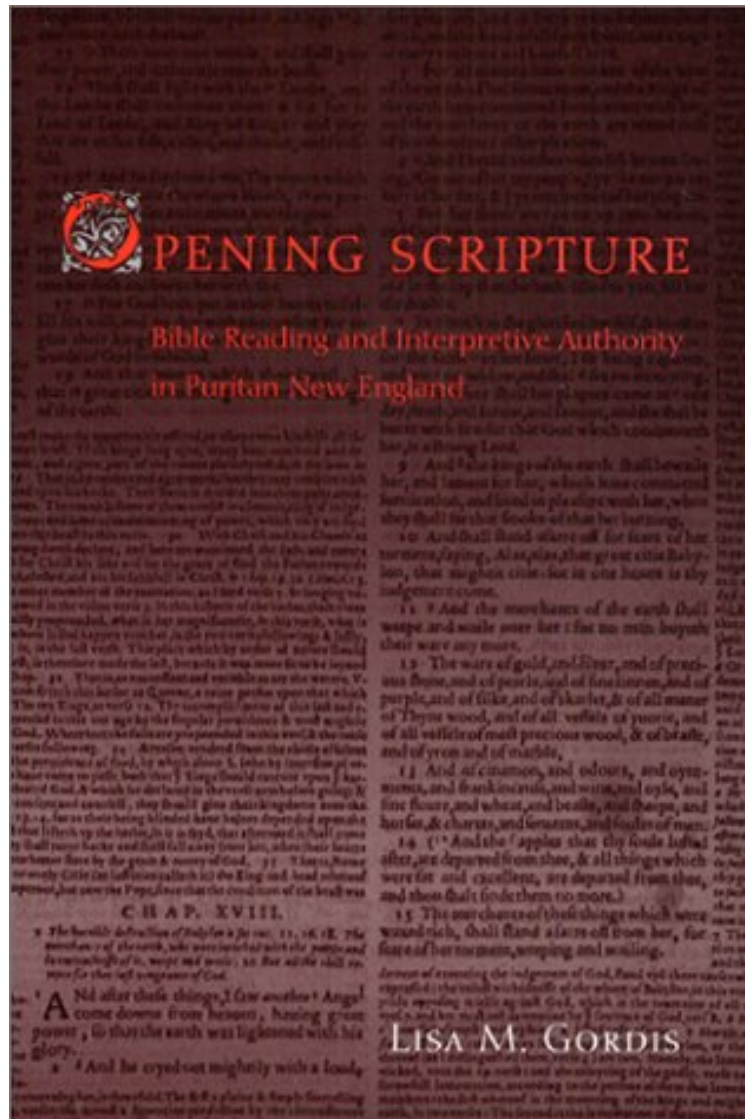


Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England

Lisa M. Gordis

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Lisa M. Gordis : Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The Bible as Literature By Michael Hoffman Gordis does a remarkable job of illuminating the literary genius behind Puritan bible study, as demarcated by the twin poles of bible

reading and preaching. Her analysis of the preaching itself and the use of "collation" and other polemical and expository tools, is most helpful in spotlighting the often overlooked factor of aesthetic pleasure and even entertainment, which early American Christians derived from the intersection of their own impressive biblical literacy with preaching which was more than just "eloquent." "Opening Scripture" is a groundwork for a new discipline in American literature and for kindling renewed interest in becoming once again biblically literate ourselves, in order to experience the kind of joy and edification which Gordis showcases, particularly with regard to the gifted Puritan preacher John Cotton. The fusion of print and spoken word culture was never performed with such virtuosity in America as it was in the 17th century, a fact often overlooked as we moderns obsess almost exclusively over the perceived negatives of all that we class (often erroneously) under the heading, "Puritanical." The informed and engaged constituency which Samuel Adams and other revolutionaries would lead to victory over the West's greatest military power in the 18th century, was rooted in part in the intelligence wrought by the literary universe in which 17th century New England was stepped. One might venture to say that America was never more literate, never brighter than in that era. If this is so, then we might wish to reexamine that time with heightened appreciation. Lisa Gordis' "Opening Scripture" is the book with which to begin the journey.--Michael A. Hoffman II historian of early American bound labor ("They Were White and They Were Slaves")

"Opening Scripture provides a thorough and original account of ministerial and lay strategies for interpreting Scripture in the Massachusetts Bay. Demonstrating an impressive command of the vast literature and history of the period, Lisa Gordis moves deftly through discussions of major figures and events. This is a significant intervention in the study of Puritan New England." Sandra M. Gustafson, University of Notre Dame
What role did the Bible really play in Puritan New England? Many have treated it as a blunt instrument used to cudgel dissenters into submission, but Lisa M. Gordis reveals instead that Puritan readings of the Bible showed great complexity and literary sophistication so much complexity, in fact, that controversies over biblical interpretation threatened to tear Puritan society apart. Drawing on Puritan preaching manuals and sermons as well as the texts of early religious controversies, Gordis argues that Puritan ministers did not expect to impose their views on their congregations. Instead they believed that interpretive consensus would emerge from the process of reading the Bible, with the Holy Spirit assisting readers to understand God's will. Treating the conflict over Roger Williams, the Antinomian Controversy, and the reluctant compromises of the Halfway Covenant as symptoms of a crisis that was as much literary as it was social or spiritual, Opening Scripture explores the profound consequences of Puritan negotiations over biblical interpretation for New England's literature and history.

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From the Inside Flap
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