Clark H. Pinnock: *Set Forth Your Case. Studies in Christian Apologetics*. Nutley (N. J.): The Craig Press, 1967. 94. Paper, $1.50.

In this small book Clark Pinnock has presented some basic principles of Apologetics. It is immediately clear that he stands in the line of Apologetics represented by Benjamin B. Warfield (p. 6). This review will be concerned with the strength and weakness of the Apologetics in this book.

In the opinion of the reviewer, the chief strength of this book is found in the way the author illustrates the meaninglessness and crisis within modern Humanism. He illustrates this through examples taken from modern literature and art (p. 16). This is also the style of Dr. F. A. Schaeffer, to whom the author is indebted (p. 2). This emphasis makes the point in question concrete and establishes a hearing immediately with much of the younger generation. This is the strength of Schaeffer and Pinnock.

Another strength of the author is found in his attempt to find a basis for Apologetics in Scripture. He tries to find Scriptural precedent for his style of presenting the Gospel. On page 3 he gives a brief survey of the Greek word apologia. In chapter III, "Validating the Gospel," he presents a survey of the use of the sign in Scripture as validating the revelatory event or Word. This is Pinnock's model for Christian evidences. We have another such survey when he tries to refute the modern notion of faith as an unmotivated leap in the dark. Throughout the whole book there is, in general, an attempt to show that the type of Apologetics he is proposing finds its roots in Scripture.

A third strength is the compact critique in chapter II of modern irrationalistic theology, entitled "The Big Sellout." The strength of the treatment is that it sets forth in a clear and popular way an exceedingly important point, one which every Christian should be aware of today.

In general the style of the book is fresh. Its main strength lies in the fact that it is a popularization, which, of course, is greatly needed.

The weakness of the Apologetics of this book, however, outweighs its strengths. Because of his style and the fact that his book is a popularization, the author quickly skips over things be introduces. This makes it difficult to pin him down carefully. There are clear indications in the book, however, that what it presents is a form of Christian Rationalism. In the remainder of this review an effort will be made to make this clear from different angles.

First, the author does not seem to understand clearly enough what Rationalism is. It must be granted that his main enemy here is Irrationalism; but there are certain results stemming from an inadequate understanding of Rationalism which have an effect on his understanding of Irrationalism. Still worse, this lack of understanding seems to stem from the fact that there is Rationalism in his own position.

A careful study of the history of philosophy teaches that Rationalism as we find it in the 17th and 18th centuries is a movement which was rooted in Hellenistic thought. It could not have been present before Plato and Aristotle; because what is characteristic of all Rationalists is the religious veneration of the understanding, always the understanding as equipped with a priori's. The law for the cosmos is located in the human subject, not in a background world as in Plato nor in the object as in the objectivism of Democritus or Aristotle. All Rationalism is subjectivistic, whether it be scientific, practical, idealistic, or early or late Positivism or neo-Idealism. For Positivism the a priori is found in the knowing activity in the form of an a priori method, quite often the scientific method, but also in the practical method for the so-called spiritual sciences. Early Rationalism maintained the a priori in the form

of innate or inborn concepts, ideas, axioms, rules, rights, *e. g.*, "inalienable rights." The a priori is thought to have eternal validity, "everywhere and always." It holds as the law for all investigation of the empirical world and for all concept-forming. Understanding equipped with a priori's is called "ratio" first by Cicero. It comes with its own light, functioning as the lamp on a miner's cap, headlights on a car, or spectacles. It does not need, therefore, to refer beyond itself for any authorization; it possesses its own validity and authority. This little excursus is necessary to set Pinnock's view in its proper light.

Talking about two implacable foes, Rationalism and Mysticism, Pinnock says, "On the one hand *Rationalism* has never left much room for supernatural revelation and miraculous Incarnation…" (p. 4). Throughout the whole book he goes on to employ the distinction between natural and supernatural. This distinction is almost always a form of Christian Rationalism, an accommodation, on the one hand, to Rationalism and, on the other hand, a limitation of Rationalism to the natural by the employment of supernaturalism. Consequently, because of an inadequate knowledge of what Rationalism is, he fails to spot the subtle form in which Rationalism has crept into Christian thinking and has been combined with the Christian gospel. An example of this Rationalism in Christian thought is easily found in Floyd E. Hamilton's book, *The Basis of Christian Faith*, which is suggested by the author for further study and is included in his "A Selective Bibliography on Christian Apologetics" (p. 93).

Also along rationalistic lines the author writes, "The 'foolishness' of the gospel (1 Cor 1:21) is not the offense it renders to the ratio (reason) of man, but to his hubris (overweening pride)" (pp. 5f). The very term ratio is laden with rationalistic content. "Reason" is a mythical notion, but the author acts as if there could be a Christian idea of it. This betrays a very uncritical position with regard to the whole notion of ratio or reason. The very notion of "reason" brings with it the idea of the a priori, and it is impossible to use this term without ambiguity in Christian thinking. On the contrary, the hubris of modern man since the Renaissance is seen most clearly in his clinging to a religious veneration for ratio. Even in all forms of Irrationalism the notion of ratio or reason is maintained, only now its territory and validity are limited. If this were not the case, one would be hard pressed to explain the central problem in all Irrationalism, namely, the problem of universal validity and the transcendence of universal validity. The author, however, conceives of Irrationalism as the complete opposite of Rationalism (p. 22); he thus fails to see that they have subjectivism in common and that Irrationalism maintains Rationalism in a limited way within itself.

On pages 44–45 the author speaks of the role of evidence in Christian Apologetics. He contrasts the nature of historical evidence with mathematical demonstration. He says: "A display of evidences is aimed at encouraging people to put the gospel to the test and make their decision regarding it. Naturally the evidence we speak about is of a probable kind. Not the surest historical evidence for anything is equivalent to mathematical demonstration. That it is only probable does not mean it is worthless, however. For all legal and historical decisions are made upon the basis of probable judgment based on evidence. Since the whole of life proceeds on such a basis, it is not a weakness that Christian evidences should rest on it too. Human decisions are constantly made on the ground of probable evidence just because they are human" (pp. 44–45). Now granting that proof, evidence, and method are not the same in the various special sciences, it seems to the reviewer to be implicit in the author's comments that he thinks mathematics somehow is exempt from probability in a special way. A rationalistic view of mathematics found its surest ground in mathematical reason with a mathematical a priori. The author seems implicitly to

grant this, which would again seem to imply that the faith commitment of a mathematician does not influence his notion of demonstration very much. The author seems to be orientated to the Positivists here and is asserting the reliability of non-mathematical knowledge, but he seems to the reviewer to be granting too much to non-Christian mathematicians (pp. 54,63).

On page 56 the author appears to grant too much to the non-Christian when he writes: "All that we ask, is for a person to keep his anti-supernatural bias isolated from his historical integrity if only for the time it takes to face the person of Jesus Christ fairly. If we apply the same historical standards to the Gospels which we apply to Tacitus and Aristotle, our validation of the Christian message is well on the way." But right here he is in deep water, because the historical standards which non-Christians apply to ancient thinkers are often quite different from those of the Christian. No Humanist has ever interpreted Plato and Aristotle rightly, and the whole history of philosophy must in large measure be rewritten by the Christian, because the non-Christian can never be unbiased with respect to pagan thinkers. Form criticism would destroy the reliability of Scripture, but no less have the historical methods of non-Christians wrought havoc and done exegetical violence to almost all ancient texts.

This criticism of Pinnock brings us closer to the heart of his apologetics. In the interests of controverting subjectivism in modern theology and avoiding the Geschichte-Historie distinction of post-Kantian theology with which he deals in chapter 2, Pinnock develops his apologetic method, which he calls "logical incarnationalism" (p. 7).

It apparently escapes the author that the natural-supernatural distinction which he employs in defense of the Christian gospel is in large measure a historical precursor to the modern distinction between Geschichte and Historie.

For very good reasons the author picks his central point in the Incarnation. The chief reason lies in the fact that the Incarnation implies that God was acting in the empirical realm. Apologetics deals primarily in the area of pre-evangelism (p. 8), and evidences has the task of validation. Validation of the Gospel cannot take place if Christ did not come into history or become what Pinnock repeatedly calls "objective fact." There is something very healthy in this emphasis—at least when one sees how modern theology takes the significance of the Christian Gospel out of history. Laying stress on the Incarnation has two important results: first, "the fact of Christ can be shared with men without apology" (p. 7), and second, "the uniqueness of the Christian message is its open-to-investigation form" (p. 59).

Over against the subjectivism of modern theology Pinnock lays stress on the empirical, objective, verifiable character of the Gospel. From beginning to end the notion of the "objective" character of Christianity is stressed. At times it is difficult to know what he means by the term "objective." On page 64 he says: "It is crucial in evangelism and apologetics to have objective considerations to back up the claims for the gospel. The sinner needs to know that the gospel is not the concoction of a human imagination, but is objectively true." Here the term "objective" obviously means non-imaginative. At the bottom of page 64 "objective" means capable of verification, and on page 12 it has the significance of that which is "public" and open to testing procedures. The author is working uncritically with a subject-object relation. He says, "Soon the break with any subject-object distinction will be complete, and the past will entirely vanish" (p. 59). He also says, "The destruction of historical objectivity and the elimination of the essential subject-object distinction has proved fatal to Christian apologetics" (p. 88).

Now the subject-object relation is not that which should characterize theoretical scientific thought. The subject-object relation is a structural, ontic relation given with the creation order and experienced as a matter of course in ordinary experience. It should not be made into a theoretical, epistemological relation, construed within the scheme of inner and outer (in the mind and outside the mind), because thereby it becomes impossible to see that not only man but also things and events are subjects. As a consequence, there can be a subject-subject relation as well as a subject-object relation.

Humanistic thought tries to discover a refuge for its autonomy in the logical subject-object relation, which it then identifies with the theoretical relation. Theoretical thought, however, is characterized by a different complicated structure. It is the failure to see this state of affairs in the history of Reformed theology that has resulted in its ascribing a partial autonomy to theoretical thought, which it then seeks to correct either by an empirical method, or by supernatural presuppositions, or both.

That Pinnock is embroiled in this same misunderstanding is evident from the way he values the inductive or empirical method. He says, "We must challenge the non-Christian to suspend his prejudice against Christianity for the time it takes to examine fairly the evidence for the Christian faith, to take up a proven method for ascertaining truth, the empirical method, and apply it to the biblical records" (p. 86); and again he states, "The error in the old quest was not its inductive methodology (that was its virtue), but rather its antisupernatural bias" (p. 59); and again, "All the new quest has really done is to retain what it ought to have rejected (the naturalistic bias) and rejected what it ought to have retained (the inductive procedure" (p. 59). It is the author's contention that the older apologetic appealed to personal experiences, but that such an appeal is no longer adequate because for the modern man personal experience has become identified with relativity. It is partly with this in mind that he appeals so strongly to the empirical method, the inductive method, the methods of testing, etc. Now a more deceptive enemy of Christianity than subjectivism is objectivism. Objectivism places the law for the subject (human or animal subject) in the objective functions of things. One hesitates to call Pinnock an objectivist because no objectivist is a rationalist. All rationalists are subjectivists. Neither is Pinnock an early rationalist. It may well be, however, that Pinnock is in some sense accommodating himself to late Positivism. Late Positivism found its a priori in its historical method of verification. Like Pinnock it stressed being objective after the fashion of the natural sciences; but it rejected the natural scientific method as the method for historical science. It stressed being inductive, empirical, and objective, and emphasized subjecting all truth to public verification, as Pinnock does. It operated, as Pinnock also does with the subject-object relation as its basic theoretical distinction. It thought, as Pinnock does, that the basic order of the cosmos is of a logical character. This late Positivism, however, was not objectivistic; it was founded in an a priori method which was the possession of the subject. Thus the subject possessed the law by which to verify and validate the objective facts of experience. This, it seems, is what Pinnock also wants to do.

In a few places Pinnock warns against Positivists, saying that they are like the earlier Rationalists in that they are anti-historical. But here he has in mind basically the early scientific Positivists. The later Positivists remain unchallenged.

Pinnock stresses constantly the rational, objective, empirical, intelligible character of the Gospel. In all cases his intentions are good, for he is warning us against modern activistic subjectivism in its historistic and existentialistic expressions; but he cannot really establish his point. The repeated use of terms like "rational" and "intelligible"

and his statements on page 22 about the Logos seem to indicate that he is trapped in the logicism of the old Logos speculation of the Patristic period. He says: "The revolt against reason, the characteristic mental attitude of our age, has religious roots, and is directed against the Logos, Jesus Christ, who created all things by the word of his power (John 1:3, Heb 1:3). It is the denial of God's structure in order to replace it with a man-centered structure" (p. 22). The close association in this quotation of reason, Logos, and God's structure, along with his emphasis on the rational, intelligible character of the Gospel, seems to show that Pinnock is still caught in a logicism. An adequate view, on the contrary, must recognize that the structural order of the cosmos is the law of God, which is his command, his will, and consequently the order which he has put to the cosmos, the order which "holds for" the creation. The law for the logical or analytical is an aspect of the total cosmic law, and as analytical law it rules man's analytical making of distinctions and forming of concepts. The cosmic structural law is not itself of a logical character, but it is what makes logical activity and logical results possible. The structure, order, and coherence of the cosmos cannot be conceived of as divine logic, of which then man has finite, probable knowledge and God exhaustive, intuitive knowledge. The counter-argument, that if the structural cosmic law is not logical it must be illogical, does not have any weight, because the opposition logical/illogical is an intra-cosmic opposition made possible by the cosmic law. The logos speculation tried to know the mind of God by reducing God to a divine thinker with a rational world plan, thereby doing injustice to the non-logical character of much of created reality.

As a consequence of his rationalism, Pinnock naively thinks that by showing that the anti-supernatural bias is old hat and by asking the non-Christian to divest himself momentarily of this rather outdated anti-supernaturalism, the proper objective climate can be produced for validating the Christian claim. Pinnock does not mean, however, that the non-Christian, by divesting himself of an anti-supernatural bias, has given up his autonomy completely, because he constantly appeals to well-established methods and to objective historical criteria independent of the Christian or non-Christian positions. These are supposed to validate the Christian position and to lead a person to accept Christianity, if the Holy Spirit opens his heart. Just to suspend (pp. 56,86) one's bias, however, while ascribing validity to one's neutral criteria and neutral empirical method, will never challenge the non-Christian's autonomy.

The question of a point of contact in Apologetics is of critical importance. Dooyeweerd's doctrine of undeniable states of affairs, Pinnock's logical incarnationalism, and C. Van Til's placing himself on the position of his opponent "for arguments sake" are all under fire. This question is of critical importance to the evaluation of Pinnock's position, but it appears to the reviewer that a solution will not be found until a Christian, Scriptural theory of knowledge is further developed, one that takes up the questions of criteriology, methodology, and evidence. Accommodation to British Idealism, commonsense Realism, or practicalistic, logical Positivism will always leave the Christian in the lurch.

The presence of certain phrases in Pinnock, such as "self-contained Trinity," "epistemological self-consciousness," and an emphasis on presuppositions suggests some dependence on Dr. Van Til.

The discipline of Apologetics, it seems to the reviewer, has served a good function historically because of the lack of an articulated Christian world-and-life-view, and better still of a Christian, Scriptural philosophy. Now that a truly Scriptural philosophy has indeed begun in the Netherlands, one that investigates creational revelation by the light of Scriptural word-revelation, the historical failings,

limitations, and inadequacies of theological apologetics are clear. Apologetics should seek instead to popularize the far more comprehensive witness of Christian philosophy, since concrete defense of the Gospel is now taking form in all the special sciences as well as in all the branches of philosophy. Theology as a special science needs the undergirding of a Scriptural philosophy. Apologetics has taken an ambiguous stance between theology and philosophy. The same ambiguity characterizes Pinnock's book from beginning to end. In his final chapter, however, Pinnock sees the need for a more comprehensive approach. This is heartening.

There are many minor points at which Pinnock's book fails. For instance, he speaks of one's entrusting "his life to Christ or not, for time and eternity" (pp. 63f). Eternity and time are not successive in that way. Eternal life is timed and is the present possession of believers. Time, on the other hand, is not for a time but is a creational ordinance. It is therefore endless and does not cease with the judgment day.

In his discussion of the proofs for the existence of God Pinnock says: "The theistic proofs for God's existence constitute a laborious, painstaking, and patient justification of theism. They attempt to set forth in rational argument what the soul grasps intuitively" (p. 75). Here he seems to work uncritically in rapid succession with the terms "theism" and "soul," possibly indicating that he holds to the scholastic ideas of a substantial rational soul and of intuitive knowledge. The notion that the soul grasps intuitively is so vague and unclear and is so inseparable from immanence-thinking and its use of intuition, that the general weakness of Pinnock's approach again comes to view. Although his book is admirable in certain respects, Pinnock accommodates himself time and time again in the most subtle fashion, to non-Christian thinking. If he were to work in closer conjunction with a community of Reformed philosophers, he would be made much more aware of his penchant for synthesis and of the "cafeteria of clues" by which synthesis can be detected.

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