

Daniel: El Profeta Mesianico, Vol. II, by Merling Alomía.

Lima-Peru: Universidad Peruana Unión, Ediciones Theologica, 2008. Paperback. xxi + 520 pages. ISBN 978-9972-9877-4-8.

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The Roman-numbered pages cover a table of contents and a list of abbreviations. The body of the book consists of twelve chapters dealing respectively with each of the twelve chapters of the book of Daniel. These are followed by a conclusion, three appendices, a list of “illustrations” (consisting of diagrams, pictures and maps), a bibliography with sources in English, German, Spanish, French and Portuguese, an index of biblical references (including apocryphal sources and ancient authors) and an index of authors referred to. Virtually every page has at least one short summary in the margin next to the main text, so that one can get a quick, general overview of the whole book by just reading these.

This book offers a clear picture of the way a Seventh Day Adventist Old Testament scholar approaches the biblical book of Daniel, and even the whole Christian Bible, rather than being an academic commentary, although there are frequent referrals to such commentaries, most of them, however, predating the middle of the twentieth century. The focus in this second volume is on Daniel’s prophecies, whereas the first was on Daniel as a man well-loved by God. In fact, Daniel is singled out as the most messianic, and therefore the most important, book in the Old Testament (although the Aramaic and Hebrew texts never use this term), and its second, seventh and eighth chapters are taken as the core of the book, suggesting a particular message that Alomía has intentionally selected from the biblical book.

The work is a systematic guidance through the book of Daniel for interested lay Christians, linking it to the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews and Revelations. This is done in numbered paragraphs, the main points of which are not always easy to distinguish as they often overlap, sometimes repeating the same issues in a seemingly incessant way. This readership is supported by drawn pictures to render the relatively

easy text even more visual, giving the impression that the book is actually aimed at school children. This popular nature of the book is also reflected in the flashy and theatrical front and back pages.

In addition, the book also serves as a polemical, sometimes sermon-like confrontation with both the Roman Catholic Church which is regarded as the Antichrist and the New Age movement. The European Union is furthermore condemned to failure as no unity of human power is said to be able to survive. Many pages are therefore spent on the interpretation of Daniel as “prophetic history” read into secular and church history, which form a substantial part of this book which raises the expectation through its title to deal (only) with the book of Daniel. Defending historical-criticism seems to be misleading, and for readers who want pure and strict exegesis the work will turn out to be disappointing.

This is done through constant and sometimes complex and confusing calculations derived from the symbolism in Daniel applied to selected events to prove the accuracy of these prophecies. The author consequently claims the origin of the book to be in the sixth century B.C.E., differing from the current, dominant view of academics that the book was composed in the second century B.C.E. after the events it is said to refer to, even when it is not meant to be historical either.

The frequent ortho- and typographic errors in all languages used and the absence from the book of the last diagram in the list, 34, leave the impression that the work has been composed in a careless way and raise the question whether this applies to the content as well. This doubt cast on its credibility is reinforced by claims such as the one on page 56 where the verb, *הִרְאָה*, is said to have a connotation of divine vision, whereas it is, in fact, a non-technical word with a wide range of applications. Incidentally, the footnote linked to this claim, 83, is completely irrelevant and deals with something else. The inconsistent interpretation of the “little horn” presented on page 268 is not convincing and raises the suspicion if the matching of Daniel’s visions to historic dates, events and eras by Alomía is forced and artificial, and have their roots in sources or agendas other than the biblical text.

The 296 footnotes are often unnecessary interruptions to reading the main text, repeating, sometimes verbatim (for instance in footnote 105 on page 66) what has already been stated in the main text. The same is also true of the marginal summaries which repeat a core sentence from the main text. This makes the text cumbersome and probably has a didactic purpose.

The work unintentionally shows, however, how the book of Daniel can be used to justify historical judgements and that recognising its symbolic statements in known events remains risky and even arbitrary. Such interpretations reveal more about the interpreters than about the book of Daniel.