

CLARK H. PINNOCK'S SHIFT IN HIS DOCTRINE OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND RELIABILITY: AN ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE

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This study investigates Clark H. Pinnock's shift in his doctrine of biblical authority and reliability.

A brief introduction, delineating the objectives, method, and delimitations of the study, is followed by an historical survey of developments in regard to biblical authority and reliability from the sixteenth century onwards. There were few doubts regarding scriptural authority and veracity until the rise of English Deism, biblical criticism, and religious liberalism. The resulting demolition of the traditional view of Scripture was protested by Fundamentalism, then by evangelicalism. Contemporary evangelicals, however, reveal little uniformity in regard to the doctrine of Scripture. Pinnock's own role in the Southern Baptist inerrancy debates can be viewed as representative of that diversity.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of Pinnock's major concerns, shaping influences, and shifts of opinion regarding apologetics, soteriology, theology proper, political theology, and Pentecostalism. His desire that evangelical theology be both conservative and contemporary is revealed in his development in all these themes.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Pinnock's early and later thinking concerning biblical authority/reliability. The early Pinnock considered that Scripture explicitly taught the inerrancy of the original autographs. He qualified the inerrancy category by reference to the "intention" of the text, regarded biblical difficulties as "apparent," and argued from biblical reliability to authority. The later Pinnock attempts to move conservatives toward acceptance of Scripture's human form. He rejects his earlier view as inadequate from the standpoint of biblical teaching and the role of the Spirit. A strict view of inerrancy is now considered incompatible with anything less than a deterministic doctrine of God.

The final chapter evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, and consistency of Pinnock's two views and suggests the reason/s for his shift. While the early Pinnock stresses the divine role in inscripturation, the later seems to emphasize the human. His conclusions in each of these periods reflect the consequence of a Calvinism to Arminianism paradigm shift which began with his soteriology, moved to his doctrine of God, and filtered into his view of Scripture. He may need to make adjustments to his system to maintain a high view of biblical authority and reliability.