

practical pastoral practices elaborated in chapter eight is worth the price of the book. The authors quote Kevin Vanhoozer: “The church is less the cradle of Christian theology than its crucible: the place where the community’s understanding of faith is lived, tested, and reformed” (89). It is for that reason that many of us remain pastors in our faith community, and why all of us might benefit from this book.

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Newsom, Carol A. *Daniel: A Commentary*. OTL. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014. liv + 416 pp. Hardback, \$50.00.

Carol Newsom teaches Old Testament at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. In 2011 she served as President of the Society of Biblical Literature. Her commentary on Daniel is a successor to the volume on Daniel by Norman Porteous in the Old Testament Library (OTL) series. Newsom’s work differs from the previous commentaries on Daniel because it includes extensive treatments of the history of reception of key topics from each chapter of Daniel since ancient times to the present. The history of reception was compiled by Brennan W. Breed from Columbia Theological Seminary. From this part of the commentary, for example, the reader can learn that the person of Daniel was used as a scriptural example by a group of South African theologians who produced “the Kairos Document, a theological rejection of the apartheid regime” (57). When tracing the history of reception of Daniel 8:14, Breed presents a long list of individual and group interpreters such as William Miller, Ellen White, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Baha’i, the Muslim Shi’ites, David Koresh, Harold Camping, and others (318).

Newsom believes that “the Daniel stories originated in the Eastern Diaspora in the late Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods” (21), but behind the compositions of the book she sees the hands of multiple authors. The author follows the thesis that the final date for Daniel’s book is the middle of the second century BC, though she admits that “We simply do not know what was going on in Jerusalem between mid-168 and mid-167” because “historical sources are so obscure and contradictory” (26). The situation is further complicated by the fact that “Persecution for religious reasons was basically unknown in Hellenistic culture” (27).

The stories from Daniel 1-6 show that God “is in control of history” and that He “delegates and eventually takes back sovereignty over the earth” (33). In contradistinction with divine sovereignty is the authority of the king whose food, so generously served at the palace, “represents power, both because of its source and because of the nature of the food itself” (50). While the power of the monarch is limited, the rule of the God of heaven is universal and eternal. Newsom states: “In identifying the God of Israel as the ‘God of heaven,’ the Persian highlight features that YHWH and the Persian god Ahura Mazda share in common, including a concern for cosmic order and

its manifestation on earth” (72). In dealing with the four earthly kingdoms from Daniel 2, the author rightly states that for almost all Jews until the Arab invasions of the seventh century and for most Christians until the time of the Roman emperor Constantine, the four kingdom schema represented the kingdoms of Babylon, a combination of Media and Persia, Greece-Macedonia and Rome (85).

A number of helpful insights into the text of Daniel could be mentioned though I will share here only a few: The story from chapter 3 about Daniel’s three friends “models survival as opposed to escape, since the youth live through the furnace” (114). The imagery of Daniel 7 is said to articulate “the classic apocalyptic response to the mystery of evil. It is understood as never fully autonomous but as playing a designated role in a divine drama, a drama that leads to evil’s ultimate destruction and elimination” (221). Daniel 8:14 according to Newsome is not “a *vaticinium ex eventu* but an actual prediction. . . . What is clear, however, is that the time permitted for the desecration of the sanctuary is strictly determined, and that at the end of the period it will be made right” (267–68). The author refers to the seventy-sevens from Daniel 9 as “the seventy sabbatical years” (300). Looking at the basic pattern in history one notices that “when kingdoms and kings appear to be at the peak of their power, that is the moment when they will be destroyed” (327).

Even though this volume belongs to the Old Testament Library (OTL), I had sincerely hoped to see more trust given to the historical reliability of the claims from Daniel’s book. The same could be said about the unity of Daniel and the traditional view of its authorship. I am one of the students of Daniel who believe that higher critical claims about historicity, unity, and authorship of Daniel lead inevitably to an impoverished treatment of the book’s rich themes and messages. Did certain higher critical views lead the author to say that Daniel’s book “so spectacularly failed to predict an eschatological culmination of history” (28)? For Newsom, the events reported in Daniel 1 are qualified as “fictitious” (39). The place of Daniel in the history of Neo-Babylon and his existence in general is sadly never stated with certainty. What is one to make of the statement from page 83 that “There is no messianic expectation in the book of Daniel itself?” Then, there is a claim that the story of Daniel 5 is “historical fiction that uses sometimes distorted memories of events” (163). In dealing with the puzzle of Darius the Mede in history, the author does not mention the thesis that behind this royal title may be none other but Cyrus the Great as argued by some scholars.

A certain amount of overconfidence leads the author to make some subjective statements such as that Belshazzar’s sin was “idolatry, not sacrilege” (162), or that Belshazzar was “not related to Nebuchadnezzar” (163). In the beginning of the commentary the same speculative type of approach is applied to the origin of Daniel’s book. On page 22 Newsom says: “Since the profession of scribe was often hereditary, it is possible that the Danielic scribes who composed chs. 8-12 during the Antiochene crisis were descendants of the authors of Dan 1-6, whose families had returned to Judea.” This continues

on page 23: “The Danielic apocalypses of chs. 8-12 and the final form of ch. 7 respond from the midst of one of the most traumatic events in Jewish history, the violent persecutions of Jews by Antiochus IV and the beginning of the revolt against Antiochus by Judah the Maccabee” (23).

Finally in regard to the challenging texts from Daniel 11, the conclusion reached in this commentary is that they “purport to be prophecies but are clearly written after the occurrence of most of the events they prophesy. But they use an account of history to attempt to make real predictions” (336). When reading this statement one cannot help but wonder if this approach to Daniel can still be of any use to the reader of today. While this commentary offers some useful material for the study of Daniel (as mentioned above), it also serves as an example of how *not* to approach Daniel—with speculative views that are not in line with the claims found in the sacred texts.

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Plantinga, Alvin. *Knowledge and Christian Belief*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. 129 pp. Paperback. \$16.00.

Alvin Plantinga has taught philosophy for over fifty years, first at Wayne State University, then at Calvin College, and finally at Notre Dame. He holds honorary degrees from different universities in Europe and the United States, and he is widely regarded as the most influential Christian Philosopher alive. His works include *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, *Warranted Christian Belief*, *The Analytic Theist*, and *God, Freedom, and Evil*.

Knowledge and Christian Belief is intended as a shorter and more user-friendly version of *Warranted Christian Belief* but it is also distinguished from it by different emphases. The main thesis of the book revolves around the development and defense of a model, called the Aquinas/Calvin Model (or A/C Model). According to this model, the divinely inspired Scripture and the internal instigation of the Spirit produce faith in human beings (63). This includes belief in the great truths of Christianity. Faith then is here not contrasted with knowledge, but it is identified as a special kind of knowledge. Plantinga defines knowledge as a belief produced by properly working cognitive faculties in the right environment that are designed to successfully aim at truth (26–28). The agency of the Spirit is thus likened to other knowledge-producing faculties, such as memory or sensory perception. The only difference is that the faith-producing faculties are provided by the Holy Spirit and are not naturally found in humans (63).

Knowledge and Christian Belief starts out by describing a number of positions set forth by different influential philosophers that have the potential to defeat Christian faith. In Chapter 1 “Can We Speak and Think About God?,” Plantinga deals with Immanuel Kant and his followers, who claimed that we cannot say anything about God because we are incapable of thinking in the categories of ultimate reality. If God exists, he is among those “things