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Letters to the Editor
Eternity
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Philadelphia, PA 19103

I was flattered to see the prominent position ETERNITY gave to Clark Pinnock's review of my latest book, Faith Founded on Fact, in its September issue (pp. 50-51). It is said that bad publicity is better than no publicity, and I shall console myself with that thought.

Two characteristics of the review, however, are troubling -- both from a scholarly and from a spiritual standpoint. First, there is the unfairness and misleading nature of the reviewer's comments, e.g., that "only the second chapter is really new, and it consists of a lengthy self-defense." In point of fact, that chapter does not at all present a "self-defense. . . against [my] version of value-free empiricism", it offers a critique of contemporary philosophical arguments against the miraculous, such as those presented by Antony Flew in God and Philosophy, and advances (if I do say so myself) the Christian case in this very difficult and crucial area. Moreover, a number of the other essays in the volume have previously been available to a very limited audience (e.g., an essay published only in England, another issued in a Swedish Festschrift in the Swedish language, etc.). Would not Pinnock have done the reader of his review a service by at least listing the titles of the major essays in my book, so the reader could have decided for himself whether they were new to him?

But this brings me to the second sad feature of the review: instead of really dealing with the content of the book, Pinnock engages in unworthy ad hominem argumentation from beginning to end. He declares that I suffer "isolation within the evangelical coalition" (a strange charge, since I was among the six persons chosen to represent evangelicalism in personal visits to Sadat and Begin in April, my speaking and writing invitations inside and outside of the evangelical community have never been greater than they are at present, and my books are being translated like crazy by evangelicals on the European continent). He expresses irritation at my academic degrees and makes the appalling -- indeed defamatory -- innuendo that I substitute academics for love and for concern for the lost: "we do not need scholarship. . . which is not allied to a love of the brethren, and more than that, a love even of the enemy." But my book speaks for itself, and I defy any reader to peruse such essays in it as "Mass Communications and Scriptural Proclamation" and not know where my heart lies.

Whenever a review goes really wide of the mark, and when ad hominem substitutes for content, the reason usually is that something has gotten the reviewer's goat. Pinnock nowhere mentions it, but could it just possibly be the fact that the final essay in my volume deals with biblical inerrancy, and specifically rejects (by name) Pinnock's view that the inerrancy question should not be permitted to divide evangelicalism? My gentleness in critiquing Pinnock there belies his charge that I am loveless--but it would seem that he is more than ordinarily sensitive to any kind of criticism. Maybe the problem is Pinnock's? At the 1978 Conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians held at Altenkirchen, Germany in August, the question most frequently--and regretfully--asked me in private was: What has happened to Clark Pinnock's theological perspective?

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