

Roennfeldt, Ray C. W. *Clark H. Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position*. With a Foreword by C. H. Pinnock. Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, no. 16. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993. xxiv + 428 pp. \$19.99.

For the last three decades, Clark Pinnock has been an especially articulate and prolific contributor to the shaping of contemporary evangelical theology. His observations on the nature and function of Scripture have been provocative and influential. Thus, Ray Roennfeldt has performed a useful service in providing us with an overview and critique of Pinnock's developing convictions in this area.

After providing a brief history of Protestant discussions of inspiration and revelation, and offering a biographical sketch of Pinnock and a survey of his thinking about a variety of theological issues, Roennfeldt proceeds, in the book's two central chapters, to examine the contrasting views of the "early" and "later" Pinnock. Roennfeldt characterizes the early Pinnock as a thoughtful apologist for the inerrantist view of Scripture. Opposing subjectivism, Pinnock relied on "evidentialist" apologetics—designed to provide compelling rational support for Christian beliefs—to defend his position; he rejected appeals to the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit as "some sort of mystical proof of inerrancy." He argued for a view of inspiration in accordance with which meticulous divine superintendence of the production of Scripture was compatible with its origin in authentic, spontaneous human activity. And he was generally skeptical of historical-critical methods of Bible study.

By 1984, Pinnock had adopted a more nuanced view, recognizing the effects of divine accommodation and human weakness on the character of the Bible. The role of the community of faith—and not just individual authors—in the process of Scripture's formation received greater recognition. The *function* of the Bible became more important as a source of guidance for understanding its nature and meaning. Historical-critical techniques merited some qualified affirmation. And, perhaps most interestingly, Pinnock's earlier rationalism had given way to a new emphasis on the inner witness of the Spirit as helping—along with rational apologetics, to be sure—to authenticate the reliability of biblical teachings.

Roennfeldt concludes by assessing the contrasting views of the earlier and later Pinnock and offering brief suggestions for further study and reflection. The early Pinnock is criticized for inattention to the human aspects of the Bible's composition and transmission as well as for excessive rationalism. In addition, according to Roennfeldt, he was insufficiently clear how attention to the apparent intentions of the biblical writers, which Pinnock regarded as normative, might be used to determine what they did and did not seek to communicate—and thus to what precisely the quality of inerrancy might be supposed to apply. The later Pinnock, says Roennfeldt, overstresses the human dimension of Scripture and the complications resulting from God's accommodation to humankind in the process of inspiration and endorses historical criticism too uncritically.

Roennfeldt suggests that the most significant factor likely accounting for Pinnock's changing position seems to have been his growing recognition of the reality and importance of creaturely freedom. And he concludes by suggesting that this may be an especially important lesson to be learned from Pinnock. He is surely right. For a strict Calvinist, God determines everything that occurs; human freedom is understood in such a way that it is compatible with thoroughgoing divine predestination. So there is no conflict, from a Calvinist perspective, between saying *both* that a thoroughly human story can be told about the origin of Scripture and that it contains precisely what God intended. But a broadly Arminian theology—like that endorsed by Pinnock and Seventh-day Adventists—presupposes a different view of freedom. On such a view, human beings must be understood as capable of acting—because of sin, ignorance, and finitude—in ways contrary to God's purposes. God cannot be supposed to be able unilaterally to determine what a biblical writer will write—and thus preserve her or him from all error—and simultaneously respect the biblical writer's freedom. Thus, we cannot defend *a priori* inerrancy if we wish to take human freedom seriously.

Pinnock's theological development represents an appropriate outgrowth of his increased awareness of tensions within traditional Calvinist theology and a welcome embracing of the implications of belief in human freedom for Christian doctrine. Roennfeldt's extensive engagement with Pinnock's thought should be a useful source of encouragement for Roennfeldt's fellow Adventists—always uncomfortable with Calvinism and serious about freedom—to continue reflecting on the manner in which divine action takes place in and through the actions of free creatures without, as Austin Farrer put it, “faking or forcing the natural story.” A recognition of the constraints accepted by God in creating free persons and a regular natural order with an integrity of its own is surely consonant with many central Christian convictions. Bearing these constraints in mind should enable us to characterize the nature of God's work in the world more fruitfully than we would be able to do if we sought to defend a position more akin to Calvinist absolutism.

An emphasis on the role of the Spirit in authenticating the truth of Scripture is understandable as a response to the complexities created by Pinnock's new view of the biblical materials themselves. A Bible of the sort Pinnock now envisions may not be capable of providing the basis for all of the rigorous apologetic arguments he defended earlier in his career. But his earlier discomfort with subjectivism seems more helpful than the assumption that the Spirit can be the source of a confidence that evidence and argument cannot provide. The claim that the Spirit's testimony is the ground of our confidence in Scripture's reliability sounds pious, and undoubtedly offers security in the face of confusion and complexity. But a reliance on the Spirit to authenticate the Bible subjectively, internally, rather than through the process of study, reflection, and discussion, can only open the door to irrationalism. Pinnock has not, of course, abandoned reason; he continues to regard evidence and argument as important. But a position that insulates Christian truth-claims from rational

evaluation runs the risk of turning them into the private property of a gnostic sect.

Traditional evidentialist apologetics are undoubtedly deficient; evidentialism is worth rejecting. But this is a problem faced by evidentialism not only in theology but in all other areas of life—science, history, morals—as well. New “postmodern” models of rationality can justify appropriate confidence without rendering some or all Christian beliefs immune to rational criticism. This path—reflected in such works as Nicholas Wolterstorff’s *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* and William Placher’s *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation*—holds out the promise of taking rationality seriously without allowing Christian convictions to be undercut by a dubious rationalism. I would argue that it is to such an approach that we would do best to look in our attempts to find a basis for confidence in the face of our realization of the human element in Scripture.

Adventists and others will therefore no doubt continue to be stimulated by Pinnock’s ongoing exploration of difficult theological questions. The process of understanding his further contributions to Christian thought will doubtless be facilitated by the systematic analysis provided by Roennfeldt’s study of his theology of Scripture, for which we can thus be grateful. Because of its focus on Pinnock, this book does not directly resolve—or attempt to resolve—the broader issues with which its subject has been preoccupied. It is thus to be hoped that Ray Roennfeldt will follow his study of Pinnock with a constructive statement of his own regarding the topic of inspiration and authority, drawing on the insights gained in the course of writing this book and calculated to carry an important conversation further.

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Sanders, Jack T. *Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants: The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993. xxiii + 404 pp. Paper, \$30.00.

There are many works which study the split between early Christianity and Judaism. Sanders’ work sets itself apart from the others by taking a sociological approach to the problem. Sanders reaches beyond the question of what beliefs and practices divided the two, and asks how these differences affected the members of the two groups and how they responded to the growing division.

Sanders’ book is divided into six sections. The first two sections deal with Jewish-Christian relations in Palestine before A.D. 70 and between 70 and 135 (the Bar-Kochba revolt), with a third section for further social analysis. The next two sections deal with the situation in Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, again with a third section for further analysis. A one-page Concluding Postscript completes the text. There are 89 pages of endnotes (the book is best read with two bookmarks), a bibliography and three indexes.