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John Peckham, *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), pp. xiii + 295. \$35.00.

This is a collection of essays. For the most part repetition is kept to a minimum, yet after 250 pages one misses a development of a case. The target is the ‘community approach’ to theology and therein, in the looseness of terminology, lies a problem. Is it an ‘approach’ to the question of biblical authority? Or to how to interpret the Bible? Or how to approach theology from the biblical texts? One can have the highest *sola scriptura* view of the Bible, but one still has to interpret the thing.

The Catholic Church is represented as monolithic, as though there were no checks and balances, and as though there is *de facto* universal agreement in matter of faith and morals (*Lumen Gentium*, 12, is quoted on p. 77), and also as if that were the same thing as authoritative uniformity in matters of biblical interpretation. Very few Catholics are quoted. There is a three-page section on (Eastern) Orthodox interpretation that relies on one article by Stylianopoulos. There are also problems with the appropriation of the categories of Tradition I and Tradition II, which, as Oberman presented them, are not ‘views’ of scripture wherein Tradition I (tradition is complementary to the Bible) is good, but Tradition II (tradition is a supplementary authority) is bad; rather they are two different things: one that leads from scripture to doctrine and the other that (at least to begin with) grounds practices.

There are further issues with the way the author represents those of his opponents, who think ‘the canon is merely a human construct’ (p. 14). But how many ‘communitarians’ actually hold that? Might they rather insist that the church is an agent, but guided by divine grace? Why insist that the categories of divine and human agency be conceived in zero-sum terms? Or (to take one view he favours) in what biblical sense is the canon actually a treaty document? Then there is the odd shaky claim that ‘Christ is also the center of the canon in that (broadly speaking) he appears to ratify the OT and commission the NT’ (p. 24, emphasis added). Well, did he actually do the latter?

A central issue is the paradigm of prophetic critique that this book favours. According to Peckham, the Bible has to be over against the people of God: ‘If the Church provides the normative interpretation of Scripture, however, it is difficult to see how Scripture functions as the “indisputable norm” in any way that could “challenge the church”’ (p. 79). To which one wants to retort: well, parts of it do. It’s right to preserve the many pages where the

Bible condemns sin and drives one towards Christ and his kingdom, but one has to remember that biblical texts serve other functions too.

It is useful to have spelled out the debt that 'theological interpretation of scripture' owes to postliberalism, although surely Lindbeck did not believe that ethical truth was 'various', as Peckham seems to think (p. 105). I'm not quite sure why Radical Orthodoxy gets the space it does, as there is nothing in the text on what its proponents think about the Bible.

I agree that the communitarian turn is worth questioning and probing. I also agree that the 'rule of faith' has become a bit of a shibboleth. However Peckham has not taken enough care in reading Irenaeus, for whom 'tradition' was neither the New Testament nor the doctrine by which the Bible must be read, but teachings of a practical sort. Irenaeus was attacking those who would change the face from that of the king to that of a fox, but does the Bible as a whole really bear the face of a king without some kind of interpretative form to order it? As the author admits, what the rule of faith meant for Irenaeus is indeed unclear, not least because he never used that phrase (he speaks of the 'rule of truth', and even that rarely).

Peckham seems to share the hope of those, like D. H. Williams, who think that a rule of faith or a creed can unite interpretation by wanting instead to posit 'the biblical canon' as the rule of faith. However, simply to affirm that doesn't achieve much. Much time is spent reporting the opinions of others (large quotations of Kevin Vanhoozer in particular) before concluding: 'canonical theological method seeks the maximum achievable correspondence to the text' (p. 210). Well, which text? Any particular verse? One book? The oeuvre of Paul? The co-inherence of several texts on the same topic? Peckham rightly avers that scriptural language is analogical and anthropopathic in its accommodation, but one need not hold to canonical theology to hold that.

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James J. S. Foster (ed.), *Thomas Reid on Religion* (Exeter: Imprint Academic 2017), pp. vi + 229. £ 14.95/\$29.90.

Best known to posterity as the founder of Scottish common sense philosophy, Thomas Reid (1710–96) was ordained by the Church of Scotland in 1731 and served as parish minister in New Machar from 1737 until his appointment as Regent at King's College in 1751. He left Aberdeen for Glasgow in 1764 (the year in which his first book, *An Inquiry Into the Human*