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Clark H. Pinnock: Conservative and Contemporary

Dr Price, who is now Professor of Religion at Mount Olive College in North Carolina, has previously contributed to our pages on 'Inerrant the Wind: The Troubled House of North American Evangelicals' (EQ 55, July 1983, 129–44). In that essay he made brief mention of the views of C. H. Pinnock, and he now turns to a fuller consideration of the theological development of this significant and influential theologian.

As everyone now recognizes, Evangelical theology in North America is in the midst of an exciting ferment. And just as the previous theological generation produced formative thinkers like Carl F. H. Henry, Bernard Ramm, and E. J. Carnall to take the baton from Warfield, Hodge, and Machen, so today new voices have arisen to lead Evangelical theology into perhaps its most challenging era yet. Perhaps it is too early to spot Carl F. H. Henry's successor as the new dean of Evangelical theologians, but it would not be surprising to see the name of Clark H. Pinnock rise to the top. As the movement has grown and developed in the last decades, Pinnock has been there in the thick of it, a participant-observer who has come to see both that the voice of Evangelical Christianity needs urgently to be sounded in the modern world, and that it has little chance of being heard and heeded unless it speaks in the idiom and to the concerns of 'modernity'. It will be our object here to plot out Pinnock's theological development, and to critique it where this may help us to understand it better. For to understand Pinnock's theology may well be to understand the evangelical theology of the coming generation.

Period 1: Defending Biblical Authority

Clark Pinnock's theological development may readily be divided into three periods, the first of which began, naturally enough, with his Evangelical conversion.

> I was raised in a liberal Baptist church. It had forgotten both the truth and the reality of God pretty much. It was a bore. Fortunately, I had a Bible-believing grandma and a like-minded Sunday School teacher at the church who led me to know Christ. I received further help from Youth for Christ in Toronto and the Canadian Keswick Bible Conference one summer . . . So I was introduced to God in the context of the fundamentalist portraiture of the Gospel. It alerted me to the fact that there are a lot of modernists out there who had vacated the house of authority and sold our birthright for a mess of relevant pottage. I sensed early on that this was wrong-headed and dangerous, and never really came to see it differently.[1]

Indeed he never did. This experience contains the germ that would grow into Pinnock's whole system of theology. Though there have been many twists and turns along the way, the trajectory was already crystal clear.

At age 23, Pinnock completed his BA with honors in Ancient Near East Studies at the University of Toronto and shortly began the PhD program at Manchester University, studying New Testament under Evangelical New Testament scholar and apologist F. F. Bruce. Completing his dissertation on Pauline pneumatology in 1963, Pinnock continued his association with Bruce for two years as an Assistant Lecturer in New Testament Studies. During the same period he was in close correspondence with apologist Francis A. Schaeffer and worked for a while at Schaeffer's retreat for troubled and doubting intellectual youth at L'Abri in Huemoz, Switzerland. The influence of both men on the content and style of Pinnock's own subsequent apologetics and theology was great. In 1965, Pinnock accepted a position teaching New Testament at New Orleans Theological Seminary, a Southern Baptist school. There he began in earnest his career as a shaper of American Evangelical thought.

Pinnock decided early on that his mission was to promote the soundness and success of evangelism by defending the Evangelical message from unbelieving skepticism, Christian synergism, and theological relativism. In his early booklet *Evangelism and Truth*, his agenda is set forth concisely:

> Evangelism is the declaration of a specific *message*. It is not holding meetings, or getting results. It is communication of the good news. Therefore, *evangelism and truth are inseparable*. Biblical evangelism requires divine truth; divine truth requires revelation in language; revelation in language requires the deposit of infallible

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[1] Clark H. Pinnock's testimony included in 'I Was a Teenage Fundamentalist', *The Wittenburg Door* No. 70, December 1982/January 1983, 18.

> Scripture. As soon as confidence is weakened in the integrity of our source material, evangelism is weakened to a corresponding degree.[2]

In the same work, he explains that Calvinism is just as foundational to biblical evangelism, since any other (i.e., Arminism) view would imply that sinners could in some measure deserve to be saved or aid in their own salvation, and in neither case would salvation be by grace alone.[3]

So the first priority of the early Pinnock is the gospel of Evangelical conversion, and his goal is to do his best to promote an accurate presentation of it and to gain a fair hearing for it. Here we see the beginning of Pinnock's concern with biblical inerrancy as a safeguard for religious epistemology, for apologetics as the necessary phase of 'pre-evangelism', and for polemics against both liberal theologians who dissolve and obscure the saving message in the 'acid bath' of relativism and non-inerrantist Evangelicals who have let down the barriers against such relativism. We must briefly examine Pinnock's early work in these areas.

Two early books, *Set Forth Your Case* (1967) and *Live Now, Brother!* (published in 1972 and reprinted in 1976 as *Are There Any Answers?*) were dedicated to clearing away intellectual obstacles to conversion. In both books Schaeffer's influence is everywhere obvious. Everywhere the reader turns, Schaefferisms confront him. The gist of the Schaefferian apologetic is that humanism, with its focus on human ability, and scientism, with its 'naturalistic presuppositions', have combined to spawn a mechanistic worldview with no room for God, the only possible source for authentic meaning and value. Humanity is seen as the futile, chance product of blind and irrational forces; our only possible fate is final destruction, and our only consistent attitude must be nihilism and despair. All humanists can do when they reach the bring of this chasm of nihilism is to flinch and make a desperate 'upper-story leap' into an irrational and imaginary zone of meaning, transcending despair by an arbitrary act of will. By contrast, the Christian gospel answers all the questions and supplies an epistemological and metaphysical basis for meaning and value. Believers can breathe easy.

Thus far, Schaeffer. But Pinnock goes on to supplement this 'cultural apologetics' with a more traditional 'evidentialist' defense derived almost as completely from John Warwick Montgomery. It would be wonderful to believe that the Christian

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[2] Clark H. Pinnock, *Evangelism and Truth* (Tigerville, SC: Jewel Books, 1969), 18–19.

[3] Ibid., 28–29.

answer were true, but what makes belief in it any more than another irrational 'upper-story leap'? 'The beauty of the gospel in the avalanche of competing religious claims is precisely the possibility we have of checking it out historically and factually.'[4]

In setting forth his case Pinnock maintains that the four gospels are unimpeachable sources written by eyewitnesses or their secretaries. From these accurate sources we can know that Jesus 'time and again' claimed both to be God incarnate and that his own resurrection would vindicate that assertion.[5] The resurrection, in turn, is vastly more probable than the alternatives (e.g., the Swoon Theory, the Wrong Tomb Theory, the Hallucination Theory) and so must be accepted as the only sufficient explanation for the rise of Christianity and the dynamic transformation of the hitherto-cowardly disciples. Once we know this, we know that Jesus was in fact divine and thus an infallible oracle. Jesus endorsed the Old Testament as the inerrant Word of God and endorsed the New Testament in advance as more of the same by investing the apostles with his own authority and promising them the Holy Spirit. Thus the Bible is added to Jesus as another infallible oracle.

Having arrived at this point, Pinnock, with Montgomery, thinks to have established a plausible basis for believing in an inerrant Bible and the Christian truth-claims that arise from it. So no one need hesitate to accept the gospel for fear of having to make a sacrifice of the intellect.

If the historical evidence for the resurrection makes Christian faith plausible, it also makes belief in inerrancy inevitable. Pinnock proceeds from general apologetics to inerrancy apologetics in two books, *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* (given as a lecture in 1966, published in 1967) and the much more substantial *Biblical Revelation—The Foundation of Christian Theology* (1971). In these two volumes, Pinnock follows the traditional Warfield line. Though we arrive at faith in Christ by an inductive approach to the evidence, once we have done so, we must adopt Christ's own view of biblical inerrancy, and henceforward treat the relevant evidence deductively. Biblical texts may appear to be in error or in contradiction to one another, but these "phenomena of Scripture" are misleading. It may be that further study will clear them up, or we may assume textual corruption or harmonize one passage with the other by seeking in it some less obvious but more orthodox interpretation.

The implications of all this for biblical criticism are clear.

[4] Clark H. Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 67.
[5] Ibid., 86.

'Complete critical freedom is purchased at the price of Christian faith . . .'[6] Much historical criticism is seen to employ 'naturalistic methodology' and 'anti-supernatural bias'.[7]

Pinnock knows that some well-meaning scholars seek to reconcile the presence of biblical errors with the fact of divine inspiration, but he is none too sympathetic. Some, like E. J. Carnell, have suggested that the inspired text might contain errors taken over by the writer from fallible sources. (Carnell had in mind especially the inflated figures of the Chronicler.) But Pinnock, aware that this would make the Bible a mere inerrant record of errors, does not see why the divine-human confluence of inspiration would not have included the careful choosing and checking of sources.[8]

The reader of Pinnock's early works on inerrancy may be surprised to note his condemnation of 'the fundamentalist tendency to overbelief in the matter of inspiration'.[9] Given the argument thus far, what could this possibly mean? There is no need, Pinnock assures us, to join Harry Rimmer and other fundamentalists in twisting the text to make it seem to anticipate modern science. No, let us admit that the biblical writers expressed themselves in prescientific terms. But this does not compromise inerrancy. 'Infallibility is obviously restricted to the intended assertions of Scripture.'[10] 'Such (pre-scientific) references are *incidental* to the teachings intended. We need to ask what is being *asserted* in this passage.'[11]

Pinnock is also willing to recognize that certain literary forms and genres of a less than strictly factual nature may be employed in the Bible, and that when they are, inerrancy is not imperilled. For instance, on this basis, an inerrantist may question 'whether the serpent really spoke, because it cannot be established without doubt that the writer intends simple literalism'.[12] 'Figurative, symbolic, and even mythological language is employed in Scripture as the subject matter and literary form require.'[13] Yet some 'deceitful' literary forms are ruled out: legend, midrash, etiology, and pseudonymity. 'Fragment hypotheses' whereby

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[6] Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation, The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 178.

[7] *Set Forth Your Case*, 66.

[8] *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* (n.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1975), 23.

[9] *Biblical Revelation*, 15; *A Defense*, 15.

[10] *A Defense*, 13.

[11] *Biblical Revelation*, 72.

[12] Ibid., 76.

[13] *A Defense*, 21.

works like Ephesians, the Pastorals, or II Peter may have been worked up from the notes of Paul or Peter by a disciple would not be out of the question, but Pinnock dismisses them as 'wholly speculative'.[14]

As we will see, it is quite true that Pinnock will move beyond his early thinking on inerrancy, but it usually goes unnoticed that even in his early period, he has a rather more flexible approach to the difficulties in the text than did Warfield, or Pinnock's own mentor Schaeffer. But Pinnock was at one with Warfield in warning that to deny the doctrine of inerrancy would be to shred the seamless garment of biblical teaching. This all-or-nothing stance explains why the early Pinnock regards inerrancy as theologically central. 'Denial of it brings into serious jeopardy the entire epistemological base of Christianity.'[15] Why? 'Without the propositional revelation in Scripture, theology is an impossible endeavor.'[16]

One observation needs to be made *re* Pinnock's whole apologetic approach. Though motivated by the same gospel zeal that makes him express his faith in a Calvinistic framework, as we have seen, his apologetics is distinctly un-Calvinistic, as he himself seems aware. Pinnock notes that the Warfield aproach to inerrancy apologetics is rejected by Cornelius Van Til because it appeals to unregenerate sinners as if anything short of the miraculous electing grace of God could open their eyes to the truth of the Bible. It is 'an Arminian view of the defense of Scripture'.[17] Pinnock sides with Warfield against Van Til because he fears that the a priorist 'believe it or not' approach of Van Til is too arbitrary and is no real apologetics at all.

Yet it *is* an Arminian view of apologetics, as can be seen from Pinnock's own *Set Forth Your Case*. In this work Pinnock repeatedly claims that sinners are so captivated by bad faith and 'the noetic effects of the Fall' that they cannot fairly consider evidence unless the miraculous intervention of the Spirit enables them to do so.[18] He sees apologetics, in fact, as dispelling pseudo-problems manufactured not by the evidence but by 'naturalistic presuppositions' and 'anti-supernaturalist biases'. But if this is the case, why address the difficulties at all? Why not simply demand that the unbeliever drop the pretense and repent? Then the smokescreen of pseudo-problems should dissipate by itself. But

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[14] *Biblical Revelation*, 191.
[15] *A Defense*, 32.
[16] *Set Forth Your Case*, 100.
[17] *Biblical Revelation*, 38.
[18] *Set Forth Your Case*, 122, for example.

Pinnock's whole mode of argumentation tacitly assumes that his skeptical readers are interested in the truth, can evaluate arguments, and might even grudgingly acknowledge the strength of the Christian case. The sinner *can* do something toward his own salvation, as Arminians claim: he can of himself listen and consider the gospel. We will see that this perhaps small variation from the Calvinistic framework is only the first step in what will eventually amount to a wholesale repudiation of Calvinism by Pinnock, one that will have dramatic implications for his whole theology.

Once the early Pinnock has completed his apologetical stronghold, he sallies forth from it in polemical sorties against liberal theologians and compromising, non-inerrantist Evangelicals. Pinnock holds out no hope for liberal and neo-orthodox theologians. He sees them simply as tragic examples of theology gone off course and shipwrecked. He tells the sad tale of their rejection of biblical authority and consequent slide into relativism and anthropocentric, solipsistic speculation. Like Roman Catholics at the time of the Reformation, and like Paul's Galatian opponents, liberal theologians have substituted a human religion for the divine Word, good views for good news.[19] He points to them and exhorts his fellow Bible-believers, 'Remember Lot's wife!' If we yield up inerrancy, there is no guarantee we will not end up like Macquarrie or Ogden or Kaufman or Altizer. Just as their talk of demythologized symbols and 'supra-historical' acts of God is meaningless, a non-inerrantist Evangelicalism would be starting down the same path: 'their position would be meaningless, for it would imply that belief in infallibility would not be affected by errors in Scripture.'[20]

In his earliest writings, Pinnock does more than exhort, however. In *A New Reformation* (1968), he urges, even demands, that the denominational hierarchy of the Southern Baptist Convention move to purge the seminaries of non-inerrantist professors.[21] Later, Pinnock will moderate this zeal, once he comes to see that the issues are not so clear-cut.

All items on Pinnock's agenda in this first period proceed from and cohere in one central concern: the possibility of Evangelical

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[19] The parallel he sees between the loss of the divine Word in liberal theology and the loss of the gospel of grace in Galatian legalism occurs again and again throughout Pinnock's writing (e.g., *Biblical Revelation*, 108). It also explains why his only volume of actual biblical exegesis is *Truth on Fire: The Message of Galatians*.

[20] *Biblical Revelation*, 195, 196.

[21] Of course, such a move is now underway.

conversion and piety is endangered by the loss of inerrancy, which leads to relativistic liberal theology. Liberal theology robs the church of its only 'valid knowledge of redemption'.[22] 'Doubts and perplexities have discouraged the faithful' because of this theology.[23] With liberal theology 'there is absolutely no way to challenge the non-Christian to receive Jesus Christ'.[24] It becomes 'impossible to defend the gospel' in apologetics.[25] 'At stake is the very possibility of knowing and preaching the gospel.'[26] In short, liberal theology will produce more churches like the one in which Pinnock grew up, *despite* whose ministry Pinnock managed to hear the gospel and be converted. Thus Pinnock's whole theological and apologetical structure is built on the foundation of piety. The best view of biblical authority is that which safeguards and promotes evangelism. The right theology is that which is consistent with Evangelical conversion and the bliss of spiritual certainty. Even his Calvinism is based on the logic of the experience of grace and prayer for the salvation of souls.

None of this may be bad, but it is certainly ironic, because it implies that Pinnock's own theology is profoundly, even fundamentally, *experience-centred.* And this would seem to smack of the very liberal subjectivity so vilified in his early works. 'Both the older liberalism and the newer existential theologies are basically pietistic, experience theologies.'[27] Note the similarity of Pinnock's own theology to that of Schleiermacher as Pinnock himself later describes it:

> Schleiermacher, the father of modern theology, reared as a pietist, connected revelation to the experiences of the heart. We experience the feeling of absolute dependence, and this gives rise to the idea of God on whom we depend . . . The main point is that revelation . . . leads to doctrinal formulations out of religious communion.[28]

Is it not clear that for Pinnock, too, piety is the criterion for proper theology? His own theological epistemology, then, is more 'liberal' than he imagines.

Period II: Obeying Biblical Authority

Various experiences in the 1960s prompted Clark Pinnock into a

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[22] Ibid., 104.
[23] Ibid., 12.
[24] *Set Forth Your Case*, 28.
[25] *A Defense*, 8.
[26] *Biblical Revelation*, 104.
[27] Ibid., 131.

period of rethinking and intellectual ferment. Papers and books resulted from it, and they cover, roughly, the early and mid-70s from 1971 to about 1977. In this period some items are added to his theological agenda, and his thinking about others changes radically. As each focus of his thought changes, it has a noticeable impact on most of the others. This is perhaps the mark of a truly systematic thinker.

In a recent volume, Pinnock recounts a spiritual experience which, like his conversion, was to shape his theological concerns profoundly. 'It happened to me in 1967 in New Orleans. I was a young theologian, heavily into intellectual reflection as I am now, but feeling a lack of reality and power which comes from an unbalanced life. Although Paul plainly says we should use both mind and spirit, theologians generally exercise only the mind.' One night after church, Pinnock and his wife Dorothy were invited to a home fellowship and prayer meeting. 'As the meeting began, it was obvious that God was very real and much loved by these people.' The enthusiastic testimonies and fervent, believing prayers convinced Pinnock that 'These people were alive unto God, as Paul says.' The result: 'I was touched by God that night. I glimpsed the dimension of the Spirit which the New Testament describes but is so often absent in churches today. The Bible came alive to me in this and other respects. Being a Christian became an exciting adventure instead of a drag. I was filled with the Spirit.'[29]

Pinnock began to interpret this experience biblically and theologically. In previous writings, Pinnock had expressed only suspicion of the Charismatic Renewal, as in *Set Forth Your Case*, published the very year of his own charismatic experience, where he faults glossolalia as simply one more irrational 'upper-story leap.'[30] In *Biblical Revelation* written three years later, Pinnock is still wary, though in light of his experience, less negative.[31]

Pinnock goes on in his writings of this second period to endorse charismatic spirituality, defending Charismatics and Pentecostals from the charge that their 'Tongues Movement' is unbiblical. Pinnock suggests that the controversial phrase 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' ought not to be the cause for disputing, since (1) it really refers more to an experience than to a (new) doctrine, and (2) the use of the phrase in Acts is broader than non-Pentecostals

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[28] *The Scripture Principle*, 21–22.

[29] Clark H. Pinnock, *The Untapped Power of Sheer Christianity* (Burlington, Ontario: Welch Publishing Company, Inc., 1985), 51.

[30] *Set Forth Your Case*, 44.

[31] *Biblical Revelation*, 132.

have been willing to admit, referring not exclusively to initial regeneration but also to subsequent 'fillings' with the Spirit.

Pinnock then leaves the defensive posture for attack. He argues that mainstream Evangelicals have been quenching the Spirit, and that they dare not ignore the more spectacular charismatic gifts like tongues and prophecy since these gifts are perfectly *biblical.* We see here evidence of a shift that characterizes Pinnock's theological widening and deepening in this second period: having defended the authority of Scripture formally, he now presses home the actual material stipulations of the authoritative Bible. What right have 'Bible-believing' Evangelicals to embrace familiar gifts like teaching and administration yet reject and spurn stranger gifts like tongues and revelations?[32]

This new emphasis on charismatic spirituality will influence other areas, as we will see, but it is also important to note that we see here the beginnings of Pinnock's new role as an agent of reconciliation among Evangelicals, as he seeks to weld them into a united front to present to the outside world of secular humanists and theological liberals.

A second new area to which Pinnock directs his attention is that of political and social concerns. Again, it is seen as a question of the material authority of the Bible. 'Evangelicals have in recent years been rather inclined to *defend* the gospel than *practice* it'.[33] Of course Pinnock here describes his own transition, which occurred, apparently, during his tenure at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School from 1969 to 1974. While there, he participated in the discussions which led to the founding of *Post-American/ Sojourners*. Before, he had regarded radical politics ('A strident cry for political revolution') as a misguided attempt to correct a problem curable in truth only by widespread conversion, the traditional apolitical fundamentalist line.[34] In fact, in the first period, Pinnock was advocating an agenda identical to that of today's 'New Christian Right', opposing 'secular humanism', homosexuality, the teaching of evolution as propaganda for atheism, etc., and supporting the establishment of private Christian schools and prayer in public schools.[35]

What a difference in this second period! As one of the

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[32] Clark H. Pinnock, 'An Evangelical Theology of the Charismatic Movement', mimeographed mailing to Theological Students Fellowship, May 1975.

[33] Clark H. Pinnock, 'A Call for the Liberation of North American Christians' in Carl E. Armerding (ed.), *Evangelicals and Liberation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1979), 128.

[34] Clark H. Pinnock, *Are There Any Answers?* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1976), 17, 18.

[35] *Set Forth Your Case*, 58, 54–55.

contributing editors of *Sojourners*, he has come to embrace pacifism and to reject capitalism and the right to private property.[36] He would actually vote for Communist candidates, seeing in Maoist revolutionaries true partisans for the Kingdom of God.[37] Yet, despite all this, Pinnock never came to see political action as an excuse to neglect evangelism. 'We are most definitely in favor of quantitative evangelization and are opposed to its being substituted by or changed into the struggle for social justice.'[38] Neither is he willing to allow the demands of radical discipleship to harden into a new legalism which would obscure the gospel of Galatians. Rather, he argues, radical obedience to Jesus should be seen precisely as an outgrowth of salvation by grace alone.[39] Having become a political radical, Pinnock still has no desire to become one of those theological liberals creating their own speculative man-centred gospels.

Far from being a denial of the biblical authority he had argued for so vociferously, his newly radical stance stems directly from the authority of Scripture. 'It is not even possible to be doctrinally sound without being ethically responsive because the Word of God clearly demands costly discipleship of us . . . I am socially concerned because I am a biblical Christian, not in spite of it.'[40] He bemoans how easily 'Bible-believing Christians' set aside and explain away the radical teachings of Jesus when it begins to hurt.[41]

But if socially conservative Evangelicals reject biblical authority materially, Pinnock is still alive to the danger of radical theologians rejecting it formally. Against the Liberation theologians, Pinnock warns his readers not to make the Bible's liberation themes a canon within the canon in order to deny other aspects of biblical teaching, or to elevate Marxist social analysis to a 'second source of revelation'.[42]

During the 70s many young Evangelicals were becoming interested in either the Charismatic Movement or *Sojourners*-type radicalism, but few were involved in both. Pinnock, of course,

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[36] Clark H. Pinnock, 'An Evangelical Theology of Human Liberation' in *Sojourners*, supplement to the January 1977 issue, Vol. 6, No. 1, 50.

[37] *Sheer Christianity*, 64.

[38] 'A Call for the Liberation of North American Christians', 134.

[39] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Second Mile Lifestyle', *Sojourners*, June 1977, Vol. 6, No. 6, 31.

[40] Clark H. Pinnock, 'A Call for Triangular Christianity', an address given at the annual Pastors' Conference of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1979, 9, 11.

[41] 'An Evangelical Theology of Human Liberation', 49.

[42] Ibid., 48.

was one of those few. And here again we can see his concern to mediate and reconcile. In his 'The Acts Connection' he shows how any genuine outpouring of the Spirit must result in a social radicalism such as we find in Acts 4:32–35.[43]

Pinnock, along with the rest of the 'radical Evangelicals', basically opted for an Anabaptist understanding of discipleship, ethics, and the state. In doing so, Pinnock had taken another step away from the Calvinist worldview. He rejected not only the historic Calvinist belief in the state as a Christian common-wealth with its 'Christ the Transformer of Culture' model, but also specific Calvinist doctrines, such as perseverence. His new view of radical discipleship made him suspicious of the 'cheap notion of eternal security' with which lukewarm American Evangelicals love to comfort themselves.[44] Also, his embracing of the Pauline doctrine of the 'Principalities and Powers' (as politically interpreted by Hendrikus Berkhof and John Howard Yoder) inclined him less toward a Calvinist doctrine of individual depravity and more in the direction of an environmentalist view of sin.[45]

For these and other reasons, in this period Pinnock completely repudiates Calvinism and becomes a full-fledged Arminian. In large measure, this theological revolution is yet another result of taking the actual texts of the infallible Bible with appropriate seriousness. For, at least as Pinnock reads it, the Bible speaks loudly and clearly of a genuinely contingent and open-ended history and of really free human will, neither being under the constraints of divine predestination. For Pinnock, the Bible clearly speaks of God's will to save all humanity, not just some imagined supralapsarian elect. There is no sense in sacrificing the law of excluded middle (something his mentor Francis Schaeffer warned him against sufficiently)[46] to hold both free will and complete determinism together. Pinnock sees Calvinism capturing the dynamic and compassionate God of the Bible in alien categories of bloodless metaphysical abstraction.[47]

What of his former objections to synergism? He now sees that to reach out with the empty hands of faith to grasp God's grace is no meritorious act whereby one might think to earn God's

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[43] Ibid., 49.

[44] Ibid., 50.

[45] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History' in Clark H. Pinnock (ed.), *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), 104.

[46] Schaeffer untiringly condemned neo-orthodox 'dialectical' theologians for denying 'antithetical logic'.

[47] 'Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History', 96–97.

grace.[48] But what of the experience of piety, wherein one knows all is of God and no credit is due oneself? Be that as it may, experience now inclines Pinnock in a different direction, because equally undeniable is the intuitive knowledge that we are free. 'When faced with a decision, we *know* with a subjective certainty that we can take one of the two or more alternatives before us.'[49] Note again how Pinnock, like the subjectivistic liberals he criticizes, uses human consciousness as a source of theological knowledge. Similarly, Arminianism is to be preferred and Calvinism to be rejected because the former is now deemed more consistent with the assurance of salvation and the practice of evangelism than is the latter. 'On (the doctrine of free will) hangs, we believe, the validity of the universal offer of the gospel, and the possibility of Christian assurance. If we do not know that God loves all sinners, we do not know that he loves us, and we do not know that he loves those to whom we take the gospel.'[50] Ironically, it is these very factors which once made Calvinism attractive to Pinnock: Calvinism was the consistent implication of pious prayer and God's sovereign offer of grace. Now, on second thought, 'It is hard to see on the basis of [Calvinism] how the gospel can be preached at all.'[51] In a later work, Pinnock writes of Calvinism, 'This is the kind of theology that makes atheists.'[52] Theology, again, is a function of piety.

Several articles devoted to apologetics appeared in this period. A series of them appearing in *His* magazine from October 1976 through April 1977 were collected, revised, and expanded as *Reason Enough, A Case for the Christian Faith* (1980). Both presuppositionalist and evidentialist arguments return in *Reason Enough*, essentially unchanged. What is new in *Reason Enough* is the addition of emphases garnered from Pinnock's own growth during the second period. For example we see his Arminianism in his stress that God gives us freedom to believe or not to believe and his willingness to grant that at least some doubts are genuine, not the result of bad faith or total depravity.

There are separate chapters on how the religious experiences of humanity (Christian and non-Christian) count as evidence for God's existence. In the early period, Pinnock would never have

[48] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Introduction', Clark H. Pinnock (ed.), *Grace Unlimited*, 15.

[49] 'Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History', 96.

[50] 'Introduction', 11.

[51] Ibid., 12.

[52] *The Scripture Principle*, 102.

[53] Clark H. Pinnock, *Reason Enough, A Case for the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980), 18, 107.

said this; under Montgomery's influence, he liked to denigrate subjective religious experiences as indistinguishable from mere indigestion unless one had an inerrant Bible to distinguish true from false.[54] We may assume it is Pinnock's discovery of charismatic spirituality that led him to this change. Similarly, his *Sojourners* experience suggests to him the propriety of a chapter on the social achievements of Christianity throughout history as an argument for faith. At the same time, his commitment to radical discipleship leads Pinnock to warn the reader to count the cost. Are you now convinced Christianity is true? Not so fast! Are you prepared for the life of costly discipleship conversion will entail?

In 'Inspiration and Authority: A Truce Proposal for the Evangelicals', Pinnock focuses on the question of biblical inerrancy. He admits that the inerrancy doctrine stems more from the needs of apologetics than from the logic of inspiration and objects that one cannot properly derive theology from the needs of apologetics. 'That in a nutshell is what liberal theology has always done.'[55] We have suggested that Pinnock himself has always done the same, and at least in the case of inerrancy, he has finally come to see it this way himself. Commenting on his earliest writings on this subject, he admits that 'A few years ago, I claimed that the Bible taught total inerrancy because I hoped that it did — I wanted it to. How else would it be possible to maintain a firm stand against religious liberalism unless one held firmly to total inerrancy?'[56]

Perhaps through his work in the Theological Students Fellowship, Pinnock has become aware that the inerrancy doctrine, instead of preserving and protecting Evangelical faith, may actually endanger it! Pinnock, for example, commends Stephen T. Davis' anti-inerrancy polemic *The Debate About the Bible* for its 'pastoral service to those who are troubled with marginal difficulties in the Bible but are deeply committed to the evangelical faith. The theory of perfect errorlessness when pressed can leave such persons stranded with nothing to hold on to if a single point however minute stands in any doubt . . . Finding nowhere to stand outside strict inerrancy, they cease to stand at all'[57] and bolt to liberal theology. So strict inerrancy having proved impractical, it's back to the drawing board.

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[54] *Set Forth Your Case*, 73.

[55] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Inspiration and Authority: A Truce Proposal', *The Other Side*, May/June 1976, 63.

[56] *The Scripture Principle*, 58.

[57] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Foreword' to Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate About the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1977), 12.

We have already seen that even in the earliest period Pinnock by no means held to the strictest possible version of inerrancy and took pains to distance himself from those who did. He was already drawing a strategic line, like Charles Hodge, between the assumptions and the assertions of the biblical writer and admitting that ancient literary genres could accommodate pre-scientific, non-literal, and even mythic language. In his second period, Pinnock makes no fundamental shift, but he does loosen up his stance a bit, accepting some ideas he had rejected previously. For instance, he now sees how his understanding of only the writer's 'intended assertion' being inerrant could accommodate Carnell's suggestion that biblical writers may have copied erroneous source material without bothering (or knowing) to correct it. 'It is entirely proper to ask with Carnell what the purpose of the Chronicler was in recording the public genealogies.'[58] He admits Dewey M. Beegle's point that it is meaningless to appeal to Jesus' belief in biblical infallibility and then to claim that only the original autograph copies were error-free, since Jesus made no such distinction, regarding the then available copies as infallible.[59] Most surprising of all, he now admits that if one qualifies inerrancy according to intended assertions, 'one could fairly say that the Bible *contains* errors but *teaches* none.'[60] Recall how in *Biblical Revelation* he said that any Evangelical 'position would be meaningless' if it implied 'that belief in infallibility would not be affected by errors in Scripture'.[61]

Despite these shifts to the left, Pinnock remains quite hesitant to accept many of the conclusions of what he calls 'negative biblical criticism'. For instance he thinks M. Kuitert has gone too far in accepting the view that the Acts of Elisha in II Kings are a cycle of legends.[62]

Pinnock is also careful to define his position over against other Evangelicals who have sought to modify inerrancy but have gone farther than he. For instance he rejects Daniel P. Fuller's suggestion that inerrancy be restricted to 'revelational' matters, leaving historical and scientific assertions up for grabs. Pinnock sees this as an unwarrantable and arbitrary move, taking the 'macropurpose' of Scripture (to instruct in matters of salvation,

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[58] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Limited Inerrancy: A Critical Appraisal and Constructive Alternative' in John Warwick Montgomery (ed.), *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 148; contrast *A Defense*, 23.

[59] 'Inspiration and Authority: A Truce Proposal', 62.

[60] Clark H. Pinnock, 'The Inerrancy Debate Among the Evangelicals', *Theology, News, and Notes, Fuller Seminary*, 1976, 13.

[61] *Biblical Revelation*, 195–196.

[62] 'Inspiration and Authority: A Truce Proposal', 64.

faith, and practice) and setting it up as a canon within the canon. Pinnock prefers his own view since it at least allows that all *assertions* on whatever subject are inerrant, though incidental assumptions may not be.[63] (In fact Pinnock's view is not *so* different from Fuller's since it is of course troublesome *factual*, not *theological*, assumptions that Pinnock wishes to exempt from inerrancy.) He also resists the attempt of Paul K. Jewett and Virginia Mollenkott to use the main thrust of Pauline teaching on women attested in Galatians 3:28 in order to bracket his chauvinistic statements in the Pastoral Epistles as residual rabbinism. This, too, Pinnock sees as a canon within the canon, and a manipulation of Scripture according to human whim.[64]

In a pair of essays, in *Christianity Today* and *Theology Today*, Pinnock speculates what shape a new admittedly non-inerrantist Evangelical understanding of inspiration might take. He admits that the sort of qualified, nuanced form of inerrantism he espouses may be little more than a half-way house on the way to such a position.[65] Clearly, Pinnock is charting the prospects for his own further development, which we will take up in our third section.

In his early writings, Pinnock saw inerrancy as all-important as a bulwark against the devastating tide of theological liberalism. If he has become more critical of inerrancy in this second period, he has also become a bit less hostile toward theological liberals. He still warns theological students to beware of liberalism. To be attracted to it would be the seduction of the devil, and to embrace it would be an apostasy and damnation! The only way to avoid this is to combine study with an active piety.[66] He is still talking about the Evangelical obligation to 'refute' and 'answer' liberal formulations such as Process Theology. But there is a new note. Pinnock realizes there is much to learn from liberal and neo-orthodox theology after all. He comes to be an enthusiastic partisan of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg, seeing both men as more like Daniel Fuller—essentially orthodox, but with a few defective views here and there. And even other, less acceptable non-Evangelicals he now acknowledges to be 'some of the most creative Christian thinkers the church has ever known'.[67]

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[63] 'Limited Inerrancy', 148–149.

[64] 'The Inerrancy Debate Among the Evangelicals', 13.

[65] Clark H. Pinnock, 'An Evangelical Theology: Conservative and Contemporary', *Christianity Today*, January 1979, 72–73.

[66] Clark H. Pinnock, 'The Study of Theology: A Guide for Evangelicals', *TSF News and Reviews*, March 1980, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1–2.

[67] *Sheer Christianity*, 91.

In fact in the second period, we find Pinnock's own theological vocabulary almost bare of the once-familiar jargon of Schaeffer and Montgomery. These are replaced by concepts borrowed from Schubert Ogden, John A. T. Robinson, David Tracy, Langdon Gilkey, and others. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Gordon Kaufman's 'historicist' theology in his new, non-Calvinist view of the historical process.

The clue to his ambivalent attitude is to be found in his 1971 essay 'Prospects for Systematic Theology'. There he suggests the need for an 'evangelical alternative' to 'the present theological ferment' that 'will be clearly seen to be, not preliberal (as if we wished to pretend that nothing of importance had happened in theology since Luther or Calvin!), but postliberal, a proposal which self-consciously turns away from the deficiencies of liberal thought and aligns itself in a fresh way with the historic faith of the church'.[68] Prior to this essay which opens his second period, Pinnock's approach to theology *had* in effect been to 'pretend' that nothing important (nothing good, anyway) had happened since the Reformation. But once he decided to listen to his opponents, he did find that much had happened that needed to be taken into account.

The influence on Pinnock (at admittedly secondary points) by the likes of Pannenberg, Gilkey, Küng and Ogden is a sign of the 'postliberal' character of his emerging theology. But more significant is the fact that in the second period he no longer makes biblical inerrancy (even the modified or nuanced variety) the watershed between 'Christianity and Liberalism' (Machen). Pinnock suggests a new shibboleth. 'Classical Christians' whether Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, or Eastern Orthodox, are united in accepting certain 'didactic thought models'[69] contained in Scripture as binding upon Christians. They agree on 'the time-honoured assumption that the concepts of Christian revelation were normative categories whose truth was binding upon Christian thinkers.'[70] These concepts would include the personality of God, the temporal fall of humanity, the saving merit of the death of Jesus, his bodily resurrection, and his second coming. In other words, classical Christians believe 'there is rational truth-content

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[68] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Prospects for Systematic Theology', in Clark H. Pinnock and David F. Wells, *Toward a Theology for the Future* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971), 96.

[69] 'An Evangelical Theology: Conservative and Contemporary', 24.

[70] Clark H. Pinnock, 'The Nature and Extent of the Modernist Impulse at McMaster University, 1887–1927', a paper given at An International Symposium on Baptists in Canada, 1979, 3.

in revelation, and not merely existentially significant symbols.'[71] On the other side are theological liberals like Bultmann, Tillich, Gilkey, Kaufman, and Tracy, who employ a hermeneutic of demythologizing or deliteralizing and so dissolve the factual realities underlying the symbols.

This new criterion for orthodoxy represents an important strategic shift for Pinnock. He is no longer in a position to offer his doctrine of inspiration as the criterion for dividing the orthodox sheep from the modernist goats because his nuanced doctrine of inerrancy by itself would not prevent anyone from sliding over into the Bultmannian camp. Pinnock has always faulted Bultmann's existentialist hermeneutic whereby the resurrection preaching may impact authentic existence even if the resurrection did not actually happen. Pinnock protests, 'Before a redemptive fact can be existentially meaningful, it must first be a fact.'[72] Yet his own willingness to accept a biblical writer's intended assertion without his factual assumptions seems to be the same procedure on a smaller scale. This view of 'inerrancy' could open the door to Bultmann, and Pinnock seems to be uneasily aware of this irony. So instead of strict inerrancy (which he has come to reject) or nuanced inerrancy (which would not logically prohibit demythologizing), he sets forth normative Scriptural 'didactic thought models' or 'concepts' or 'categories'. The doctrine of Scripture no longer has to play the role of Atlas, upholding the whole weight of orthodoxy on its sagging shoulders.

As the references to Bultmann and demythologizing might imply, the single greatest hurdle in the path of Pinnock's postliberal reconstruction is biblical criticism. So far he has been unwilling to deal seriously with it. In his early writings he saw higher criticism as simply an unbelieving attack on Scripture, producing 'pseudo-problems' with its 'anti-supernatural bias'. He glibly dismissed form-criticism and the JEDP hypothesis of the Pentateuch. Even in the second period, he seemed to feel that the worst problem inerrancy has to face is the presence of individual difficulties and inaccuracies here and there. Granted, he comes to believe strict inerrantism is not even up to such a mild challenge, but he never seems to glimpse the magnitude of the challenge posed to any Evangelical view of Scripture by the historical method. Of course, Pinnock does finally wrestle with biblical criticism, and this struggle ushers in the third major period of his theological development.

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[71] 'The Study of Theology: A Guide for Evangelicals', 3.
[72] *The Scripture Principle*, 94.

Period III: Rethinking Biblical Authority

The centerpiece of Clark Pinnock's 'postliberal' theology is a new understanding of Scripture for 'post-critical believers'.[73] This new view of inspiration was anticipated in a 1980 paper "The Inspiration and Interpretation of the Bible" and set forth full-blown in *This Treasure in Earthen Vessels* (a draft written in 1981) and *The Scripture Principle* (1984), the second being a completely rewritten version of the first, really a second book on the same themes.

Pinnock admits that in an age of biblical criticism, the traditional Hodge-Warfield doctrine of 'divine-human confluence' will not pass muster. With its double-think claim that every word was chosen both by God and by the human writers, the theory is in effect no different from the older dictation view. The older view at least had the merit of being coherent, however implausible it might seem, but the 'confluence' view is self-contradictory and makes no better sense of the phenomena of the text.

Perhaps it is time for a fresh reexamination of the Bible's claims for itself. If it does in fact teach either dictation or confluence, we are in trouble if we wish to be critically honest with the text. But if it does not, we may dismiss the pseudo-problems over which Evangelical apologists have for so long exercised themselves. It is time for a truly inductive theology of inspiration 'from below'.[74]

In his 1963 anti-inerrancy polemic *The Inspiration of Scripture*, Dewey M. Beegle suggested that the Bible's claims for its own inspiration (e.g., II Timothy 3:15:16) should be defined and understood in light of the 'phenomena' of Scripture, those historical difficulties in the text uncovered by criticism. If we approached the definition of inspiration this way, reasoned Beegle, we would never wind up troubling ourselves with belief in inerrancy. The early Pinnock joined other inerrancy militants in repudiating this whole procedure. Pinnock now has more sympathy for Beegle's idea: he does not want to let an abstraction like inerrancy control our reading of the text. But he goes Beegle one better. 'The deductive tendency that would see inerrancy as a necessary corollary of inspiration works against honestly facing up to the data (even) in the case of the claims themselves . . .'[75] Perhaps even Warfield will prove to have been guilty of 'fundamentalist overbelief' in the matter of inspiration.

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[73] Ibid., 86.

[74] The parallel with recent attempts by Küng, Schillebeeckx, Berkhof, et al., to do 'Christology from below' is intentional. *The Scripture Principle*, 87.

[75] Ibid., 59.

First, Pinnock admits that it is even a bit misleading (certainly question-begging) to ask after what Scripture teaches about 'itself', as if it were known from the outset to be one united and harmonious whole in which a claim made in one text would apply to all other texts. Instead, we have to approach it text by text and face the fact that some portions of the Bible claim nothing for themselves.

He notes that the strong claims of the Hebrew Prophets were intended to apply to their spoken oracles, not (in the nature of the case) to the later written texts containing them. For the most part we know nothing of these later transcribers and compilers. We are told that Jeremiah dictated his oracles to Baruch, but even this is not said to have been inspired. So Pinnock rules out the model of inspiration that would make the biblical writers prophets with pen in hand. Texts seem to claim inspiration, when they do, in different ways. Especially in regard to the Psalms a claim for inspiration becomes a delicate business. On the whole, regarding the Old Testament, Pinnock concludes that 'Many texts express the Word of God, but some are content to perform lowlier tasks, such as giving utterance to a spiritual struggle or expressing an honest doubt.'[76]

When he comes to Jesus' view of Scripture, Pinock notes that Jesus repudiated the rabbinic view of Scripture current in his day, which in many ways resembles today's inerrancy hermeneutics. For example, Jesus rejected divorce by pitting one Pentateuchal passage against another.

Yet Pinnock does retain the standard apologetic that Jesus 'preauthenticated the New Testament canon as the Scripture of the church' when he invested the Twelve with his authority (Matthew 10:40) and promised them the guidance of the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13).[77] But he departs again from apologetical orthodoxy when he points out that the 'prophetic model' of inspiration presupposed by Warfield scarcely comports with many features of Paul's letters (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:14–16; II Timothy 4:13) or with Paul's own intentions. For often Paul reasons and appeals as if he does not want to be a legalistic master but rather a partner in dialogue or a colleague in seeking the truth. When Paul persuades and advises, it is arbitrary for a doctrine of inspiration to make him command and dictate.

What blanket statements the New Testament does seem to make about the Scripture, our Old Testament, cannot be pressed to refer to the New Testament as well; at least the writers themselves

[76] Ibid., 34.
[77] Ibid., 47.

cannot have intended any such reference. In many texts wherein New Testament writers speak of 'the word of God' (e.g., Hebrews 4:12; I Peter 1:23), they do not mean the Scriptures, but rather the gospel message (I Peter 1:25), so these texts must be left aside. II Peter 1:20–21 refers to spoken prophecy, not to written Scriptures, so it, too, must be bracketed. At last, Pinnock considers the lone witness of II Timothy 3:15–16. Surprisingly, he now agrees with Daniel P. Fuller, whom he once sought to refute at this point, that this passage authorizes us to speak only of salvific truth relating to faith and practice. It does *not* imply inerrancy on other matters.[78]

His conclusion: The Bible does not give us a doctrine of its own inspiration and authority that answers all the various questions we might like to ask. Its witness on this subject is unsystematic and somewhat fragmentary and enables us to reach important but modest conclusions.'[79]

What model of inspiration would be most appropriate given both the phenomena and the newly understood claims of Scripture? Here is Pinnock's greatest departure from his earlier thinking and from Evangelical orthodoxy. Though he does not actually use the term, it is clear that he has adopted the theory of 'concomitant inspiration' proposed by Jesuit theologians in the seventeenth century. According to this view of inspiration, God simply supervised the writers of Scripture, making sure that all went well and that the result was an adequate Scripture. Actually, the Catholic thinkers proposed that the superintending Spirit protected the writers from all error, but they qualified inerrancy in much the same way as Pinnock now does.

Pinnock sets forth his view of concomitant inspiration in statements like these : 'God did not negate the gift of freedom when he inspired the Bible but worked alongside human beings in order to achieve by wisdom and patience the goal of a Bible that expresses his will for our salvation.'[80] 'God exercises a significant but not determining influence over people writing Scripture so that the result is really their script and also what he delights in. It requires me to see inspiration more as persuasion and less as coercion.'[81] Similarly, Jacques Bonfriere had written, 'The Holy Spirit acts concomitantly, not by dictating or in

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[78] Ibid., 55.
[79] Ibid., 54.
[80] *The Scripture Principle*, 104.
[81] 'An Interview with Clark H. Pinnock', *Faith and Thought* (now *The Journal of Faith and Thought*), Fall 1984, Vol. 2, No. 2, 56.

breathing, but as one keeps an eye on another while he is writing, to keep him from slipping into errors.';[82]

Equally important is the question of literary genre. He is now willing to accept many genres he regarded as destructive and deceitful before. 'I think it is excessively deductive to declare what literary forms the Bible may or may not have in it. How are we in a position to say that?'[83] Even the presence of legend and fiction would not be tantamount to error: 'Inerrancy simply means that the Bible can be trusted in what it teaches and affirms. The inerrant truth of a parable is of course parabolic, and the inerrant truth of a fable is fabulous. If Matthew gives us some fictional midrash, then it is inerrant according to the demands of this genre. All this means is that inerrancy is relative to the intention of the text. If it could be shown that the Chronicler inflates some of the numbers he uses for his didactic purpose, he would be completely within his rights and not at variance with inerrancy.'[84]

Pinnock qualifies the inerrancy of each text's assertion in the light of the salvific/paraenetic intention of Scripture as a whole (its 'macropurpose') as we find it set forth in II Timothy 3: 15–16.[85] Again we notice a decided shift toward the position of Daniel P. Fuller, even toward that of Jack Rogers and G. C. Berkouwer who see the central gospel message of salvation as the locus of scripture infallibility. 'The authority of the Bible in faith and practice;' is the important thing, as in the Fuller Theological Seminary credo. The Bible will seem reliable enough in terms of its soteric purpose, and the perplexing features on its margins (these are almost Beegle's very words) will not strike fear into our hearts and minds.'[86]

Where Pinnock would differ from Evangelicals to the left of him hermeneutically, such as Paul K. Jewett and Virginia Mollenkott, is that while he allows Scripture's salvific macropurpose to subsume factual errors, he will not use the macropurpose to trim away apparently aberrant assertions vis-a-vis *faith and practice*, as when Jewett uses Galatians 3:28 to lop off I Timothy 2:12. All texts' salvific/didactic assertions must be upheld. And this is to say that Pinnock further qualifies the inerrancy of assertions *canonically*.

What does Pinnock suggest we do when we encounter

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[82] James T. Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 47.

[83] Ibid., 55.

[84] *The Scripture Principle*, 78.

[85] Ibid., 121.

[86] Ibid., 104.

divergent theological views in the text? 'I would not want to deny that belief in inspiration supplies a hermeneutical guideline for me and makes me tend to deny the reality of apparent contradictions.'[87] Why? Because as in his earliest period, he feels that 'if contradiction exists our doctrine of Scripture is overthrown.'[88] Yet Pinnock claims to have finished with deductive text-twisting. Instead of harmonizing the divergences, explaining them *away*, pretending as fundamentalists have always done, that they do not differ, he attempts to explain why they do in fact differ. 'There is something to be learned from their *not* fitting neatly.'[89] Apparently following the lead of James D. G. Dunn, Pinnock is willing to 'look for the underlying unity beneath every case of surface contradictions'.[90]

Another way of understanding diversity within the canon is to arrange the different writers (or different works by one writer) along a time-line of progressive revelation. This is taken for granted in the case of the Old Testament. Applied to the New Testament, it would allow us to see that, e.g., Mark's Christology is not the same as John's more advanced incarnational doctrine because not as much of the truth had yet been revealed to Mark. So Mark's Christology is true as far as it goes, or to borrow a phrase from Francis Schaeffer, it is true but not exhaustively true. John's Christology includes Mark's; Mark's points forward to John's, just as Isaiah 7:14, which originally predicted the birth of a child in Isaiah's lifetime, points forward to a secondary fulfillment in Jesus' birth centuries later. We might then speak of a kind of canonical *sensus plenior*, whereby each text has its own meaning according to authorial intent, plus another sense charismatically superimposed on it by virtue of its presence alongside other texts in a canon. The Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament; the individual New Testament books are fulfilled in the New Testament canon.

What hermeneutic results from Pinnock's new understanding of inspiration and biblical diversity? 'God's Word is most likely to be heard when we take the historical context of texts seriously and when we heed the inner canonical dialogue. We are likely to miss it when we pick out isolated texts without regard for their setting and look at them all as of equal significance, to be harmonized into some rational system of our own making.'[91] We

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[87] Ibid., 73.
[88] Ibid., 147.
[89] Ibid., 185–186.
[90] Ibid., 186.
[91] Ibid., 195.

would, however, be bound by the 'normative concepts' and 'didactic thought models' yielded by the final stage of revelation in the canon, e.g., John's Christology, Paul's soteriology.

When it comes to decision-making and applying the Bible ethically and ecclesiastically, and otherwise practically, the Bible is not to be viewed as a legalistic instruction manual, but rather as a place to stand and listen for God's voice. We examine the rich diversity of biblical views on an issue, e.g., Paul's praise of celibacy in I Corinthians 7 versus the Song of Solomon's celebration of sex. We seek the Spirit's guidance to decide which biblical text is most appropriate, always keeping the other(s) in mind for perspective's sake.

As before, in this third period, Pinnock has given his attention to theological matters besides Scripture. Pinnock has come to see the force of Process theologians' critique of classical theism. He has come to agree with them that the God of the philosophers (abstract, unchanging, atemporal, impassive) is simply not the God of the Bible (living, acting, involved in history, loving). But Process theism's finite and changing God is in his own way no less abstract and unbiblical. So what is Pinnock's third alternative? 'A biblical, and therefore neo-classical theism'. Pinnock wants to take the authoritative Scripture at its word when it describes God as a living, loving, hating, repenting person who makes threats and promises and waits to see what will happen. If we believe in the God of Israel and the Father of Jesus Christ we must simply reject the divine attributes of aseity, atemporality, omniscience, and immutibility. To impose these philosophically derived abstractions onto biblical theism would be no less arbitrary and deductive than to impose a modern standard of historical accuracy on the biblical text. With regard to theism itself no less than the idea of inspiration, Pinnock wants to let the texts speak with their own voice.

It is not difficult to see that in this major shift, Pinnock is moving farther along the same trajectory he followed when he rejected Calvinistic theism. The God of eternal decrees is one with the God of timeless awareness. After all, Calvin himself employed the notion of 'accommodation' to explain away biblical anthropomorphisms. Pinnock first rejected predestination, now he rejects fore-knowledge.

It should be noted that his rejection of the Warfield 'divine-human confluence' model of inspiration, too, may be seen as a stage of his systematic purging out of Calvinism. To say that the Bible is simultaneously the spontaneous work of man yet also verbally inspired by God 'stems from the Calvinistic orthodoxy

underlying so much of the modern (Evangelical) movement. The theology of a Warfield or a Packer, which posits a firm divine control over everything that happens in the world, is very well suited to explain a verbally inspired Bible.' But surely many Arminian, Dispensationalist, and other Evangelicals hold to verbal inspiration without embracing Calvinism? Yes, but they simply 'do not think systematically and limit their Calvinism to this one subject'.[92]

Apologetics does not play quite the same role in Pinnock's thinking in this third period that it did in the earlier two. In *The Scripture Principle* he alludes to his earlier defenses of the historical factuality of Jesus' resurrection.[93] But he understands the nature of apologetical arguments differently. As implied in the title *Set Forth Your Case*, he used to see it as a matter of proving a case in a legal fashion. This is true even of the less strident *Reason Enough*, where he compares his arguments to 'points in a lawyer's presentation which are adduced to convince a judge and jury'.[94] But in *The Scripture Principle* he more modestly claims that 'belief in the truth of the Bible and the gospel is rationally preferred over not believing in it, because it economically explains some important data'.[95] This language reflects that of Thomas Kuhn and his discussion of paradigms and implies a softer and subtler kind of convincement, where no definitive proof is possible but where one explanatory paradigm is provisionally adopted as more workable and comprehensive than others.

Concomitant with his recognition of the tentativeness of the assent rational argumentation can produce, we find Pinnock acknowledging that real conviction of the gospel can only finally come from the Holy Spirit: 'God's working in the human heart in response to faith is . . . the main cause of faith.'[96] 'While still wary of fideism, I understand better what scholars like Daane, Berkouwer, Rogers, Bloesch, Barth, Wink, and Grounds have been trying to tell conservatives like me who have an overly rationalist bent.'[97] He admits 'Now I'm halfway between where I used to be and the Reformed fideists.'[98] How ironic that when he was a Calvinist and a stricter inerrantist, he accepted the 'happy inconsistency' of Warfield's 'Arminian' approach to apologetics,

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[92] Ibid., 101, 102.
[93] Ibid., 97.
[94] *Reason Enough*, 16.
[95] *The Scripture Principle*, 166.
[96] Ibid., xix.
[97] Ibid., 229, footnote 30.
[98] Lecture at New College, Berkeley, July 23, 1979.

and now that he has repudiated Warfield's Calvinism and his predestinarian model of inspiration, he has moved more in the direction of Reformed apologetics!

Apologetics has not only served as the defense of Pinnock's theology; it has sometimes been one of the sources of it as well. This is no less true in the third period. From whence comes our belief in the Bible? Not really from impartial consideration of the evidence, but because in our experience 'it has been able to . . . introduce (us) to a saving and transforming knowledge of Christ.'[99] Similarly, Process theism is to be rejected because its God is inadequate to 'evangelical experience' and 'religious needs'.[100] Is not Pinnock, like Schleiermacher, extrapolating theology from the consciousness of piety?

Though his rejection of both verbal inspiration and classical theism may seem dramatic enough, perhaps the most startling recent mutation in Pinnock's thought has been his political about-face. In the early period he was anti-communist; in the middle period he became a radical pacifist and socialist; recently he has embraced a military neo-conservatism that is in fact difficult to distinguish from the stance of the so-called New Christian Right. Pinnock now finds himself in complete agreement with Michael Novak and others who have been baptized in the 'Spirit of Democratic Capitalism'.[101] He now supports a vigorous free-market economy, a strong military defense of the West against Communism and the Christian reclamation of Canadian (and presumably American) society. He even opposes the teaching of evolution in the public schools. This new conservatism is in evidence even in *The Scripture Principle* where Pinnock dispels the pseudo-problems presented to the modern Western reader by Old Testament laws mandating death for the adulterer and the incorrigible child. The offense is one taken, not given, says Pinnock. It is only our overly lenient humanist sentimentality that makes us fault God's Word for what is really only proper severity![102]

So here is Clark H. Pinnock, conservative and contemporary, some would say too conservative in his politics, others would say too contemporary in his views of the Bible. How can he move so noticeably to the left in one area and to the right in another? If we may attempt to harmonize this 'apparent contradiction', it must

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[99] *The Scripture Principle*, xix.

[100] Clark H. Pinnock, 'Between Classical and Process Theism', draft for inclusion in Ronald Nash (ed.), *Process Theology*, 12.

[101] *Sheer Christianity*, 57–79.

[102] *The Scripture Principle*, 113–115.

surely be that, as with Scripture, Pinnock wants to avoid deductively imposing some neat and simple a priori schema on the stubborn 'phenomena' of reality. He must be honest and take each case as it comes, responding to each as seems appropriate. This hermeneutic of reality keeps him open to change as reality itself is changing, and if this leads him to take positions uncongenial to those of the left, right, or middle, this does not much matter. Pinnock is always willing to set forth his case.