The “New Tolerance” —
The “intolerance” of those who call for tolerance

Unless you’ve been asleep or in a coma for the past decade or so, it is a new age; it is altogether different. If you think things are the same as they were at the turn of the century, are you in for a surprise! Someone said that there is one thing being taught to our children today—from kindergarten through graduate school—and that is the prevailing theme of the Post-Modern Age curriculum. Do you know what it is? Tolerance! Steven Bates, The Guardian newspaper’s religious affairs correspondent writes, “Tolerance may indeed be the dominant theme of the modern curriculum. The authors of a recent study of American high schools concluded tolerating diversity is the moral glue that holds schools together. One study of American history books found toleration presented as the only ‘religious’ idea worth remembering.” One writer in the magazine, Teaching Tolerance, stated that “tolerance is an idea that is universally relevant [to every class], and it belongs everywhere in the curriculum.” Teachers are being told how to teach it in every single subject. From history to literature to mathematics, the children are learning tolerance.

Now you may say, “That’s wonderful. We’re all in favor of tolerance.” Of course we are—at least tolerance as we have always known tolerance to be defined: 

tol-er-ance (tōl‘ər-əns) n. is being willing to put up with, endure, bear with those whose views or lifestyles are different from others’ views without agreeing with them. But if you think that is what is being taught in the curricula of this country, you are naive.

Historically in America, the writings of Thomas Paine (1737-1809) and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) express a theory of toleration that is tied directly to political practice. Not only were they critical of unrestrained political power, but they were also committed to an ecumenical approach to religious belief. Paine makes it clear in his Rights of Man (1791) that toleration for religious diversity is essential because political and ecclesiastical authorities do not have the capacity to adjudicate matters of conscience. “Mind thine own concerns. If he believes not as thou believest, it is a proof that thou believest not as he believeth, and there is no earthly power can determine between you.” So by the end of the 18th Century, we see tolerant ideas embodied in practice in the U.S. Constitution’s Bill of Rights—the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution (ratified in 1791). Collectively these amendments serve to restrain political power. Specifically, the First Amendment states that there can be no law, which prohibits freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition to the government.

Subsequent developments in U.S. constitutional law have led to a tradition of respect for citizens’ freedom of thought, speech, and action. In the past, intolerance meant bigotry or prejudice; judging someone or excluding people because of the color of their skin or their country of origin, or ridiculing people for their beliefs. It also usually implied an attempt to use force to oppose other points of views. Intolerance, in the old sense, offends.

Certainly every true, biblically adherent Christian should be tolerant in the correct and historical meaning of that word. It is what the Bible means in the love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13: “Love endures all things.” Every Christian should have a benevolent attitude to views and practices different from one’s own, even though he/she doesn’t agree with them.

But the word tolerance has changed in meaning. In modern parlance intolerance has come to mean simply disagreeing with anyone's beliefs. Tolerance now is the willingness to respect lifestyles, no matter how deviating they may be from the society's standard for behavior. The practical outcome of the modern view of tolerance is

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that now everything seems to be acceptable.

THE NEW TOLERANCE
The "new tolerance" means this: Not only do you put up with and endure and bear with those who have different views, habits, and/or lifestyles than your own, but now you agree with their views, as well. Furthermore, you hold that their lifestyle is equally true and equally valid as your own and, therefore, there is no possible way that you could be intolerant because there is nothing to be intolerant of. Moreover, you must even be willing to promote and endorse that other lifestyle, since it is every bit as good as yours.

Now you may say, "That is a most totally foreign ideology. I've never even heard of it before." Your children and grandchildren have heard it. They are hearing about it all the time; and you will probably find out that they have been hearing about it when they come home sometime and tell you that you are an ignorant bigot, and that you are intolerant. Then you will find out what they have been learning. Dr. Frederick W. Hill, a school administrator, said, "It is the mission of the public schools not to tolerate intolerance."

How can this be? It begins with the idea that there is no 'absolute truth.' University of Chicago professor Allan Bloom in the blockbuster book, The Closing of the American Mind, states in the first page, the first chapter, and the first sentence that the one thing all high school graduates have come to believe and every college professor can be assured that they believe when they enter into college is this: There are no absolutes. Everything is relative. That is the one thing they have learned. Therefore, one kind of lifestyle is as good as another kind of lifestyle. You mustn't judge because there is no absolute standard to judge by!

It is interesting that when you ask a college student how they know that there are no absolutes, they may say to you, "Where have you been? Haven't you ever heard of Albert Einstein? Don't you know about the Theory of Relativity, and that Einstein said that all things are relative?"

The fact is, Einstein didn't say that. This is what Einstein said: "Relativity refers to the realm of physics—not ethics." He was appalled to find people applying relativity to the moral realm; but they have. Therefore, everything is relative; there are no absolute truths or standards or morality. Consequently, you can't look on their views as inferior to yours. You must agree that they are equal.

FEELINGS
Furthermore, there is a total concept of 'feeling' that is involved in Post-Modernism. Post-Modernism says that rationalism has failed. The Modernist declares, "Faith has failed. We must be rational." The Post-Modernist cries, "Reason has failed. We must resort to feeling." How often you hear people say, 'Well, I feel that … so and so …" or "I don't feel that … " It is not "I think …," but "I feel …" The only important thing is how they feel.

It appears we have even invented a new civil right—the civil right for my feelings not to be hurt. Some time ago, a young lady in a high school sued because they sang a patriotic song that had some religious words in it. She said that it hurt her "feelings." The whole machinery stopped; the whole school ground to a halt. The courts moved into action and ruled—"We cannot have anybody's feelings hurt." And so they ceased to sing the patriotic song because her feelings were hurt!

Part of Post-Modernism is this 'universal individual.' We don't have countries. We don't have anything except the individual. There is no human race. There is just the individual and his/her feelings, and they must not be offended. We have gone from a democracy—a government by the people, ruled by the majority, and absent of arbitrary class distinctions and privileges—to a government by the sovereign individual, or should I say, by the sovereign individual's feelings.

Surely you have run into this in talking with people about different things. You will hear this more in the future—that there is no truth, there are no moral absolutes, and the important thing is my individual feelings.

CULTURE
That brings us to the fact that there are not even any universal truths of any kind for people; that whatever truths we have are simply societal constructs that each community or society or nation has created; and these do not apply beyond the borders of that culture. All morality is culturally created and culturally defined. This concept ran into trouble in the late '40s at the Nuremberg trials that brought Nazi war criminals to justice. The Nazi defendants said, taking the offensive to the allied prosecutors, "Who are you to come in here and tell us that killing millions of people is wrong. We legalized it. According to our laws it was legal. Do you not know that all ethics and morality are relative? They are culturally created and they are limited to the culture. How can you possibly come and try to impose your cultural views upon us?" The prosecutors didn't know what to do, because for twenty years they had been teaching in the universities that very truth. (It is not a truth, but to them it was.) What were they going to do? Well, they appealed to a rather vague 'natural religion'—a religion that is universally discernible by all people based on principles derived solely from human reason and the study of nature apart from any miraculous or supernatural revelation. They had to plea to that thinking in order to find some way of condemning what these people had done. So it

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice." (Proverbs 29:2)
is the end of all moral absolutes. Truth does not exist in any objective sense, and it is always limited to a particular culture.

THE LAST VIRTUE OF A DEPRAVED SOCIETY

The late Dr. D. James Kennedy repeatedly said that tolerance is the last virtue of a depraved society. When you have an immoral society that has blatantly, proudly, violated all of the commandments of God, there is one last virtue they insist upon: tolerance for their immorality. They will not have you condemning what they have done as being wrong, and they have created a whole world in which it is not, and in which they are no longer the criminal or the villain or the evil person, but you are! And so they call evil good, and good evil.

The Old Testament Prophet Isaiah spoke of the day when he prophesized for the ages – “Wow to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.” (Isaiah 5:20)

“HATE” CRIMES

There is a nation in our world today that would not even allow the mention of homosexuality on television or radio. If anybody were to read aloud Romans 1 … or any of the many other passages in the Bible where God condemns homosexuality … that person would go straight to jail. You ask, “What benighted nation would have such an immoral law as that?” It is Canada. Why, the very things I’ve written in this issue of The Clarion Call could land me in prison in Canada. And don’t foolishly think for a minute that this could never happen in America!

While speech opposing homosexuality remains legal in the United States, some note that the nation is heading in the same direction as Canada … as discrimination laws are being enforced by state Human Rights Commissions across the country. A number of incidents have made headlines in recent years where American businesses have been punished under anti-discrimination laws for their refusal to accommodate the homosexual lifestyle, such as the story of Christian photographers Elane Photography in New Mexico that was forced to pay $700 in fines for declining to shoot a same-sex commitment service; or the Vermont bed and breakfast owners who settled a lawsuit with two lesbians who were told by an employee that they could not hold their commitment service on the property; or a Kentucky t-shirt screening company who was recently punished for declining to complete a work order involving t-shirts that were to be worn at a local homosexual pride parade. The State of Washington is suing a small flower shop after the owner of Arlene’s Flowers in Richland, WA declined to provide flowers for a homosexual wedding – based on her religious beliefs. She is facing thousands of dollars in fines and penalties for allegedly violating the state’s Consumer Protection Act. “If a business provides a product or service to opposite-sex couples for their weddings, then it must provide same-sex couples the same product or service,” said Attorney General Bob Ferguson in a statement. The Attorney General is seeking a permanent injunction forcing the flower shop to comply with the law – as well as $2,000 in fines for every violation. Representing the floral shop owner, Attorney JD Bristol called the notion that his client was guilty of discrimination “nonsense.” He told The Seattle Times that he believes the state is trying to make an example of the flower shop. “This is about gay marriage, it’s not about a person being gay,” he told the newspaper. “She [the owner] has a conscientious objection to homosexual marriage, not homosexuality. It violates her conscience.”

If it is true what they say …

• that there are no judgments by which we can condemn any standard of right and wrong or good and evil as better or worse,

• that the only thing that matters is our feelings,

• that you cannot separate what a person does from what the person is, and

• that the Christian belief of 2,000 years of loving the sinner, but hating the sin is now taboo,

… then it only stands to reason that there are no moral absolute truths.

Today’s high school students believe that you cannot criticize anything anyone believes without criticizing and finding fault with that person. Therefore, if you have a discussion of atheism with an atheist, you are finding fault with that individual and criticizing his/her views. You can’t separate the two. If you find fault with a thief and you would criticize his stealing, though as a Christian you would want to love the thief, then you are finding fault with him, not merely the act of stealing. The same thing is true of a homosexual. You cannot have a rational discussion of the rightness or wrongness of homosexuality, because if you find any fault with it, you are finding fault with that person who will tell you that “what I do is what I am,” and you cannot divide between the two. The overwhelming majority of high school students in America believe that. They believe it passionately. They have been thoroughly indoctrinated with that idea.

We’re going down a slippery sloop. Some would say, “Does it matter?” Yes, it matters, because when you are criticizing what that person believes or what he does, you are hurting his “feelings;” you are demonstrating hatefulfulness to him, and that is a “hate crime.” And that can put you on trial in a court of law. For the first time in American history, you can be judged for what is inside your head or inside your
AN ABSOLUTE RELIGION
Christianity is the most loving religion in the world. God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, who gave His life (John 3:16). God gives to us eternal life (John 3:36). God forgives us and He urges us to love others, to love our friends, to love our enemies, to love even those who kill us (Matthew 5:43-45). But Christianity is an ‘absolute religion.’ All of these strictures do not apply to other religions—only to Christianity, because that is the only absolute religion. You can belong to three or four of the other world’s religions at the same time. But God is a jealous God, and He will not have any other gods before Him (Exodus 20:5). All of the gods of the heathen, He says, are but idols (Deuteronomy 32:16). But God says, “I am Jehovah. There is none like me,” (Isaiah 46:9) Christ says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

That statement alone could one day, in America, have landed Him in jail because it is absolutist.

Only Christ died for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). Only Christ rose again from the dead (Acts 10:40-41). Only Christ offers eternal life freely to those who will trust in Him (John 5:34). Christianity is diametrically opposite from all of the other world’s religions in those things that really matter. But because it is absolute and not relative, it is Christianity against which all the slanderous attacks are aimed.

America is adrift on a sea of moral relativism. The only absolute that remains for many is the absolute right to “do whatever I want to do.” The Framers of our nation created the most prosperous country the world has ever witnessed. They designed a republic based on law that was derived from biblical revelation. The Declaration of Independence reflected their commitment to absolute truth: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” In the closing line of that pronouncement they refer to their willingness to risk their fortune and their lives with the confidence that “Divine Providence” would assist them. God is again looking for such men and women.

The fact that America was established as a Christian nation is without question when the historical record is allowed to speak. As the Founding Fathers sought to honor God as they built their new nation, the Lord in turn provided a protective hedge around them enabling the country to prosper beyond their grandest dreams. Deuteronomy 28:1-14 describes the blessings that follow national obedience to God’s laws. But this same passage of scripture doesn’t end there; it goes on to pronounce what becomes of the nation that disobeys God’s laws. Deuteronomy 28:15 describes the blessings that follow national obedience to God’s laws.

But the same passage of scripture doesn’t end there; it goes on to pronounce what becomes of the nation that disobeys God’s laws. (read Deuteronomy 28:15-68) Jehovah God is our Righteous Judge; either our greatest hope or our greatest threat. Our response in the immediate future will determine which He will be to America. We will experience a national revival or we will see the end of the American experiment with freedom.

Don’t forget His promise: “If My [God’s] people, who are called by

My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

God is calling committed men and women to repent of their individual wrongdoings, co-labor to repair the wall of protection, and collectively lead to restore America to her Christian heritage. And know this: God doesn’t call the qualified; He qualifies the called.

“Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proposition to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites.”

— Edmund Burke

“The highest glory of the American Revolution was this, it connected in one indissoluble bond, principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”

— John Quincy Adam

“Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise, and in this sense and to this extent our civilization and our institutions are emphatically Christian.”

— Justice Josiah Brewer

Church of the Holy Trinity v. U.S.

“Let my neighbor once persuade himself that there is no God, and he will soon pick my pocket, and break not only my leg but my neck. If there is no God, there is no law, no future account; government then is ordinance of man, only, and we cannot be subject to conscience sake.”

— William Linn, Chaplain

House of Representatives in 1789