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Peckham, John C. *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. xii + 336 pp. Paperback US\$ 29.99.

John C. Peckham is a professor of theology and Christian philosophy at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He has written several books, including *God with Us, Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil, The Love of God: A Canonical Model, and Why We Pray*. He was honored with Educator of the Year awards in 2012 at Southwestern and in 2016 at Andrews University, followed by an Excellence in Scholarship award in 2018 from Andrews University.

In his book, Peckham discusses the divine attributes of God as suggested by the title. Here, he unpacks important aspects that have been in discussion throughout the history of Christian theology. In chapter 1, Peckham summarizes how God has been understood, primarily from two perspectives: The Scriptures and Philosophers. According to him, the Scriptures portray God as the one who creates, sustains, and dwells with man. This dwelling is understood through the covenantal relationship God has with His people, which is later termed “Covenantal theism.” Conversely, the philosophers approach God from the perspectives of classical theism, process theology, and Greek philosophy. These views commonly depict God as purely transcendent and timeless, with minimal or no connection to the created order. He further advocates Canonical theology, meaning, to read and understand the Bible as “one book” that testifies to the overarching theme of “Christ’s

Spirit-borne commissioned testimony to himself" (pp. 29–30). Also, he aims to integrate biblical exegesis and systematic theology under the rule of Scripture to fulfill two fundamental goals: systematic coherence and canonical correspondence. This chapter sets the stages for the whole book.

In chapter 2, Peckham explores three key attributes of God: Aseity, immutability, and impassibility. These can be examined through three pivotal questions: Does God change? Does God experience emotions? Does God genuinely care about humanity? He depicts God as one who suffers alongside humanity, asserting that God is voluntarily passible—willfully experiencing emotions while maintaining His aseity. God relates to the world through divine love that is covenantal (reciprocal), volitional (freely given), evaluative (delighted or displeased), and emotional (relationally affected emotions). Peckham is convinced that Scripture affirms God's changelessness (Ps 117:2; Mal 3:6–7; John 1:5) in certain aspects while also acknowledging that God changes relationally (2 Sam 24:25; Ezek 22:30), what he terms as "qualified immutability and qualified passibility" (p. 65).

In chapter 3, the author examines divine presence and its connection to omnipresence and eternity. He highlights differing perspectives on divine omnipresence, such as panentheism (the world is in God) and divine incorporeality (God has no physical body). However, for Peckham, the Scriptures record ample evidence of divine presence in a particular location and everywhere. While God cannot be contained in a specific location (1 Kgs 8:27), He also reveals His presence in a special manner (Gen 18:33), either through "theophanies" or "bodily" form. He further points out that omnipresence does not imply uniformity of presence. God's special presence is foundational to His covenant with His people. He quotes Horton, who calls it God's special "covenantal-judicial presence," a recurring theme from Genesis to Revelation.

Also, Peckham cautions the readers against the misconception that God can be contained or encompassed within creation, any physical form, or location. Hence, he concludes that God's omnipresence might be *nonderivative* (present to all creation) and special divine presence might be *derivative* (not necessarily uniform but dwells with humans in a special manner, pp. 88–89). Although timelessness is commonly associated with the attribute of God, Peckham argues that there is no explicit biblical warrant to attest that God is timeless. Still, instead, the Scriptures depict He is everlastingly eternal and experiences temporal succession (Pss 90:2; 102:24). This is further identified in the incarnation of Christ as evidence of divine temporality. Hence, Peckham provides a "biblical" model of God and time by affirming

that God is eternal (Rom 16:26) and He is not influenced by time, nor does He relate to it in the same way that humans do (Ps 90:4).

In chapters 4 and 5, Peckham discusses God's omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, foreknowledge, and providence. He rejects the "Open-Theism view" and affirms that God's omniscience includes exhaustive definite foreknowledge, knowing "the end from the beginning" (Isa 46:10) and "everything in between" (Ps 139:16). This might be understood as God knowing not only future events but also the decisions of human beings that lead to them. Notably, the foreknowledge of God does not affect or determine man's free will. Additionally, God is omnipotent, meaning He is Sovereign and possesses the power to initiate, sustain, and accomplish any task without relying on external force. However, Peckham also highlights that God cannot perform actions that contradict His character. He cannot be tempted by evil (Jas 1:13) and cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). To summarize this attribute of God, Peckham aptly states that "God sovereignly governs all of creation such that God's *remedial* will always come to pass, but much of what occurs in creation is *not* what God actually prefers" (p. 174).

In chapters 6 and 7, Peckham presents God as omnibenevolent and explores the problem of evil through the lens of Divine Triunity. Peckham asserts that love is the foundation of God's governance, through which freedom is expressed. To clarify this concept, he introduces the "Cosmic Conflict Motif" and the "Rules of Engagement" to emphasize the approach God uses to eliminate sin, in contrast to Satan's deceptive schemes and temptations. Although God has the power to eliminate sin instantly, He demonstrates His unconditional love even as He passes judgment on the wicked. Peckham further provides biblical warrant for the core Trinity doctrine by stating it in four tenets, namely: (1) There is one and only one God (Exod 8:10; Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29); (2) There is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16–17; 28:19); (3) The Three Persons of the Trinity are distinct from one another (Exod 23:21; John 14:26; Acts 5:3–4; Rom 8:26–27); and (4) The three Persons of the Trinity are fully divine and thus coequal and coeternal (1 Chr 17:20, John 1:1–3). In the final chapter, Peckham explains how God relates with humanity through His divine attributes, a concept he refers to as "Covenantal Theism." By this, he means that God engages in a reciprocal love relationship with mankind. This covenantal theism affirms that God is "dynamically relational and covenantal" (p. 253). To address the problem of evil, God sent His Son to offer salvation to all who accept Him, a solution Peckham refers to as "theodicy of love."

Peckham provides a comprehensive understanding of divine attributes by asking prominent biblical, philosophical, and theological questions. The book can be commended for many reasons. First, he considers Scripture as his ultimate authority. This was consistent with the claims of early church fathers and later protestant reformers. He meticulously presents his arguments with extensive biblical evidence. Following this, he examines various perspectives on certain concepts and critiques them from a biblical standpoint. In addition to providing biblical evidence, he supports his arguments with references to respected authors who have written on the subject, such as John Walton, Gerhard von Rad, Linda Zagzebski, and N. T. Wright. Second, the table of contents and outline are well-structured, making it easy to navigate through the author's arguments. Third, his emphasis on systematic coherence in doctrinal development is notable. This is helpful to ensure that theological concepts are consistent and interrelated. Fourth, the author concludes the book by giving prominence to the Trinity and covenant. This is pivotal for two reasons: (1) Divine attributes are rightly understood and clarified from the Trinitarian perspective, particularly omnibenevolence; and (2) The divine attributes are not merely transcendent but are intimately connected to humanity through the covenant relationship. Lastly, Peckham provides several models and motifs that are drawn from Scripture to support his arguments, among them are "Qualified Immutability and Qualified Passibility," "Divine Omnipresence and Eternity," and "Cosmic Conflict Motif."

While Peckham offers a wealth of insight through his compelling arguments, there are a few areas that warrant critical examination. Given that the doctrine of God's attributes has been extensively explored throughout Church history, including a discussion of a historical perspective would have enriched the topic. Additionally, given the numerous views, models, and theological terms presented by the author, a "Definition of Terms" section would be beneficial. Such a section would aid the reader in following the author's arguments more effectively throughout the book. In his discussion of the incarnation, Peckham rejects some aspects of the classical view without explicitly acknowledging this. This omission could leave readers uncertain about his position on the matter. Overall, this book is well-written and is carefully argued from Scripture. I would recommend this book to students and professors of systematic theology and those interested in the

Doctrine of God. It can further be used as a textbook to have an overview of the divine attributes of God.

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