

BOOK REVIEWS

Coats, George W., and Long, Burke O., eds. *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977. xvi + 190 pp. \$13.50.

This collection of essays by ten distinguished OT scholars is briefly introduced by a preface from the editors in which they point out among other things that there is a "new context" for biblical authority produced by changes in society and the historical-critical method of biblical research. "Ironically, the fruits of scholarly labors have contributed about as much toward making scriptural authority problematic as have any large social changes" (p. x). The end result of the application of the historical-critical method is that the notion of a canon as a unified revelation and the religious authority based upon it is said to be "inherently arbitrary, intolerably narrow, and untimely" (ibid.). A reaction to this negative situation from a NT scholar has recently been published (G. Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* [St. Louis: Concordia Press, 1977]), and the volume under discussion presents a number of recent trends to find meaning in the OT without giving up the critical method that has so significantly contributed to the problem itself.

A variety of historical questions is raised in the first five essays: B.O. Long, "Prophetic Authority as Social Reality" (pp. 3-20), James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy" (pp. 21-41), R. E. Clements, "Patterns in the Prophetic Canon" (pp. 42-55), G. M. Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of a Canon" (pp. 56-70), P. R. Ackroyd, "A Judgment Narrative between Kings and Chronicles? An Approach to Amos 7: 9-17" (pp. 71-87). In this reviewer's opinion, the essays by Sanders and Clements deserve particular attention, because they point to impulses toward the canonization of the prophetic writings of the OT.

Three essays acknowledge the current dissolution of the authority of the OT, but seek to employ or reject current notions of making the OT again normative for modern man: G. W. Coats, "The King's Loyal Opposition: Obedience and Authority in Exodus 32-34" (pp. 91-109), P. D. Hanson, "The Theological Significance of Contradiction within the Book of Covenant" (pp. 110-131), W. S. Turner, "The Renewed Authority of Old Testament Wisdom for Contemporary Faith" (pp. 132-147). Coats and Hanson are diametrically opposed in their use of notions of process theology. Turner reveals the contemporary shift to wisdom writings as touching modern man's experience.

The last two essays are written from the perspective of the full validity of the final form of the canonical text of the OT and thus are most important for the matter of the authority of the Bible: B. W. Anderson, "A Stylistic Study of the Priestly Creation Story" (pp. 148-162), R. P. Knierim, "'I Will Not Cause It to Return' in Amos 1 and 2" (pp. 163-175).

Canon and Authority is a volume that will be read with interest by all concerned with the questions of OT canon and biblical authority. The essays do not reveal a consensus. Neither do they treat the problem of a "canon within the canon" nor do they discuss the early or late fixing of the OT canon (see now the penetrating study by S. Z. Leiman, *Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* [Hamden, Conn.: Shoestring Press, 1976]). They do reveal concern for the stages in the formation of the canon and some of them point to canonical hermeneutics.

Andrews University

GERHARD F. HASEL