

BOOK REVIEW

of

Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture*,
The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988.

This book is in the Evangel Library,
and this review is presented by Larry D. Paarmann.

Noel Weeks, who teaches history at the University of Sydney, has B.D. and Th.M. degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary, and the Ph.D. in Mediterranean Studies from Brandeis University. He is a member of the Reformed Churches of Australia and is involved in the Christian School movement there. He is sought after as a speaker and writer on many issues. I'm not sure if he has written other books, but this one, *The Sufficiency of Scripture*, shows wide learning, critical thinking, and a commitment to the Scriptures as the Word of God written. The fact that the book is still in print some eleven years after its release suggests that it has been well received. Glen Averill informs me that it was a required book in one of his theological courses at Whitfield Seminary.

The debate about the Scriptures in the early part of the 20th century was between evangelical and liberal Christians. That debate ended in a more-or-less standoff. The dialog does not continue much now. Liberals stress the human element in the production of the Scriptures, with what evangelicals consider a very low view of inspiration, whereas evangelicals hold to the Scriptures as God's revelation of Himself to mankind. The burden of Noel Weeks, in this book, is that now evangelicals show much confusion on the doctrine of Scripture.

In Part One, Weeks presents some of the basic issues in the doctrine of Scripture. Weeks is concerned that some evangelicals have a tendency to restrict the area of Biblical infallibility. The tendency is to limit it to religious questions. Supporters of this position claim that it is only the heart of the Gospel where we need insist on infallibility. Statements such as "the Bible is not a textbook on science," or history, or psychology, etc. are not uncommon. Scientific, or historical accuracy in Scripture is irrelevant to the Gospel, some will say. What is important is to bring men to see their need of Christ as Savior and Lord. Therefore, in Part One, Weeks gives presentations on general and special revelation, Providence and Scripture, words and meaning, the human element in Scripture, etc. The thrust of Part One is to provide a foundation upon which the applications in Part Two can build.

In Part Two, Weeks presents a number of specific applications which are controversial and where Christians are divided. It is Weeks' attempt to show that Christians are divided on these topics only because they have not properly studied the Scriptures for a proper understanding of what the Scriptures teach, are confused and inconsistent in applying Scriptural fundamentals, have a weak view of inspiration, or are simply disobedient to God's Word. Given that a Christian desires to obey God's Word, most, if not all, of these controversial issues hinge on one's approach to the doctrine of Scripture and commitment to its accuracy and sufficiency.

The first specific application where Weeks applies the doctrine of Scripture is to the creation account. He says that since "Scripture records factually an event of the greatest interest to science, namely, the origin of man, it is impossible to argue that Scripture does not in any way impinge upon science." A couple pages later, he adds "We have seen that the narrative is in prose and integrates into the historical narrative of the rest of Genesis. The references to it from elsewhere in Scripture take it as a narrative of events which occurred as described. What other evidence could one ask for as proof for treating the account as historical narrative and not poetic parable?" Weeks continues, in following chapters, applying the doctrine of Scripture to the interpretation of prophesy, women in teaching / ruling offices in the Church, slavery, the worship and government of the Church, psychology, and the political and social task of the Church.

In his conclusion, Weeks suggests that there "is widely expressed concern today that the evangelical church has been guilty of a retreat into the emotional, the private and individual. Social and political concerns have been neglected." Weeks continues, "Does not limited inspiration represent another form of retreat? In effect it says that the Scripture says nothing definite to the disciplines of science, history and so on. The Christian leaves these areas to be dominated by non-Christian approaches and assumptions." "What are we led to if we accept the idea of Scripture having nothing to say in important areas? People affirm that they believe in 'creation' but the mechanism proposed is indistinguishable from what is supposed to have happened without any God being involved. People affirm belief in the usefulness of prayer and a belief in conversion through the work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless they are embarrassed by the idea that God actually acts upon the world or upon people. They say that the Bible is the Word of God yet doubt what it says." This is a good book on critical thinking about the Bible.