]; or that the prominent horn of chapter 8 refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes [189]), I think that pastors, teachers, and students can benefit from a careful reading of this commentary.

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McClendon, James Wm., Jr., with Nancey Murphy. *Witness: Systematic Theology*, vol. 3. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000. 446 pages. \$30.00.

Christianity is Christ and the church is the people who follow Christ. As this theme came through in the first and second volumes of the late James Wm. McClendon’s astonishing trilogy, it now comes through in the third. Completed just before the author’s death, this work applies the Radical Reformation perspective, which has informed his writing from the beginning, to the theology of culture. It is about the church confronting the world through mission; in a simple word, it is about witness.

In his *Ethics*, written first, McClendon introduced the idea of “prophetic,” or as he more often says, “baptist” (note the small *b*) vision. Thinking of today’s Adventist, Baptist, Brethren, Mennonite and similar church bodies, he argued that for Christians with roots in Anabaptism and the Radical Reformation—what he means by small-*b* “baptist”—the “prophetic vision” is the key to faithful reading of the Bible. In prophetic light, the church today is the early or “primitive” church (1:33), much as the Acts 2 church *was* (Acts 2:16) the community Joel envisioned centuries before. The prophetic church looks for and lives out the plain meaning of the whole biblical story that culminates in New Testament Christianity. At the same time, the prophetic church looks for and lives out the plain meaning of the eschaton. Like the story from the past, the Bible’s vision of the end—of what lasts and what comes last—shapes prophetic thought and practice in the present. As the author says in his summarizing formula, “this is that” and “then is now.” True Christian existence, in other words, reflects today both the past and the future, the first and the final, ideals. And thus true Christian existence—the crucial point—refuses to bend its convictions to the pressures and fashions of the moment.

In his *Doctrines* McClendon turned from how the church may truly *live* to what it may truly *teach*. Again, the story—the whole Bible’s record of what has happened and vision of what will happen—is decisive. Because Jesus bestrides both the story and the vision, true Christian doctrine “begins and ends with the confession *Iesous Kyrios*, Jesus is Lord” (2:64). And as before, the point is that the church may live aright. Doctrine is secondary, a means to faithful practice and to the grand goal of a new “corporate humanity” centered in Jesus Christ (2:33). The paradigmatic Christian scholar is the newly sighted Bartemaues, who in McClendon’s reading of Mark 10 unites in one life both reflection on, and