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Dreams and Dictators: On the Book of Daniel (Book Review)

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vellous and colorful tour of the formative period of the Dutch Reformed faith. The pity is that those who belong to and who continue to give leadership in that tradition often do not show the interest in and knowledge of it that Crew does. Her book deserves to be bought and read by all of them.

Its three appendices, which constitute a fourteen page list of Dutch Reformed ministers active from 1544-1570, is rich with information and so fascinating and important that it alone makes the book worth the purchase price. The bibliography and helpful charts and maps are a bonus.

Dreams and Dictators. On the Book of Daniel, by Herman Veldkamp (translated by Theodore Plantinga). St. Catherines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1978. 251 pages, \$4.95. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Theology.

This publication is another meditational jewel from the late Rev. Herman Veldkamp, a minister in the *Cereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands. Just as his earlier books *The Farmer from Tekoa* and *Waiting for Christ's Return*, this book clearly displays Veldkamp's uncanny ability to point out the comfort of Scripture and to open new vistas for the covenantal pilgrim.

By means of thirty-five meditations, Veldkamp provides the reader with a glimpse of God's (progressive) revelations to Daniel and of the responses of Daniel to God. Each meditation is a close-up picture of outstanding features of many baffling episodes in the life of Daniel, the only prophet who witnessed both Judah's exile and, seventy years later, her return. Taken together these devotional closeups comprise a fascinating spectacle of the unique experiences and visions of this remarkable prophet and powerful ruler.

The character of the subject matter and nature of the approach used in these devotional gems have been well-stated on the outside cover of this book:

Daniel lived in frightening days: God's people were in the grip of a pagan empire, and that empire was under growing pressure from without. Against this background, Herman Veldkamp tells a dramatic story of dreams and dictators, of fearful visions and empires in collision, emphasizing that God's people are never forgotten, however desperate their plight.

Veldkamp shows how prophecy and history blend in the book of Daniel to present a single message. That message is intended to strengthen believers of all ages as they face the assaults of Satan and his hosts and pray feverishly for the return and final triumph of Christ.

Particularly beautiful and helpful are those meditations — cf. 5, 16-19, 27-29, 35 — that deal with the role, essence, and power of prayer in the life of the believer. By focusing on God's promises of grace and threats of judgment, and on the central significance of the coming of Christ and the new kingdom, Veldkamp has demonstrated how listening to Scripture can be pastorally enriching and culturally relevant. What is especially refreshing about this book is that it is void of all premillennarian speculation and Bible-distorting moralism.

I find the section on Christians being lights in the world (cf. pp. 42-45) somewhat distracting as far as the flow of the book's main thought is concerned. Also, I question the legitimacy of equating the fourth man in the fiery furnace, who looked like "a son of the gods," with a prophecy that points to "Christ's descent into hell" (p. 57). Furthermore, because of the ambiguous meaning of the word "theology" in our intellectualistic western culture, I consider the reference on page 31 to "theological faculty" and the phrase "theologians like Daniel" unfortunate, if not misleading.

Even though Veldkamp warned against reading Daniel 11 "as a prophecy about the struggles and conflicts of our time" and playing "ingenious games with the Bible" (p. 222; also, pp. 227, 244, 249), he did not avoid this pitfall himself when he suggested that "the leopard" could be considered a prophetic reference to "motorized vehicles," "unmanned missiles," "intercontinental missiles, rockets, and nuclear warhead," and that the fourth, unidentified animal could be conceived of as a possible allusion to "frightening machines of war manned by people disguised as robots" (pp. 153-154).

Dreams and Dictators is an excellent book to be used in personal devotions, as official proclamation of the Word, for communal Bible study, and for teaching of Bible in both grade and highschools.