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Dr. Clark Pinnock Sets Forth His Case

IT'S TIME FOR TOLERANCE!

However else one may disagree with "objectionist" philosopher Ayn Rand, a truly devastating feature of her argument is in laying bare the "all pervading evasiveness" of current non-objective philosophies. Now, at last, we have a Christian apologist-- Dr. Clark H. Pinnock--who calls attention to these all-pervading attempts to evade objective reality--and he marshalls his arguments to the support of Christianity!

His recently published book, Set Forth Your Case, points out that a convert, although not forced by logic into Christianity, can at least feel that his faith is not without rational basis. An awareness of reality outside of Christ leads him to a meaningless view of life--and ends in despair, or what Sartre terms "Nausea". The task of the evangelist, then, becomes two-fold: (1) "Nudge (the non-Christian) toward the logic of his own position", and thereby reveal to him his true situation of despair; and (2) "Urge him to the logic of ours", offering him a convincing alternative.

Dogmatics gratifies the initiated, but it appears to be a rather impotent tool of evangelism. If we abandon apologetics (as has been the recent trend) and call simply for a "leap of faith", are we not asking the potential convert to span a rather prohibiting chasm? Although faith is required, is it not our responsibility to present the gospel in such a way that the commitment becomes intellectually palatable? Since, as Dr. Pinnock has said, "the heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false."

Dr. Pinnock's book is not simply another published product of mental gymnastics. It calls for a practical and intelligent approach to evangelism. It challenges the serious evangelist to know the modern mind, to know his faith, to abandon the lazy witness of "faith in faith", and to "set forth his case".

---Chip Conyers

NEW ARRIVAL

On Sunday, a son, 7lb. 10 oz., was born to James and Esther Overbay.

Not since the furor and tumult of the twenties and thirties has the tension between "Liberals" and "Conservatives" been greater in Baptist life. What will happen when the tensile strength of the Convention garment has been reached? Sadly there is only one outcome-- it will rip and tear apart--unless something can be done to relieve the pressures on the fabric.

Something must be done, and soon, to offset the strain upon the fragile threads of unity which are currently holding the material together. It is time for tolerance!

The best way to decrease the strain is to ease off from both sides. We must be willing to give and take so that the thinly stretched cloth can contract back into shape, and in which the true pattern of our denomination can be seen and observed once more.

Therefore, let's pull the bolt off the loom and examine it under the illumination of him who is the light of the world. It was he who said to his disciples:

"If you love me, obey my commandments, A new commandment I give you: love one another".

(John 14:15; 13:34)

As people who value the Bible, what does it say in matters like this? Let's read it and let it speak to us; not defend it or dissect it! Examine Galatians 5:14-26; Ephesians 4:17-32; of Colossians 3:8-17 for background material. (You choose your own translation, it matters not. The truth will shine through to you).

I'm proud to be a Baptist! I'm proud of our heritage and our accomplishments, and I look forward to our future. Consequently, as a seminary student and a pastor in the Convention family, I want to propose five tenets for tolerance:

First of all, there is a natural tension that exists between church and institution merely by virtue of their calling. Scholars are involved in theory, detail; educational activities. Pastors and laymen are absorbed in practice and principles; everyday applications. Which is more important? Neither, for both are necessary. If through mutual respect and understand-

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ing, we seek to profit and learn from each, they are equally important and edifying.

Secondly, we must admit to a "communication gap" among us. Conservatives must seek to understand the language of Liberals and not be so quick to jump to conclusions. Liberals must help them to understand what they are saying and on what their conclusions are based. This is a real problem which must be worked on from both ends. We cannot hope to understand one another if we are not willing to talk to each other in terms that each of us can grasp. Together we can overcome this chasm which exists because of suspicions, distrust, and the green monster of jealousy.

Thirdly, Liberals who are obsessed with the ecumenical movement would do better to seek first the unity of those of similar faith and denominational loyalties. This would weave a still stronger fabric on which we can blend and shape our designs for the future. Conservatives would do well to not worship "the Book," but the person of the book to which it points them. This would eliminate many misunderstandings about the Book.

A fourth reason is vital to our survival as a major denomination and to Christ's church. Both must unite and present a solid front because of evil in the world. We have enough enemies on the outside without fighting among ourselves. This is a life or death struggle and not a matter of semantics and internal tensions only. Our destiny hinges on the outcome of our differences and similarities--not as a denomination; not as Protestants; but as human beings. For people are not labels. Labels are things which divide us. Let us concentrate our efforts on the things which unite us: forgiveness, eternal life, fellowship, and the person of Christ.

Most of all, we need to lift each other in prayer. Because we are human, we are not infallible nor are we equal in wisdom or convictions to God. Remember too, that the strongest rope breaks one strand at a time. The ties that bind us also have their breaking points.

NOW is the time for tolerance!

----Gene Carnell

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 \*\*\*\* LETTERS \*\*\*\*

In previous letters to The Enquiry individuals have been taking whacks at each other--liberal whacks conservative; conservative whacks liberal. The labels become meaningless when we look at the New  
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Testament imperative to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Everyone of us on this campus has a calling. We may disagree with each other on certain issues but there is one issue which we hold in common, namely to proclaim the Gospel and to love each other with a Christian love. Is taking whacks at each other Christian love?? When are we going to realize that the Church already has enough divisions without creating more of such. This is one reason why the Church is losing ground in winning the world to Jesus Christ. In the second place, Paul in his letter to the Philippians says that even if Christ is preached with envy and strife Christ is preached. God is only going to use that part which will redeem mankind and fulfill His purpose.

The mission conference on this campus was to stimulate the minds of college students and seminarians. One purpose of the conference was to look at the world and see reality. Did we open our eyes and look? Did we open our ears and hear the cry of humanity? Are we afraid of reality? It seems that reality shocked some of us. If reality really disturbs us that much maybe we had better look at the structure of our faith and see if it is made of gold, silver, and precious stone; or hay, wood, and stubble. It seems that we have the attitude that if our brother disagrees with us that we should whack him with cutting words. Is this Christian love? Does a true minister of Jesus Christ hate his fellow brother? Maybe we should all read again I John 4:11-21 and let God's Spirit change our attitude.

---Ralph L. Sparrow, Jr.

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 "I do not recall whose thought prompted the formulation of this first paragraph, but I am grateful. 'It takes neither a wise man nor a good man to denude the church and lead it thus naked down the main street before the amused gaze of an unbelieving world. Almost any simpleton can do it and, on most any day, one can find a score of books in any religious bookstore which do little more than engage in this Godiva-like exercise.'

Most of these critics have either forgotten or else they never knew what the church is. The church is a society of sinners. As a matter of fact, it is the only organization I know of where one of the conditions for membership is that you must admit that you are imperfect. The church welcomes only sinners. It is made up of men and women who recognize their imper-

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fections and, having come to trust their lives to God through Jesus Christ, join hands with others like themselves the better to worship and witness. The church, in the time parenthesis, is imperfect. How could she be other wise with men and women like ourselves in her membership.

Some of the critics start from the false premise that the early church was practically perfect; that theirs was a totally dedicated membership. It isn't far from that illusion to the conclusion that the church today is totally and hopelessly apostate. The facts simply do not support such a wild contention. If one makes allowance for the difference in time and circumstance, the contemporary church is not at all unlike the early church.

For instance, take a look at that first little band of disciples gathered about Jesus. The Treasurer was a thief (John 12:6) who betrayed his leader for a bribe and, in a fit of remorse, committed suicide. One of them, as late as the Crucifixion, could still "cuss like a sailor". At the Last Supper they jockeyed for position and only slightly resembled the lowly Galilean. You say, 'That was before Pentecost and the indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit! True, but what about Ananias and Sapphira? What about the 'race question' becoming the root out of which necessity for deacons grew? And what about the split in the foreign missionary personnel (between Paul and Barnabas) over who should constitute the second team. Peter and Paul had 'eye-ball-to-eyeball' confrontation in one of the early church business meetings, and if one is interested in knowing how sorry some of those early Christians were, let him read Corinthians.

What these critics either do not know or will not learn is that the church has never been at any point in history much different than it is now. There have always been the dedicated and the indifferent; the humble and the proud; the zealous and the apathetic.

Don't misunderstand me. The church needs critics but she needs critics who love her. It is relatively easy to snipe at the church from a safe distance. The church has many faults. They need to be corrected. I have my doubts, however, that they will be corrected by carping disparagers who have grown fat and professional by writing books based on the latest disrobing technique. Most of these critics are not pastors. If they were and were doing the job of shep-

herding the flock, they wouldn't have time to write books.

I write then to remind you that in spite of all their faults, those early Christians kept the faith; maintained the oral tradition until guided by the Holy Spirit to write it down; perserved the manuscripts; set the canon of Holy Scripture; guarded against error; translated it all into the language of the people; wrote commentaries, formulated creeds, and, in the end died without having 'received the promises, but only saw them a long way off' (Heb.11:13). It may be said in truth that without them the world would not have known of Christ. There is hope!

(Copied ---Dr. Carl E. Bates, First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.)

Submitted by T. A. Sheppard

Dear fellow members of the Heavenly kingdom who reside in earthly places. Greetings to all who bear witness to God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the past, I thought I was a pretty good fellow, although there have been times when I resigned or became sterile in my place as God's earthly instrument for witnessing.

Recently while in one of my appointed places of worship, I began a tremendously important phase of my earthly pilgrimage. This phase set off some important mechanism in the beginning of a period often called self-examination, or a better and more traditional term, called "soul searching." I have not yet gone through all the processes involved, but feel that I have at least made a start.

Many of you have been kind and helpful, and I wish to thank you. Some have been puzzled by my behavior and tried to understand it. I'm sure I have hurt some deeply and hope I can help to bind and heal their wounds.

So when we meet along the way I will try to understand you and hope that you will continue to understand me. I confess that I have been a burden to many in the past, but in the future will try to be a burden-lifter and a burden-bearer.

So do not hesitate to call on me for assistance in any way which I can share with you; and I will continue to seek guidance, assistance and prayers from you. Perhaps as fellow "soul brothers" under the guidance of one unifying source of all who sincerely desire the Way of truth, we may express some witness to our faith.

Your brother in Christ,

Thomas A. Cherry

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