

The Doctrines of Clark Pinnock: an outline and hermeneutical assessment

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Clark Pinnock has been described by J I Packer as a ‘brilliant man’.¹ He is a Christian who is passionate in his love for God, and desire to make him known. He writes prolifically, and has become increasingly influential in certain evangelical circles. His writing is warm, and with deep conviction. He can be seen to have been ‘adopted’ as the leading theologian in British pentecostal and charismatic churches.² By his own admission, he is involved in a pilgrimage, which has produced changing theological understandings.³

Clark Pinnock often quotes the Bible, and would want to be known as a biblical scholar. Fundamental to all of Clark Pinnock’s reading is what he describes as his ‘hermeneutic of hopefulness’ or ‘control belief’. This can be described briefly as an overwhelming optimism in the numbers saved, and the conviction that salvation is possible through general revelation alone (apart from hearing a specific message of Jesus).

This paper will argue that his current ‘control belief’ is systematically defective, by biblical standards.⁴ Furthermore, it will be seen that the reason for this systematic deficiency is due to a faulty interpretative method. This interpretative method is fuelled principally by the need for what he sees as ‘God’s love’ to be an over-riding ‘root metaphor’⁵ for understanding the Bible. Whilst it will be seen that there is much in scripture to commend elements of his view, this paper seeks to show that the use of this ‘control belief’ is unjustified from scripture.

This does not mean that every time Clark Pinnock quotes the Bible, he misinterprets it. Rather, when considering key passages which are used to justify his theology, the interpretation that he makes is, by his own admission, systematically controlled by his control belief. The meaning is distorted to the extent that the ‘control belief’ affects the understanding of the text.

These are strong words, and are not written hastily. Yet they are motivated

by a desire to understand and apply the word of God that Clark Pinnock himself shares. For Clark Pinnock, the *way* people read the Bible is of great importance, because it is *God's* word, not humankind's. He says, 'the hermeneutical task is not a matter of reducing the meaning of Scripture to what readers want to hear but is an exercise in discerning what the Word of the Lord is for this time and place.'⁶

This paper will outline some key themes of Clark Pinnock, and in each case will assess them in the light of his control belief. This aim of this work is admittedly narrow in focus. It is not directly aimed at considering Clark Pinnock's declared principles for understanding (though inevitably these will be brought in from time to time). Nor is the focus seeking to critique his systematic theology as a whole, since this has already been, and continues to be, the subject of much literature.⁷

Doctrine of God

The Doctrine of God is perhaps one of the most controversial areas of Pinnock's contemporary writing. Broadly, it can be described as 'free-will theism', or 'creative love theism', or 'the Openness of God'.⁸ Although arguably not original,⁹ there is a growing list of publications defending and critiquing these doctrines.

This is based on a critique of classical theism, which is considered to present a God who is excessively transcendent (distant from the world and people he created), and immutable (such that he never changes, nor responds to the people and world he created). Real problems were perceived in classical theism relating to these doctrines, not least whether God answers prayers (can he change his mind?), and the extent to which he cares for the world he made (does God feel for the suffering which is in the world he made?). With respect to divine immutability, Pinnock contends that classical theism has been excessively influenced by Platonic thought, which holds that a perfect being can not change, else it would not have been perfect.¹⁰

The traditional understanding of God's sovereignty is also challenged. God is the 'sovereign Creator',¹¹ who has created a world *ex nihilo* in which he has not monopolised power,¹² but rather given humans a significant degree of freedom. People are free to choose how they will relate to God. In this

context, God has made a world where the future is not totally clear, since God is not omniscient to the extent that he knows perfectly what every human will do. His omniscience is limited to knowing everything that can be known, but this does not involve predicting the choices of independent free agents.¹³ Human freedom also functions such that God's will is not presently happening, for his sovereignty is being resisted by the powers of darkness.¹⁴

God's lack of total knowledge means that he is able to change his mind, because as the world changes, so he needs to change his actions.¹⁵ God's judgment operates within this framework. He judges as a lover, not an angry judge.¹⁶ His aim is to restore people rather than condemn them. Indeed, he does not want to exercise his wrath.¹⁷ His genuine desire is for all people to be saved.¹⁸ If he had his way, 'all his judgements would be penultimate',¹⁹ and no-one would be condemned. As it is, however, Pinnock argues that God will succeed in the end, even if some are not willing to see his love.²⁰

This view of God should not be seen to limit God in any way. Indeed, the potential for surprise and delight is embraced by God: the world would be 'boring' if everything happened according to plan.²¹ Pinnock's doctrine of God functions at an existential level, to deepen his personal devotional life.²² For him, God is 'a lover wanting to be loved'.²³ Yet he does not force his love upon the world he has made. Hence it is risky for him: he has opened himself to the possibility of rejection, and failure. This love is shown first in creating humans, then in giving them freedom to live. But God constantly longs for us to return to him, and he gives us plenty of opportunities.²⁴ When humankind turns away from God, he is more concerned in restoring the love of the lost son, than in 'brooding' over what he has lost, or being concerned with any 'affront to his honour'.²⁵

The 'social Trinity' is a model which is highly relevant to free-will theism. God is not an isolated, dominant individual, but a loving community, which is open and dynamic. The Trinity both confirms God's self-sufficiency, and displays his over-flowing love for the world.²⁶

■ Hermeneutical assessment

God is conceived by Pinnock as open, and embracing all the peoples of the world. God's attitude is tolerant. So, according to Deuteronomy 4:19, it is

‘with liberality’ that Yahweh allowed the other nations to worship him in ways which Israel was not to.²⁷ The text states that the sun, moon and stars were given to all nations (presumably out of God’s cosmic love, for their physical benefit).²⁸ It clearly commands Israel not to bow down to the objects. There is also implicit reference to the worship of these objects by other nations. But there is no hint that the Lord is condoning that practice, let alone that he is permitting it ‘with liberality’. Pinnock’s hermeneutic has allowed him to change an implicit reference with no moral statement attached, into an explicit permission that such objects may be worshipped. Furthermore, he has given Yahweh’s full and open approval of that. His interpretation fits his picture of God, but does not fit the interpretation of the text.²⁹

With reference to Psalm 95:7, Pinnock says that God ‘ever strives to make himself known’.³⁰ The verse is an exhortation to the people to hear God’s voice. But it says nothing as to God’s own intentions—the call is from the psalmist to others to hear God. The reference to ‘making himself known’ is also misleading, since the first six verses of the psalm have been celebrating the God, the Lord, whom they do know. The verses are a call to worship one who is Creator God and their covenant King (hence the reference to Yahweh). The charge in verse 7 is not so much that people may know God, but that they may act on what they already know. God has spoken, and people are to hear his voice. It is not God, therefore, who is striving to make himself known, but people who should strive to know the God who has made himself known. Pinnock’s hermeneutic has therefore reversed the meaning.

With respect more broadly to the concept of God making himself known, Pinnock comments on Hebrews 1:1-2

It has always been possible to cast oneself on the mercy of God, even when one’s theology is conceptually incomplete. God is a Person, and people can receive the gift of his love without knowing exactly who the giver is or how much it cost.³¹

Pinnock’s one-dimensional view of love is translated to a one-dimensional view of revelation. When God reveals himself, Pinnock assumes it must be salvifically.

In essence, Pinnock makes the fallacy of an irrelevant conclusion.³² The fact that in the past, God's revelation of himself meant that people had less complete knowledge of him and his character, compared to now in Christ, does not mean that if they ignored God as a person, they could still receive his love. It is ironic that Pinnock, who sees himself as a great proponent of God's personal love, forgets that love is not an impersonal activity: as a personal and relational activity, it relies on a relationship with the giver.

The idea that God is not always able to secure his own ends is supported by the interpretation of Romans 8:29. On this, Pinnock says that it is God's plan that all of humankind become like Jesus, but that the choice is ours to make, and he leaves it to humanity to express itself as it chooses.³³ God's plan can be thwarted. But this interpretation makes a mockery of the love of God, shown in Jesus' death on the cross and the victory it has brought.³⁴ Paul is arguing in Romans 8 about certainty, to give hope to believers through their struggles in the world. That is why nothing, no power or ruler or authority, can separate those who are in Christ from the love of God.³⁵ Ironically, here, Pinnock's hermeneutic has warped the understanding of the very love of God which he has been trying to promote.

There are times when Pinnock's hermeneutic is neutral towards the meaning of a passage. So, for instance, he explains Luke 14:23 to show the overwhelming nature of God's desire to see people come to him.³⁶ But it should be seen that this verse only refers to the one half of Pinnock's hermeneutic—that of God's love for the world and desire to see people restored to a right relationship with him. His hermeneutic of hopefulness can add nothing to this, since there is no mention of judgment. The same could be said for his use of Matthew 22:8-9.³⁷

Christology

Pinnock's view of Christ needs to be set in the context of his doctrine of God, particularly that of God as desiring all people to be saved. He describes this as 'the universality axiom'.³⁸ Concomitant with this is 'the particularity axiom' which states that salvation has been provided by God for all people, through Jesus Christ alone. The phrase 'Jesus Christ is Lord of all' is 'basic Christian grammar',³⁹ and establishes the parameters for the particularity axiom. There is no other name, nor way, by which one may be saved.⁴⁰ This is the central belief of Christianity, and must not be diluted, 'however good

our intentions'.⁴¹

This very particularity, however, carries with it universal implications. Jesus is Lord of all, which means he is able to be Saviour of all—and he wants to be recognised by all people as Lord of all.⁴² In the light of this, Jesus' death was an 'expiation for sin'⁴³ and not only provides for the possibility of salvation, but also is the only way in which we can be sure God is truly gracious, generous and has a global reach.

The cross shows how sinful the world is, because it rejects God's love.⁴⁴ Pinnock rejects the traditional model of penal substitutionary atonement, although he admits that 'something like it may be true'.⁴⁵ A key reason for rejecting this model is that, Pinnock concedes, it would logically lead to the idea of limited atonement, where Christ only died for some people, not all people.⁴⁶ Seeking to move away from the judicial model of atonement, Christ instead is to be seen as our representative, living a life which we could not live, and rising through death to give life to those who would come to him. Hence, atonement is not 'primarily penal',⁴⁷ although Christ was in some sense a victim—but a victim of the Romans and Israel, rather than third party substitute.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, any concept of retribution is firmly denied.⁴⁹

Christ's sufferings were in fact such as to change the world's attitude to God, not his to the world.⁵⁰ As a representative death, the Father reached out to suffering humanity in his son, prompting a change that would enable humanity to accept forgiveness.⁵¹ In so doing, God gained a moral authority and credibility, that he had not had before.⁵²

In addition to this, Jesus' death on the cross 'must' be seen as an 'intratrinitarian drama',⁵³ in which the Father hands over the Son to be killed, and through the Spirit, the Son offers himself to the Father. The Spirit, who is the bond of love, then brings together the Son's suffering love with the Father's forgiving love.

The eternal Son of God, was not 'swallowed up'⁵⁴ in Jesus of Nazareth, but rather is the divine Logos, through whom God made the world, and through whom God now makes himself known as the universal Saviour of the world.

Hermeneuticalassessment

Acts 4:12 is the only specific passage on which Pinnock has written an

article.⁵⁵ He asserts that it teaches three things. First, that Jesus is the one who is the long-awaited Messiah: this is a verse proclaiming fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Second, Peter is showing that salvation is holistic, as well as messianic. Physical healing is included in what it means to be saved. Third, this messianic and holistic salvation ‘in its fullness’ is available only through the name of Jesus. Pinnock then denies that it speaks at all about the unevangelised, nor about the role of other religions within God’s total plan of redemption.⁵⁶ Because of this, he argues that this verse does not entail exclusivity.

Pinnock’s first point is one which the context of Acts, and content of early sermons,⁵⁷ certainly teaches. His second point is justified by the healings which Peter and John perform, although the verse does not strictly teach that.⁵⁸ The third point is using words from the very verse, but adds ‘in its fullness’ to the promise of salvation in Jesus. It is this subtle addition that is symptomatic of Pinnock’s teaching. For at face value, the phrase ‘in its fullness’ could simply be written to emphasise the fullness of the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy which Jesus brings. If so, then it would be thoroughly correct. But, from what he writes elsewhere, it is more likely that he means to set up a case where ‘not so full’ salvation can come from elsewhere.

Pinnock’s denials are also true—the verse does not in itself speak of the fate of the unevangelised or other religions. But from this, Pinnock’s hermeneutic enables him to express optimism for such a fate. That optimism is not in the verse: he argues from silence. In fact, the context suggests the opposite, at least for Israel. For Peter is warning the Jews that despite their status as God’s chosen people by birth, and despite their thousand-year history of God’s blessing, there is now no other name under heaven by which they, Israel, may be saved.⁵⁹ Pinnock’s hermeneutic is not affected by that exclusivity for Israel then, since it considers there is salvation apart from Israel (‘pagan saints’). But Pinnock’s argument for this from this verse is from silence, and therefore not biblical.

Mission

The concept of world mission is an important one for Pinnock, and is derived from his commitment to a God who wants all to be saved, and Jesus Christ who died that all may be saved. The concept of ‘mission’ can be considered

with respect to its purpose, scope, method, and hope. The purpose of mission is framed by the content of the message of the gospel, which is God's love. So mission is to seek out those who are denying God's love, and to seek to awaken them to it.⁶⁰ Salvation, thus, concerns much more than 'eschatological wrath';⁶¹ rather, it offers eternal life, which is to be enjoyed in this world.

This love of God 'woos'⁶² people closer Him. There is no compulsion. The goal is a new life, union with Christ, and a release from the power of sin. Mission is therefore important to bring people into the fullness of relationship with God. The world is already included in salvation, 'without our asking', and has been accepted into the 'life and love of God'.⁶³

The scope for Christian mission is without doubt universal. God's love is for the whole world, and through his Spirit he works in the world to draw people towards himself.⁶⁴ It is this framework of the advancement of God's kingdom within which we should consider other religions.⁶⁵ Since Christ transforms cultures, Christians should therefore be open to the insights other religions can provide.⁶⁶ Other religions are only 'evil' and 'demonic' when they claim that they are greater than Christ.⁶⁷ Ultimately, however, it is not possible to worship God truly unless one worships Christ.⁶⁸

With respect to method, there are various strands Pinnock displays. On the one hand, he is clear that Christ meets the world in the preached gospel.⁶⁹ Yet he also proposes that it is not necessary to know Christ *per se* to be a partaker of Christ's salvific work on the cross. Christ is ontologically necessary for salvation (he needed to come to earth and die), but he is not epistemologically necessary to be saved (you don't need to have heard of Jesus to be saved).⁷⁰ One way of the latter being made efficacious is that sinners can relate to God on the basis of the work of the Spirit of God in creation.⁷¹ God can be viewed as someone who is gracious to unbelievers, in a salvific way.⁷²

Pinnock could therefore be described as an optimistic inclusivist. He denies there is salvation outside of Christ, yet longs to see heaven full, and 'dare[s] to hope' that many who have not heard about Jesus, though longed for a Saviour, will still be saved.⁷³

This optimism for the unevangelised is combined with a hope for their conversion, and so salvation, after death. Pinnock has become a leading

exponent in the combination of both inclusivism and so-called ‘post-mortem’ evangelism.⁷⁴ This is where someone dies without having heard of Christ, and so is given the opportunity to hear of his offer of love, and to accept it, before the final judgment. Whilst Pinnock acknowledges that post-mortem evangelism is ‘only hinted at’⁷⁵ in the Bible, he suggests that it is based on a ‘reasonable’ assumption. The case of God being merciful to babies who have died, and to the mentally-disabled, is used: if (as even many exclusivists argue) God can forgive those who die at birth, before they have the chance to hear of Jesus, then why is it not possible for him to be merciful to those who die in parts of the world where they have never had the chance to believe in Jesus?

Hermeneutical assessment

Pinnock views Paul’s encounter with the Athenians in Acts 17:16-34 as a ‘representative text’ in place of a biblical theology of religions.⁷⁶ Pinnock claims that Paul accepts they are worshipping God.⁷⁷ His argument is that they must know something about God because Paul quotes one of their own poet’s comments about God.⁷⁸ But Paul’s challenge to them in Acts 17:30-31 does not permit such optimism that they *know* God; knowing about God is not the same as knowing God. Indeed, Paul affirms that people are able to know about God from his revelation of himself through his sovereign rule in creation; that is explicitly part of God’s plan.⁷⁹ But Paul is not content to leave them in their state of ignorance. His use of a local poet is the equivalent today of quoting a soap opera character; Paul used it as a way to teach an eternal truth. That in no way means the person who is being quoted is necessarily speaking the truth in the way they meant it. It should be noted, also, that any language of God ‘wooing’⁸⁰ individuals is completely absent from this passage. Paul says that God ‘commands all people everywhere to repent’.⁸¹

Pinnock understands the fact that God ‘overlooked’ such ignorance to mean that the Athenians were not culpable before him.⁸² It is as if their sins did not matter to God in the past; God overlooked them in the sense of not seeing them at all. But this would mean that by hearing about Jesus, they now are culpable, implying that Paul’s evangelism has made them worse off than they were before they heard about Jesus.⁸³

The word ‘overlook’ does not bear any sense of innocence—if anything, the

opposite. It can be taken to mean: 'to look over, look down upon; to slight, despise, disdain, show contempt for'.⁸⁴ The context in Acts 17 suggests more the sense God delaying a judgement which humankind deserves. Pinnock's reading of this text is indeed optimistic, but is clearly unwarranted.

Pinnock also frequently refers to Acts 14:16-17 with the aim of claiming God can be known everywhere.⁸⁵

The verse addresses one of the four aspects of God's love for the world, the goodness he shows creation. For Pinnock, however, this verse also shows not only that God has made himself known to the world in general, but has done so salvifically.⁸⁶ Pinnock's hermeneutic of hopefulness enables him to assume this, but the context demands otherwise. Acts 14:16 explains how God has allowed nations to continue along their own ways, but now, they are commanded to repent and turn to him. Previously, God focussed on Israel with respect to his work of salvation; after the cross, the doors are flung wide, and all nations are commanded to acknowledge him as Lord.⁸⁷

At times, the hermeneutic of hopefulness continues to use the same wording of the text, but distorts its meaning. In Matthew 13:45-46, the conclusion is that a person is able to seek after the kingdom of God for themselves.⁸⁸ The text does speak about someone seeking a pearl (likened to the kingdom of God); but the purpose of the parable is not to explain how someone is able to search after the kingdom for themselves, but to show how valuable the kingdom is.

Similarly, the parable of the soils and the seed (Mark 4:1-20) is taken to teach how God is looking for receptive hearts, which are the fertile soil.⁸⁹ The parable does speak of fertile soil, which is rightly taken to be receptive hearts. But the parable speaks nothing about God searching for those fertile hearts. If it did, then he was doing a bad job, because three out of the four soils he chose were failures. In this case, the parable speaks (pessimistically) more of the difficulties of following God, and the consequent realism for those doing evangelism, than it does of an all-accepting, all-embracing God who accepts any of the soils, but prefers those which are fertile. His hermeneutic also omits the importance of the 'seed' being scattered (the gospel message, so specific revelation).

With respect to post-mortem opportunities for salvation, the use of 1 Peter 3:18-22 is unacceptable, not least because it is unhelpful to formulate such a specific doctrine from so complicated a text, when the rest of scripture is silent on that matter. It is unclear who the 'spirits in prison' are. The passage itself refers to them as 'spirits in prison, who in former [Noah's] times did not obey';⁹⁰ presumably referring to a limited group, in a limited time period. It is therefore exegetically fanciful to claim that they are all those people, in eternity, who have never heard the gospel. Furthermore, Jesus makes a proclamation to them, but there is nothing in the text to suggest it was a call to repentance, or that they responded with repentance to the proclamation. Pinnock's 'hermeneutic of hopefulness' has allowed him to read conclusions into this passage, which are simply not there.

Carson questions even why someone would logically want to hold both the inclusivist view, and the view that there is a post-mortem opportunity for evangelism.⁹¹ If conscious confession of faith in Jesus is not required for salvation (the inclusivist view), then why is it necessary for them to hear the gospel after death? Similarly, if people will hear the gospel after death regardless, then why should they need to hear it on earth? Carson's conclusion is that this apparent contradiction and illogicality is more to do with the 'mindset'⁹² of the proponent, than with a commitment to careful exegesis and thought-through reasoning.

Finally, the hermeneutic functions neutrally where the text teaches eschatological hope of a perfect new creation and the banishment of evil. One example is Romans 8:21, where Pinnock speaks expectantly of the wonders of the last days. He has no reason to mention either the fate of the unevangelised, nor the prospect of hell, so his words are a warm encouragement to any faint-hearted person.⁹³ But the context of Romans 8 demands such high optimism. So Pinnock's hermeneutic adds nothing to the meaning of the text in its context.

Considering Matthew 25:31-40, 'serving the poor' is seen as the embodiment of 'the love which God himself is, and is accepted as the equivalent of faith'.⁹⁴ So for Pinnock, the believing unevangelised will be saved by Christ, even though they do not know that they were serving Christ. Yet Matthew has already established that Jesus' brothers are believers.⁹⁵ The least should be taken as those believers who are persecuted for the sake of the gospel.⁹⁶

In this instance, the hermeneutic of hopefulness overlooks the exclusivity presented in these verses (whether or not people have loved Jesus and his followers), yet seeks to use them to support its own premises.

Pneumatology

The starting point for Pinnock's inclusivist view, is his belief that the Holy Spirit is active in every part of the world, even in the religious life of other religions.⁹⁷ The Spirit is active, luring people back to God.⁹⁸ Indeed, Pinnock asserts that the Spirit is 'encountered' in the vitality, radiance, joy and love of creation itself.⁹⁹ This is because Spirit was intricately involved in the process of creation, turning 'chaos into cosmos'¹⁰⁰ and bringing life as God breathed into Adam. At times, Pinnock can seem quite restrictive in his understanding of the operation of the Spirit ('Spirit comes in the proclamation of the Word'¹⁰¹), but as a whole, the emphasis is on the all-embracing work of the Spirit throughout the created order, gently drawing people back into God's love.

Pinnock seeks to revise the traditional subordination of the Spirit to the Son, by emphasising the Spirit's work in sending Christ.¹⁰² Jesus is a part of the Spirit's mission, and their relationship is at least reciprocal.¹⁰³ This is submitted whilst affirming that the Spirit is also a part of the Son's mission. Christocentricity, however, is not correct, if that requires a subordination of the Spirit to the Son.¹⁰⁴

Just as it is possible to subordinate the Spirit to the Son in Christology, so the danger exists with respect to ecclesiology.¹⁰⁵ The Spirit should not be seen as a secondary add-on or helper to the primary role of Christ establishing the church. Rather, the Spirit gives birth to and empowers the church, just as Jesus was conceived by the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit for mission. The Spirit continues to work through the local church to build up the understanding of the individual believer.¹⁰⁶

Taking a somewhat more conservative line than may be expected from a theologian with such a view of the Spirit, Pinnock does not consider that Spirit is involved in the impartation of new information, but rather to influence the reader to be drawn 'deeper into the world of the text, deeper into the kingdom of God, closer to God's heart'.¹⁰⁷ Spirit sheds light on the word, that the reader may grow in friendship with God. He describes this process

variously as 'illumination'¹⁰⁸ or 'contemporary inspiration'¹⁰⁹ by the Spirit. In the latter, the distinction is made with 'original inspiration' by the Spirit, which is the Spirit's work in forming Scripture.

More widely, the scriptures should be seen as only a part of the 'larger revelatory work of the Spirit'¹¹⁰ who operates continually amongst believers. Part of this work is an expansion of the original meaning in the minds of the contemporary reader. Pinnock distinguishes not only between meaning and significance,¹¹¹ but also between original meaning and contemporary meaning, asserting that the meaning now can be enlarged through dialogue with the original text.¹¹²

Throughout the various books and articles by Pinnock on the work of the Spirit, it is noteworthy that there is no mention of the Spirit's work in conviction of sin (John 16:8-11).¹¹³

Hermeneutical assessment

The link between pneumatology and Pinnock's hermeneutic is more direct than may perhaps seem on first consideration. For the Spirit is a central part to Pinnock's understanding that general revelation is salvific. So it is consistent for the Spirit to operate everywhere salvifically.

Pinnock therefore sees Luke 1:35 as a reference to the Spirit sending Jesus, with a parallel to the Spirit hovering over Jesus just as he hovered over creation (Gen 1:2).¹¹⁴ The parallels are, however, not so much with the cosmic presence of God in Genesis 1:2, but with the awesome presence of God.¹¹⁵ The word for overshadow conveys the sense of the holy, powerful presence of the God whose glory filled the tabernacle when the cloud 'covered'¹¹⁶ it in Exodus 40:35 (which uses this word in the LXX). The same word is also used in each account of the Transfiguration to describe the overshadowing of the cloud.¹¹⁷ Similarly, in each account the voice that comes out of the cloud identifies Jesus as God's Son, just as the angel (not the Spirit) does.

Yet Pinnock gives no exegetical or linguistic reason to link Luke 1:35 to Genesis 1:2. His hermeneutic has operated to deduce a universal interpretation, at the expense of the more exclusivist interpretation of God's awesome presence being found in the tabernacle.

At times, Pinnock's language is subtly close to the words of the text, but his meaning is different. Using Psalm 139:7 as support, he claims that the Spirit is the one 'not at all far from us but very near, and who is present with his creatures in every situation'.¹¹⁸ The Psalmist is speaking from within the covenant community of the overwhelming sovereignty of God's creative purposes. Within that context, Pinnock's words are correct. Yet he uses them to justify a much broader context for God's covenant relational activity. The psalm does not speak of that. That it teaches God is all-powerful, all-knowing and everywhere does not mean that it teaches that all in creation have a saved relationship with God. The hermeneutic is adding to the primary meaning of the text.

In Matthew 19:28, the Spirit is said to be involved in the regeneration of the cosmos.¹¹⁹ But Jesus here does not speak of Spirit, simply that the whole cosmos will be regenerated. Pinnock is seeking to broaden the regenerative role of the Spirit outside of the work in believers, and so attributes to the Spirit something on which the text is silent.

Annihilationism

Pinnock can also be considered as one of the leading evangelical proponents of annihilationism. This holds that a human's soul does not continue for ever, but that after death, at some stage, the soul is annihilated by God, ceasing to exist. The final judgment of hell therefore becomes an eternal punishment of non-existence, rather than eternal conscious punishment.

Whilst he acknowledges that this is not a doctrine that can be held with similar conviction as others, not least because he claims the Bible is 'reserved'¹²⁰ in speaking of life after death, this is, all the same, a doctrine Pinnock claims is perfectly consistent with biblical teaching. He also claims support from leading theologians such as John Stott, P E Hughes, and J W Wenham.¹²¹

The doctrine is grounded in the Old Testament, where the wicked are considered to become nothing after death.¹²² Imagery that is used includes withering like the grass, being cut off, vanishing like smoke, death, destruction, ruin and perishing.¹²³

Although Pinnock acknowledges that Jesus is 'modest'¹²⁴ in his precise

description of the eternal destiny of the wicked, he argues that Jesus does confirm that the soul will be destroyed in hell.¹²⁵ John the Baptist joins Jesus in warning that the wicked will be burnt like wood or chaff in a fire.¹²⁶ The rest of the New Testament continues with similar imagery of fire, death and destruction.¹²⁷ Pinnock calls on the 'fair person' to conclude that the Bible can 'reasonably' be understood to teach the final destruction of the wicked.¹²⁸

Pinnock's arguments for annihilationalism are not merely exegetical. He also argues that annihilationalism is correct philosophically and theologically. His philosophical approach is to argue that eternal life is not inherent for humans.¹²⁹ He considers that Christian doctrine has been excessively influenced by the Hellenistic understanding of the immortality of the soul. This has, in turn, excessively influenced Christians through the ages, to believe that the soul will last for ever, even after death. He is careful to distinguish his view from that of 'conditional immortality', which holds that humans are not naturally immortal. He does so because, whilst acknowledging that conditional immortality is a necessary condition for annihilationism, it is not sufficient. Pinnock argues that it is the scriptures which show that annihilationism is true.¹³⁰

Pinnock's theological argument is based on his doctrine of God and morality.¹³¹ He considers it 'morally intolerable' that a loving God should allow one of his creatures to remain in eternal, conscious punishment. He argues that this notion is utterly contrary to the very nature of God, who is wholly loving and merciful. God's justice would also be questioned: how is it just for a finite human being to be punished for infinity?

It is perhaps in this debate that Pinnock has used some of his most colourful language to describe opposing views. He even acknowledges that this very debate is not one which can reasonably remain calm about.¹³² He considers the traditional doctrine of eternal, conscious punishment as 'outrageous'.¹³³ He even claims that such a view makes God 'vindictive',¹³⁴ more like Satan than God,¹³⁵ and nothing more than 'a bloodthirsty monster who maintains an everlasting Auschwitz for victims whom he does not allow to die'.¹³⁶ Although challenged by some,¹³⁷ this language at least displays the passionate concern Pinnock does have about what he sees as the honour of God's name, and the fate of the lost.

Hermeneutical assessment

Much of the debate with respect to annihilationalism could be said to turn on semantics. Pinnock agrees that God will one day judge the world, that he will bring in a new order where all is perfect, and that the unrighteous will be destroyed. He agrees their destruction will be everlasting. But the semantic range of the words 'destroyed' and 'everlasting' create the distinctive understandings.

For Pinnock, destroyed means 'becoming no more', and everlasting means that 'the consequences of what have happened are everlasting'. There are many texts which scholars refer to, but it can be supposed that the same hermeneutic will be used on each.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of the hermeneutic of hopefulness at work is Matthew 25:46. Pinnock acknowledges that this text can teach everlasting punishment (and is correct to complain about the fact that the adjective 'conscious' is too often 'smuggled' into the phrase, without showing how it is reached).¹³⁸ However, Pinnock claims that Jesus' lack of definition of what 'eternal life' and 'eternal death' mean allows the reader to interpret the verse either as teaching everlasting torment, or irreversible destruction (annihilation).¹³⁹

Pinnock overlooks four important factors which serve to remove the flexibility in interpretation he claims. Semantically, the word group can refer to both a temporal and eternal sense, although Carson argues that the adjective used here is only used by Matthew 'for what is eternal'.¹⁴⁰ Carson also notes the juxtaposition of 'eternal life' and 'eternal punishment', and concludes that since they are in parallel, the 'eternal punishment' really must mean that the punishment is everlasting.¹⁴¹ The alternative is to suggest that there may be some limit to the eternal life.

Pinnock also overlooks the imagery of the passage.¹⁴² The punishment is graphic, and at least implies suffering: Pinnock's assertion that 'conscious' is often smuggled in may be valid, but the feeling is there in the text. Raymond 'can find no occurrence of it where it connotes annihilation...it seems in every instance to mean 'punishment'.¹⁴³

He also fails to set the episode in its wider historical context. Given that the contemporary understanding of hell was eternal, conscious punishment (using *Gehenna* as a model), Jesus' words would have been understood in that light, and yet he does nothing to seek to correct them.¹⁴⁴

Doctrine of Sin

Much of Pinnock's flawed hermeneutic is arguably linked to a 'weak' view of human sin. For Pinnock, sin is not so much rebelling against a God who rules with justice; rather, sin is better defined as 'not welcoming God's love'.¹⁴⁵ Pinnock's own understanding of God's love is all-embracing. The question as to why some would want to reject such love is clearly almost overwhelming. He says, '...understood properly, God is practically irresistible. It is a mystery to us why anyone would reject him who loves them so.'¹⁴⁶

Turning to one of the most seemingly stark passages on the state of unredeemed mankind in the Bible (Eph 2:1-2), Pinnock explains being 'dead' in sin as not so much an 'inability to believe' as an 'inability to merit God's favour'.¹⁴⁷ He does not explain why this is so. The implication of being dead in sin is, of course, that people are unable to merit God's favour (or grace). It is logically impossible to merit what comes through grace. But Ephesians 2: 1-10 speaks of much more than an inability to believe. It speaks of an active disobedience. The unregenerate are spiritually dead, and actively living in the ways of darkness.¹⁴⁸ Pinnock's hermeneutic has again functioned to ignore aspects which contradict that hermeneutic.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to show that Clark Pinnock's 'control belief' is systematically defective, by biblical standards. He describes it as his 'hermeneutic of hopefulness' but it has been shown that the Bible texts he uses to support this hermeneutic have been misunderstood and misapplied. His hopefulness, though sincere, is therefore unfounded biblically.

To challenge a renowned biblical scholar with the assertion that he systematically misreads the Bible could be conceived as impudent. This work is therefore presented humbly, knowing that in itself it risks being systematically biased in one way or another. Every effort has been made to avoid being classified as one of the 'sectarian evangelicals' whom Clark

Pinnock feels are zealously and arrogantly hounding him.¹⁴⁹

It has been shown on a large number of texts, covering a variety of doctrines, that Pinnock's hermeneutic of hopefulness is defective. It has also be shown that on the few occasions when the texts are read 'accurately', this is entirely predictable given the weight of this hermeneutic and the content of that passage. Although an inductive (as opposed to deductive) argument, the balance of probabilities is such that it is justifiable to claim that Pinnock's hermeneutic of hopefulness is systematically defective.¹⁵⁰

However, to the extent that this analysis has been shown to be true, the reliability of the whole of that scholar's work must be questioned, at least in so far as it seeks to teach theology biblically. This is not to downplay the contribution the person makes to theological debate, and at times most pertinently. The church strongly needs to be reminded of the pro-active, sacrificial love which eternally is at the heart of the Trinitarian Godhead. Rather, this paper questions the biblical reliability of their work.

Nor has this paper sought to deny in any way that God is a loving, gracious, generous, merciful God. Rather, it has shown that the way Pinnock understands this awesome God is, partially, at fault. The elements which are correct need to be heard: God's love for the world in sending Jesus to die, God's concerns for the nations, the universal Lordship of Christ. However, the effect of his hermeneutic has been to mean that he systematically misreads scripture, and therefore, in the end, systematically misreads God. The theology of this debate is not insignificant.

The paper is also not aimed at denying the faith of an individual. However, it must have an impact on the way it sets the standards for others to interpret the scriptures. This in turn will affect faith: since God is known authoritatively through his word, if the meaning of this is distorted, then so is someone's understanding of (and faith in) God. Pinnock's image of a father is warm and inviting, but one questions whether it is a fair representation of the God of the scriptures.

The reader should beware of the danger of making a logical fallacy, in concluding that because of this paper, the views Pinnock proposes are

thoroughly invalid. This paper has not argued that. Rather, it has argued that the biblical texts Pinnock uses to justify his position do not enable him to do so. Pinnock's case is unproven, not disproved. Carson has warned that hermeneutical positions are much more significant in determining someone's theology than is often perceived.¹⁵¹ This paper has shown that his warning was clearly justified.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 C H Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation—The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1997). (First issued by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company 1970) Foreword p 5. Packer is frequently a representative for Pinnock's critique of contemporary conservative evangelicalism.
- 2 Consider, *e g* his address for the Didsbury Lectures, Nazarene College, Manchester 2000.
- 3 C H Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology," in C H Pinnock (ed) *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989).
- 4 Daniel Strange has bracketed Clark Pinnock's thinking into three stages: up to 1970 (essentially Calvinist); 1970-1986 (conversion to Arminianism); and 1986 onwards (the transition to free-will theism). See D Strange "Clark H Pinnock: The Evolution of an Evangelical Maverick," *Evangelical Quarterly* 71:4, 1999. The 'hermeneutic of hopefulness' is seen most clearly in the current stage.
- 5 C H Pinnock, "Response to Daniel Strange and Amos Young," *Evangelical Quarterly* 71, 4 (1999) p 351
- 6 C H Pinnock, "Biblical Texts—Past and Future Meanings" *JETS* 43/1 (March 2000), p 81
- 7 There is a vast literature on this topic, covering 'Openness' theology as a whole, and some relating more specifically to Clark Pinnock. Much is critical, some verges on the polemical. For work on 'Openness' theology see, *inter alia*: G Bray, *The Personal God* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998); T R Schreiner & B A Ware, *Still Sovereign* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 2000); B A Ware *God's Lesser Glory* (Wheaton IL: Crossway 2000). For work more or less specific to

- Pinnock, see inter alia T Gray & C Sinkinson (eds) *Reconstructing Theology: A critical assessment of the theology of Clark Pinnock* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press 2000); A Howe, "The Evangelical Megashift and The Theology of Clark Pinnock", <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/crn/> p 15. html (01/05/01); R A Koivisto, "Clark Pinnock and Inerrancy: A Change in Truth Theory?" JETS 24/2, (June 1981); R M Price, "Clark Pinnock: Conservative and Contemporary" in *Evangelical Quarterly* 88:2 (1988) pp 157-83; D Strange "Clark H Pinnock The Evolution of an Evangelical Maverick".
- 8 See Pinnock "Systematic Theology" in C H Pinnock *et al The Openness of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994); also D Strange "Clark H Pinnock: The Evolution of an Evangelical Maverick" pp 318-21
 - 9 Bray suggests that it is a form of critique which originated in Germany in the early nineteenth century; see G Bray *The Personal God* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998) p 7
 - 10 C H Pinnock "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology" p 24
 - 11 Pinnock, CH "Systematic Theology", in C H Pinnock *et al The Openness of God*
 - 12 *Ibid* p 113
 - 13 C H Pinnock "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology" p 25
 - 14 Pinnock "God's sovereignty in today's world" http://www.opentheism.org/pinnock_sov.htm (12/10/00)
 - 15 C H Pinnock *et al The Openness of God*, p 117-8
 - 16 C H Pinnock & Brow R C *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the 21st Century* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994) p 70
 - 17 C H Pinnock *Flame of Love* (Leicester: IVP 1996) p 186
 - 18 The issue of salvation will be discussed further under 'Christology' and 'Mission' in this chapter.
 - 19 Pinnock *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the 21st Century* p 70
 - 20 *Ibid* p 71 Pinnock does not satisfactorily resolve the seeming contradiction in that he says God wants all to be saved, but all are not, yet still God 'succeeds'.
 - 21 C H Pinnock *et al, The Openness of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994) p 123
 - 22 A point which Bray says is in free-will theists favour. See G Bray *The Personal God* p 7
 - 23 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 75
 - 24 *Ibid* p 75
 - 25 C H Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 11
 - 26 C H Pinnock *et al, The Openness of God* p 108
 - 27 C H Pinnock *A Wideness in God's Mercy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) p

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- 28 EBC on CD-ROM on Deuteronomy 4:19
- 29 See D A Carson *The Gagging of God* (Leicester; Apollos 1996) p 295-6
- 30 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 231
- 31 *Ibid*, p 198.
- 32 Copi, IM, & Cohen, C *Introduction to Logic* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1990 8th ed pp 105-107. It is possible to accuse Pinnock of arguing *ad misericordiam* (argument appealing to pity): words like “cast oneself” and “conceptually incomplete” read alongside “mercy of God” and “receive the gift of his love” combine to suggest that the person denying this is denying God’s mercy and love.
- 33 C H Pinnock “*From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology*” p 20
- 34 e.g. Romans 5:8, and the whole of Romans 8
- 35 Romans 8:38-39
- 36 Pinnock, CH, *Flame of Love*, p 189
- 37 *Ibid* p 190
- 38 C H Pinnock “*Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions*”, JETS 33/3 (Sept 1990), p 360. This will be expanded on in the section “Mission” in this chapter.
- 39 C H Pinnock “*The Finality of Jesus Christ in a world of Religions*” in M A Noll & D F Wells *Christian Faith & Practice in the Modern World* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans 1988) p 154
- 40 C H Pinnock “Acts 4:12—No Other Name under Heaven” in W Crockett *Through No Fault of Their Own* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House 1991)
- 41 C H Pinnock “*The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*” p 155
- 42 *Ibid* p 157
- 43 CH Pinnock “*Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions*” JETS 33/3 p 362
- 44 C H Pinnock & R C Brow *Unbounded Love* p 60
- 45 C H Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 106; see also C H Pinnock “Salvation by Resurrection” in *Ex Auditu* Vol 9 1993 p 2-4
- 46 It is never quite clear that Pinnock understands the traditional model of penal substitutionary atonement correctly, since his language often characterises it rather primitively. He understands it sufficiently, however, to see that penal substitutionary atonement requires limited or particular atonement to be consistent. See, e.g., Pinnock, C.H., *Flame of Love* (Leicester : IVP, 1996), p.107 and p.155-7; also Pinnock, C.H., “*From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology*”, in Pinnock, C.H., (ed.), *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), pp.22-23; also Pinnock, C.H., & Brow, R.C., *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for*

- the 21st Century* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1994), p.100-110; and Pinnock, C.H., "Salvation by Resurrection" in *Ex Auditu*, Vol.9, 1993, p.2-4
- 47 C H Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 106 (Pinnock's italics)
- 48 *Ibid* p 107
- 49 Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 103-105
- 50 *Ibid*, p 103
- 51 *Ibid*, p 103-4
- 52 *Ibid*, p 106
- 53 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 104
- 54 C H Pinnock "Evangelism and Other Living Faiths: An Evangelical Charismatic Perspective" in H D Hunter & P D Hocker *All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization* (Sheffield Academic Press 1993) p 211
- 55 C H Pinnock "Acts 4:12 - No Other Name under Heaven"
- 56 He also reminds his readers that everyone comes to a text with presuppositions, which risk affecting the way we read individual texts. He confesses that he finds it 'utterly repugnant' to consider that this verse should exclude most people in the world from salvation. C H Pinnock "Acts 4:12—No Other Name under Heaven" p 111-12
- 57 Acts 2:14-36; Acts 3:12-26
- 58 Acts 3:1-10
- 59 D A Carson *The Gagging of God* (Apollos, 1996) p 304-305
- 60 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 157
- 61 C H Pinnock 'The Finality of Jesus Christ in a world of Religions' in M A Noll & D F Wells *Christian Faith & Practice in the Modern World* p 167
- 62 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 157
- 63 Pinnock & Brow *Unbounded Love* p 44
- 64 An attempt has been made to reflect the style of writing of Pinnock; an example of the lack of a definite article for 'Spirit', which here is more easily read as a name, than an ontological description (which would typically take an article). Where 'Spirit' is written with a capital 'S', it should be read as the name Pinnock uses.
- 65 C H Pinnock "Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions" *JETS* 33/3 (Sept 1990) p 364
- 66 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 201
- 67 Pinnock "Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions" p 364
- 68 *Ibid* p 363
- 69 C H Pinnock "Salvation by Resurrection" p 10
- 70 C H Pinnock "Evangelism and Other living Faiths" p 213

- 71 Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 62-3
- 72 This is the import of his comments in C H Pinnock & D Brown *Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1991) pp 154-5
- 73 Pinnock “*The Finality of Jesus Christ in a world of Religions*” p 153
- 74 D A Carson *The Gagging of God* p 299
- 75 In 1 Peter 4:6. See Pinnock “*Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions*” p 368
- 76 C H Pinnock, “*Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions*”, JETS 33/3 (September 1990) p 364; see also: Pinnock *The Openness of God* p 112, *Unbounded Love* p20, p154. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy* p32., Pinnock, *Flame of Love* pp 51, 193, 195, 216
- 77 Pinnock “*Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions*” p 365; see also Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 20
- 78 Pinnock *A Wideness in God’s Mercy* p 96
- 79 Acts 17:26-27
- 80 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 185
- 81 Acts 17:30
- 82 Pinnock, CH, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy*, p 101
- 83 Carson *The Gagging of God* p 310
- 84 H G Liddell and R Scott *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968)
- 85 Pinnock “*The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*” p 158, 163; Pinnock “*Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions*” p 368; Pinnock *Flame of Love* pp 83, 193, 201, 202, 216 Pinnock; “*Response to Daniel Strange and Amos Young*” p 356
- 86 Pinnock *A Wideness in God’s Mercy* p 96
- 87 Carson *The Gagging of God* p 307-8
- 88 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 160
- 89 *Ibid* p 160.
- 90 1 Peter 3:19-20.
- 91 Carson *The Gagging of God* p 300.
- 92 *Ibid* p 300
- 93 Pinnock *Theological Crossfire* p 229
- 94 Pinnock *A Wideness in God’s Mercy* p 165. Sanders makes the point that this is a departure from Pinnock’s previous position on this verse, found in “Inclusive Finality or Universal Accessibility” see J E Sanders *No Other Name—An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Wm B

- Eerdmans, 1992) p 259 (footnote—note Sanders refers to the manuscript, hence the difference in page numbers)
- 95 Matt 12:48-50; 28:10 (also cf Matt 23:8-9)
- 96 EBC on CD-Rom; also Carson *The Gagging of God* p 301
- 97 C H Pinnock “An Inclusivist View” in D L Okholm & T R Phillips *More Than One Way?—Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) p 102
- 98 Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 30
- 99 C H Pinnock “The Role of the Spirit in Creation” in *The Asbury Theological Journal* Spring 1997 Vol 52 No 1 p 50
- 100 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 50
- 101 *Ibid* p 163
- 102 Pinnock “The Role of the Spirit in Redemption” in *The Asbury Theological Journal*, Spring 1997 Vol 52 No1 p 56
- 103 *Ibid* p 56 also *Flame of Love* p 80ff pp 196ff
- 104 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 82
- 105 *Ibid* p 115
- 106 Pinnock “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Interpretation” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36/4 (December 1993), pp 495-6; this point is noted with approval by Carson *The Gagging of God* p 268
- 107 Pinnock “*The Work of the Holy Spirit in Interpretation*” p 494
- 108 *Ibid* as used in his article
- 109 Described in C H Pinnock “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics” in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 1993 pp 3-23
- 110 *Ibid* p 5
- 111 For discussion on the distinction between ‘meaning’ and ‘significance’ see G R Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991) pp 6-9; 391-6; also W C Kaiser & M Silva *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: the search for meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) pp 27-45
- 112 C H Pinnock “*The Work of the Holy Spirit in Interpretation*” p 496
- 113 In Pinnock’s *magnum opus* on the Spirit, *Flame of Love*, there are references in the Scripture index to John 16:7 and 16:13, but not to the intermediate verses. A close reading of the book also yields no reference to the concept of “conviction of sin”
114. Pinnock *Flame of Love*, p 82, 86
- 115 EBC on CD-Rom for Luke 1:35
- 116 Heb. *sakan*; NIV ‘settled upon’
- 117 Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34

- 118 C H Pinnock "The Role of the Spirit in Creation" in the *Asbury Theological Journal*, Spring 1997, Vol. 52, No.1 p 50
- 119 Pinnock *Flame of Love*, p 165
- 120 Pinnock *Unbounded Love*, p 91
- 121 See Pinnock "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent" in *Criswell Theological Review* Vol 4 Sept 1990 p 246, p 248; also Pinnock *Theological Crossfire* p 230
- 122 Ps 37; Mal 4:1-2. See Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 91
- 123 C H Pinnock "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent" p 250-51; Pinnock, "The Conditional View", in W Crockett (ed) *Four Views on Hell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) p 144
- 124 Pinnock "*The Conditional View*" p 145
- 125 Matt 10:28, Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 92
- 126 Matt 3:10,12. See Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 251
- 127 Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 251-2; Pinnock "The Conditional View" p 145-6; Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 91
- 128 Pinnock "*The Conditional View*" p 146
- 129 Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 253; see also Pinnock "*The Conditional View*" p 147-9
- 130 Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 253
- 131 Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 253-4; Pinnock *Theological Crossfire* p 230; Pinnock "*The Conditional View*" p 149-51
- 132 Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 246
- 133 *Ibid* p 246
- 134 Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 90
- 135 Pinnock "*The Conditional View*" p 140
- 136 C H Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 253
- 137 Millard J Erickson advises Pinnock about the strength of his language. Given such rhetoric, "he had better be very certain he is correct. For if he is wrong, he is guilty of blasphemy". Quoted in R L Reymond *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998) p 1069
- 138 C H Pinnock "*The Conditional View*" p 156. This is a warning Pinnock would do well to heed also, given that he has been shown to be susceptible to frequent vagueness and ambiguity in language.
- 139 See C H Pinnock "*The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*" p 256; also "*The Conditional View*" p 156
- 140 Carson *The Gagging of God* p 528
- 141 *Ibid* p 528
- 142 *Ibid* p 529

- 143 Quoted in R L Reymond *A New Systematic Theology* p 1075
- 144 Carson *The Gagging of God* p 529
- 145 Pinnock *Unbounded Love* p 30
- 146 *Ibid* p 12
- 147 Pinnock *Flame of Love* p 160
- 148 Eph 2:2-3
- 149 C H Pinnock "Reconstructing Evangelical Theology: Is the Open View of God a good idea?", *paper given to the Evangelical Theological Society*, Nov 14-16, 2001
- 150 At least four of Copi and Cohen's six categories involved in weighing up the balance of probabilities have been met: those relating to the 'number of entities' (a large number of verses), the 'number of respects' (covering different doctrines), the 'number of disanalogies' (when texts are read correctly, the result would have been entirely predictable), and the 'relevance' of the argument (only verses have been used which Pinnock quotes, and only direct understandings of those verses have been taken; nothing has been assumed unless it has been stated, e.g., the language that takes 'we' to be humankind). See I M Copi & C Cohen *Introduction to Logic* p 46 and pp 357ff (esp pp 363-5 for the categories).
- 151 D A Carson "Hermeneutics: A brief assessment of some recent trends" *Themelios*, Jan 1980 Vol 5 No 2 p 12