

worthy contribution relating particularly to the Sea Peoples and offers a fresh historical-critical discussion replete with interesting observations and insights devoted to this formative period in biblical history.

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Peckham, John C. *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. xiii + 295 pp. Softcover. USD 35.00.

John C. Peckham, associate professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, has written a seminal work on canonical theology and the theological method of *Sola Scriptura*. It is a thought-provoking book and perhaps the most significant study to be written on *Sola Scriptura* and theological method in recent times.

Peckham tackles some difficult, yet fundamentally important, issues in doing theology and he does so with theological acumen and great skill. Peckham provides helpful guidance through a maze of different positions and theological approaches, old and new. In ten chapters, he covers the basic ground to lay out the parameters for an approach to canonical theology that has the potential to significantly stimulate the current theological debate.

In the first four chapters, Peckham competently addresses the crucial issue of canon versus community. What is the role of the canon and how is the canon established? Which has priority? The canon or the community? Peckham points out the crucial difference between what he calls “intrinsic canon” and “community approaches” and pinpoints significant implications that arise from the fundamentally different approaches. He unashamedly calls for the priority of the canon over community. Peckham proposes that “divinely appointed books are intrinsically canonical independent of extrinsic recognition” (5). The author identifies three criteria for books that possess some traits that assist in recognizing them as canonical: those “books must be (a) divinely commissioned as prophetic and/or apostolic, (b) consistent with past ‘canonical’ revelation, and (c) self-authenticating” (32). These criteria are difficult to sustain historically or scientifically and are ultimately based on faith. But they are congruent with the biblical account. Hence, he proceeds to list canonical indicators for this claim (22–47) and then addresses some historical questions related to the origin of the canon and extracanonical literature (48–68). Since no community is monolithic, Peckham repeatedly raises questions such as, “What qualifies a legitimate community to serve as arbiter of the canon and which community is adequate to determine the canon?” (55–60 and passim). These questions deserve to be taken seriously. In similar manner, the rule of faith and its value as interpretative authority is discussed in chapter five. With keen reasoning, Peckham points out the inadequacy of any communitarian approaches, even though they recently have become *en vogue*.

In chapter six, “*Sola Scriptura: reduction ad absurdum?*” Peckham provides one of the best argued cases for the Protestant stance of *sola scriptura* in recent times. He skillfully interacts with critics of the *sola scriptura* principle and demonstrates that *sola scriptura* is neither reductionistic (it is not *solo scriptura*), nor self-defeating or viciously circular.

Peckham then attempts to put the *sola scriptura* principle to the test by tackling the theology of the Trinity in a case study (ch. 7) and by investigating the nature of divine love from a canonical perspective (ch. 10). Here he draws heavily on his substantial earlier research in his acclaimed books *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015) and *The Concept of Divine Love in the Context of the God-World Relationship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014). Chapters eight and nine deal with the relationship of canonical scripture to Systematic Theology and the nature of Theopathic Language, respectively.

Peckham has given us a gold mine to explore. Throughout the book, his commitment to the divine authority of the canonical books is evident, but is never naively argued. Instead, his informed and well reasoned, canonical-biblical approach has the potential to significantly move the theological discussion forward and produce insights into the biblical-canonical text that will go far beyond confessional boundaries and traditional concepts. Whether one agrees with all his conclusions and proposals or not, no serious student of the canonical scriptures who is interested in pursuing a biblical-canonical theology will be able to do so without the proposals provided in this book. It might well become a classic that initiates a new school of thought and opens a way to a new theological ecumenism that is solely founded and grounded on the text of the biblical canon alone.

Peckham also calls for and demonstrates a pleasant humbleness in theological thinking (see his discussion 218–222), something that is strangely absent among many theologians. His own proposal is “not offered as the final word,” but remains “open to challenge and revision” (257). In light of this openness, I submit the following questions and observations, hoping thereby to advance the discussion, sharpen the focus, and reflect more deeply on several issues that need clarification.

Peckham’s claim that “divinely appointed books are intrinsically canonical independent of extrinsic recognition” (5, and passim throughout the book) raises some important questions about the canon and the text of the canonical books. Peckham claims that “not merely any prophecy is ‘canonical’ but only that which is covenantal witness to God’s redemptive event/revelation” (34n50). What is the difference between a “covenantal prophet” and an “ordinary prophet”? He claims that the process of revelation and inspiration is necessary for canonicity, but is not sufficient to explain it (cf. 38–39). For him, there are other factors that play a part in this process, such as consistency with past canonical revelation and the self-authentication of the canonical books. If later canonical books need to be consistent with earlier canonical revelation, how is progress in divine revelation and “new light” in later canonical literature related to a systematic ordering of the

canonical content? Is there a “*sensus plenior*”? Does a genuinely new element exist in later canonical books? How is this element harmonized with earlier revelation? Is the self-authentication of the canonical books the same for everyone? Is the self-affirmation of the canon limited to a minimum number of books? And if so, why? If God guided the process of the canon, why did God not guide every Christian in the same way? Why do different traditions recognize a different number of books as canonical? Peckham points out that it is no coincidence “that there is a common canonical core of sixty-six books that is accepted by nearly all self-identifying Christians” (41). And he aptly recognizes that this raises “a question for further study, relating as it does to God’s providence, etc.” (40n73). Indeed, these questions need to be studied in more depth and await further clarification.

Furthermore, what is the relationship, as Peckham sees it, between the canonical text of Scripture given in the sixty-six books of the Bible and different textual traditions that exist of those books? If the text of the canon is decisive, how are different textual variants related to the canonical text, and which canonical reading and variant should be preferred over another? This issue, too, awaits future exploration.

His remark that “Christ is also the center of the canon” (24) needs further clarification and differentiation in order not to fall into a Christ-centered criticism of the canon, or a canon within the canon, something that Peckham does not seem to support.

There is another area where Peckham seems to have overstated some conclusions or makes statements that appear to be counterproductive. He is certainly correct that there is no total neutrality in the process of interpretation and that “explicating the meaning in the text is an imperfect, complex, and continual process” (212). There is no presuppositionless interpretation of Scripture (cf. Frank M. Hasel, “Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid, Biblical Research Institute Studies 1 [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005], 27–46). But to claim that “*sola scriptura* does not entail any claim to provide ‘doctrinal certitude’ or ‘unity of doctrine’” (162) seems to overstate the point and misses the fact that the canonical Scriptures are the very basis of any theological unity. If Scripture would not lead us into some theological unity, worshipping the one true God and following Him faithfully would morph into meaninglessness. Theological unity can only be achieved by Scripture alone. Why should that not be possible? Why did Jesus Christ and the apostles constantly refer to Scripture which, for them, was the basis for creating a community that was based on theological faithfulness and formed a visible entity (ecclesiology)? If we deny this fact, we rob Scripture of the ability to unite theologically, to create community, and to correct heresy. If the canonical text indeed holds priority, as Peckham correctly states (214), and if “there is a determinate meaning that the author intended to convey in the text” (211), then it should be possible, in principle, to arrive at a unified theology. To claim that “theological method will not lead to theological unity” (192) is unfortunate and seems to jeopardize his

otherwise excellent conclusions. It is often claimed that Scripture alone does not settle controversial debates like the Trinity, but it is not a deficiency or insufficiency of Scripture that prohibits theological unity. It is rather the diversity of traditions and thinking that challenges theological unity, and that needs to be brought into harmony with Scripture.

Peckham is strong in analyzing the deficiencies of various positions on the Trinity. He correctly points out that a communitarian approach and community resources are utterly inadequate in settling the Trinity debates, but he does not provide a thorough biblical argument in support of a canonical understanding of the Trinity. Perhaps this was beyond the scope of the book, but it would be helpful to explore that in the future.

In line with the above mentioned aspects, Peckham seems to envision a minimal, albeit not minimalistic, approach to canonical interpretation (219) that holds only what can be derived with confidence, “keeping in mind that certainty (interpretative and otherwise) is beyond our ken” (219). It would have been helpful if he could have been more specific in mentioning what can be derived with confidence. Unfortunately, he does not. Is certainty really out of the canonical picture? Does canonical theology evade certainty of faith? If all our findings are subject to revision, why can he be certain that his reading of the nature of the love of God is not transitory and subject to (substantial and significant) revision?

One also wonders whether “the discernible, demonstrable and defensible” canonical data that Peckham envisions is data that is shared by all, or simply by a majority, and then by whom? Peckham thinks that there might be “fewer conclusions held with confidence than one might have initially hoped” (219). But aren’t there more commonalities among believers than Peckham might be willing to admit?

One aspect that is strangely missing in Peckham’s otherwise excellent research is the question of the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of canonization, as well as in the process of self-attestation of the canonical books. This, too, might be worthwhile to explore further. There are a few books on the canon which would have added more insights into Peckham’s thesis and even strengthened some of his conclusions that are strangely missing. Among them are books by Robert Vasholz, *The Old Testament Canon in the Old Testament Church: The Internal Rationale for Old Testament Canonicity* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990); Franz Stuhlhofer, *Der Gebrauch der Bibel von Jesus bis Euseb: Eine statistische Untersuchung zur Kanongeschichte* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1988); Theodor Zahn, *Grundriß der Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, 3rd ed. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1985); Ingo Baldermann et al., eds., *Zum Problem des biblischen Kanons*, *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988); Alexander Sand, *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Band I, Faszikel 3a (1. Teil) Kanon—von den Anfängen bis zum Fragmentum Muratorianum* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1974). On the issue of *sola scriptura*, the following books are missing: James Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism: Biblical Foundations for Evangelical Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), which, despite its title, does address

similar issues; John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Philipsburg, NJ: P& R Publishing, 2010); John Whiteford, *Sola Scriptura: An Orthodox Analysis of the Cornerstone of Reformation Theology* (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 1996); Don Kistler, ed., *Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2009); Hans Heinrich Schmid and Joachim Mehlhausen, eds., *Sola Scriptura: das reformatorische Schriftprinzip in der säkularen Welt* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1991); Richard Ziegert, ed., *Die Zukunft des Schriftprinzips* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994); and Heinrich Karpp, *Schrift, Geist und Wort Gottes: Geltung und Wirkung der Bibel in der Geschichte der Kirche—von der Alten Kirche bis zum Ausgang der Reformationszeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992).

Despite these minor shortcomings, Peckham succeeds at engaging the ongoing scholarly conversation on theological method. While he describes what a thoroughgoing biblical-canonical theology might actually look like, and how it should be structured, it still is only hinted at and awaits detailed canonical exegesis and further exploration.

Peckham's greatest weakness is, at the same time, his greatest strength: "Because Scripture is afforded theological primacy by divine commission alone, there is no witness adequate to ground this primacy except God, whom we come to know through the Scriptures" (149n30). While an intrinsic canonicity cannot be proven scientifically, it is internally coherent as a concept and is unashamedly *sola fide* and, as such, fully *sola gratia*, i.e., utterly dependent upon God's grace and divine sovereignty. As such, Peckham is thoroughly Protestant in what he affirms from the canonical Scriptures and deserves a wide hearing and positive reception.

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Pierce, Ronald W. *Daniel*. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015. xvi + 213 pp. Hardcover. USD 29.99.

Ronald W. Pierce, professor of biblical and theological studies at Talbot School of Theology (La Mirada, CA), has engaged in a "close reading of Daniel" with his students at Biola University for "nearly four decades" (v). In the present volume, he shares the insights that he gained along the way, while aiming to interpret "Daniel on its own terms" (1). Pierce divides each chapter of the book of Daniel into one to three manageable sections, which add up to twenty-nine units. The author also includes four excurses labeled "Additional Insights." Together with the introduction, these sections increase the book to thirty-four chapters. The standard chapters in this volume have the same length—six pages—in accordance with the series's format. Chapters devoted to the text itself are divided into three segments: (a) Understanding the Text; (b) Teaching the Text; and (c) Illustrating the Text. Chapters also contain at least two textboxes which highlight "The Big Idea" and "Key Themes" in the selected passage.

In the introduction, Pierce affirms a sixth-century BCE date for the composition of the book of Daniel, while conceding that "internal and