

<Obituary>

Pekka Pitkänen* – Bold and Modest Expositor of Scripture



On July 29th, 2024 during the general session of the section “Ritual in the Biblical World” Dr. Giancarlo Voellmy gave memorial words on Dr. Pekka Pitkänen to the participants, and a moment of silence in his memory was held. Dr. Giancarlo Voellmy read the following words:

Dr. Pekka Pitkänen is known to the interested public mainly by his work on Joshua and Numbers. He surprised by taking unconventional stances, e.g., reading those books as «settler colonial» documents. Yet, by applying such recent, «postcolonial», theoretical framework to biblical texts, his aim was to point out the authentic character of the biblical accounts.

Dr. Pitkänen never acted as a militant apologetic. His reasoning was sober, according to his Finnish roots. He held an engineering degree in Applied Physics and Computer Science from Teknillinen korkeakoulu-Tekniska högskolan, Espoo, Finland. In South Korea, where he met his wife Sowon, he earned a MTh at Chongshin University in 1997, followed by a PhD in Religious Studies at the University of Gloucestershire (Central sanctuary and the centralization of worship in ancient Israel, 2000; published by Gorgias Press, 2004).

* Dr. Pitkänen served as an international editor for *Canon&Culture* from Fall 2017 until his passing.

In his *Commentary on Numbers* (Routledge, 2018), Dr. Pitkänen does not seek to straighten out the biblical text by applying literary criticism. He rather chooses «post-Wellhausenian» theoretical perspectives from ritual or postcolonial studies to shed light on overlooked aspects of coherence in the – admittedly – rather disparate matters of the book. For theological outlook («Meaning»), he reads the passages also in their canonical, semiotic contexts.

While preparing the sessions on «Ritual in the Biblical World» for the 2022 SBL International meeting, it became clear, Pekka would not be able to participate for health reasons. After severe brain surgery, he and his wife Sowon moved temporarily to his homeland, Finland. Only when reaching out to Pekka for the preparations to this year's SBL meeting in Amsterdam, in late 2023, I received the sad news, he had died on August 19th, 2023.

May the work of his hands be of lasting endurance (Psalm 90,17)!

Dr. theol. Giancarlo Voellmy,
Linden, Switzerland.