

This letter is going to be a one page mimeographed sheet designed to aid the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in fulfilling its call to teach the gospel in accord with the Word of God and the doctrinal system contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; to evangelize the lost, using every method that is in conformity with Scripture and our sub-standards; and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is a great Church. It is so not because of its size numerically, nor because of the great influence it wields in the world today, nor because of the extent of its physical resources, but because it seeks to honor God and His Word. Its founders were great in their effort to reform the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. A. They were great in refusing to bow down to the infidels and compromisers of that Church who insisted that they obey a mandate which made loyalty to Church and loyalty to Christ synonymous. They were great as they left the prestige and security which association with a large denomination gives when that denomination made it impossible to stay in and contend for the faith. They were great as they did not flinch from breaking with old friends in their communities and in organizing continuing Churches or new Churches in the face of overwhelming disapproval from both the world and the organized Church in general. They were great in their opposition to modernists and compromisers of every kind. They were great as they emphasized doctrine in a non-doctrinal age. They were great in their efforts to evangelize.

I am glad to be in a Church with such a background. I am glad to be in a Church where I can teach, evangelize and contend without fear of being disciplined as a trouble-maker. I am glad to be in a Church where I can be sure that every minister in it would preach the Word if they occupied my pulpit. God has raised us up as a Church not merely to teach the Truth. Such a Church would be disposed toward what is called cold-orthodoxy. Nor has our Church been raised up merely to evangelize. Such a Church would be disposed toward shallowness and superficiality. Nor has our Church been raised up merely to contend for the faith. Such a Church would be disposed toward schism. But God has raised us up to do all three--teach the Truth, evangelize the lost, and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. To this I am certain that all O.P.C.ers will agree.

Why is it then, that a division exists which threatens to split our denomination and further scandalize the Church of Christ? Why is it that we who have so much in common find ourselves using so much of our energy battling one another rather than the enemies of Christ? Why is it that we do not heed the new commandment that we should love one another as He has loved us? Why, despite the blessing of God on our denomination during the year, is there a lack of enthusiasm concerning the future? WHAT IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE DIVISION? WHAT STEPS MUST BE TAKEN TO HEAL THE BREACH?

A letter will be sent out each week dealing with the struggle in the O.P.C. If any pastor desires extra copies, let the writer know.

*Samuel J. Allen*

April 21, 1947

CAUSE OF DIVISION

No. 2.

What is the chief cause of the division in the O.P.C.? Is there a simple answer to this question? If so, the whole Church should know it. I believe there is and the purpose of this page is to answer that question.

The chief cause of the division in the O.P.C. is the opposition of many ministers and laymen to the leadership of the professors of Westminster Seminary. The professors have a very definite idea of what constitutes the Reformed Faith and Reformed practice. This conception is believed by many to be much narrower than that of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms as interpreted and practiced by American Presbyterian theologians. The professors have always looked upon anyone who veered from their conception as not being truly Reformed.

The list of those who are considered as not truly Reformed has grown throughout the years. It includes men who have given their time, energy and lives for what they considered the Reformed Faith; men who have suffered breakdowns, who have been alienated from their families, who have suffered the loss of friends and who have sacrificed worldly prestige and security. Looked upon by the professors as not being truly Reformed, such men were and are barred from teaching at Westminster Seminary or being members of its Board of Trustees or having anything to say about the editorial policy of the Presbyterian Guardian.

The list includes Carl McIntire, Allan MacRae, Charles Woodbridge, Cary N. Weisiger who left our Church and Robert Strong, Clifford Smith, Gordon Clark, Edwin Rian, Floyd Hamilton, the writer and probably a majority of the ministers of the O.P.C.

Why are these men considered not truly Reformed? Carl McIntire and Allan MacRae were premillennialists who believed in the Moody type of evangelism and a type of separated life for the Christian generally accepted by Bible-believing Protestants in America. The professors and those whose allegiance they had held that the O.P.C. could not be truly Reformed with these men and others of the type in its fold. Many of us came to believe that what was derided as "Fundamentalism" was as bad as modernism. Great was the relief when they left the Church. I confess my sin and ask God's pardon for my part in that conflict. It was not so much what I said as the way I said it. It was the sinful complacency which made me think that their going would enable us to be a truly Reformed Church. Charles Woodbridge and Cary Weisiger could not be trusted to exercise leadership in a truly Reformed Church for they were tainted with a liking for some of the elements of "Fundamentalism". Most of us who are opposing the professors are likewise tainted. In addition, Gordon Clark has a different theory of knowledge than that taught at Westminster Seminary. The professors sincerely believe that there is no place for us in a truly Reformed Church. We believe that there is.

*Samuel J. Allen*

The professors do not hesitate to contrast what they believe to be their forthrightness in facing issues with what has been referred to by some as the political methods of their opponents. If it is forthrightness to raise issue after issue to the lofty plane of principle and to declare that the decision rendered by the Church will decide whether it wishes to be truly Reformed or not, then the professors have been forthright. But if the issues raised are not principal but matters upon which truly Reformed people can and do differ, then the professors are not forthright but schismatic.

There have always been men in truly Reformed Churches who have opposed Premillennial doctrine very strongly, who have opposed what they considered a piety not taught in Scripture, who have opposed an emotional type of evangelism which they thought minimized the importance of sound doctrine, and who have opposed cooperation of any kind with other church bodies as a lowering of Reformed distinctiveness; but very few in America indeed have maintained that such men should not be in a truly Reformed Church. Even the professors have not been forthright enough to say that. Can you imagine what the O.P.C. would be like if every Premillennialist everyone who believed it sinful to drink alcoholic beverages, everyone who believed in the popular evangelistic meeting, and everyone who believed that all Bible-believing Christians should on the basis of great fundamental doctrines present a common front to Modernism, Roman Catholicism and Secularism were declared non-Reformed and unfit to hold office? Even the professors are not forthright enough to say that. They are willing that such should remain in the Church and that such should have liberty within the Church and that such should support the agencies of the Church, plus institutions like Westminster Seminary and the Presbyterian Guardian; but they are not willing to see anyone whom they consider to be tainted with these errors have any real influence in deciding the policy of Westminster Seminary or the Presbyterian Guardian. That is why they are so afraid of letting the O.P.C. have anything to say about the policy of these institutions. That is why they do not trust the O.P.C. That is why they are apparently willing to wreck and split the O.P.C. rather than permit it to have a say as to the education of its future ministers or a voice in the running of a magazine that is looked upon by many as an organ of the Church. THAT IS APPARENTLY THE REASON WHY THEY HAVE ALWAYS MADE THE O.P.C. FEEL THAT THEY WOULD LEAVE ITS MEMBERSHIP IF THE ISSUES THEY RAISE ARE NOT DECIDED FAVORABLY.

If such a club is held over your head it is not possible to speak as plainly as you would like. Schism is a great sin and one that rends asunder the body of Christ. The threat of a split was enough to make us work carefully and politically rather than recklessly and irresponsibly. Very reluctantly I have come to the opinion that the professors are more interested in the Seminary than they are in the O.P.C.

One does not like to oppose his brethren in the Lord. One does not like to speak against the policy of a Seminary which honors God's Word. But when one is convinced that that policy is suicidal in its effect upon the Church he hasn't much choice left. He could tire of strife and go back to a compromising Church in the Federal Council. He could retire to his own local Church and forget the denomination, but this is not Presbyterianism. Or he can contend (despite threat of division) for a Church which unites a strong doctrinal emphasis with the best elements of what is termed "Fundamentalism", a Church in which there is room for both professors and dissenters.

*Samuel J. Allen*

May 5, 1947.

Consistency.

No. 4.

Every minister of the O.P.C. believes that the Presbyterian system of doctrine is the most consistent expression of the Christian faith. If each did not so believe he should leave its communion and unite with another which he believes to be more consistent.

The O.P.C. owes a debt of gratitude to the professors of Westminster Seminary for the doctrinal consciousness of the men who have graduated therefrom, for the emphasis on catechetical instruction, for the emphasis put on the sovereignty of God in every sphere of life and for the brakes which they have put on much enthusiasm which is not thoroughly grounded on God's Word. Their consistency has had a great deal to do with the good foundation of our Church.

Would that I could say that their consistency was always helpful! If it were I would have been spared the pain of writing these letters. It is no pleasure to oppose men who stand on the Word of God, men who have attained a high standing in the world of conservative scholarship, men whose friendship I value, men whose leadership I followed wholly for over six years.

But there is a place where consistency ceases to be a jewel and degenerates into that foolish consistency which Emerson says is "the hobgoblin of small minds." I believe that this place is reached when what we believe are the implications of an opponent's position, though denied by him, are raised to the high plane of principle upon which there can be no compromise.

Consistency had a jewel-like quality when the professors pointed out the errors of modern-dispensationalism and the errors and tendencies of "Fundamentalism" in general. But it was foolish consistency that caused them to take the stand that a church could not say that it was expedient to abstain from drinking of alcoholic beverages. It was and is foolish consistency to make hobgoblins out of men like McIntire, Strong, Smith, Clark, Hamilton and others. It is foolish consistency which compels men to go on the defensive and spend their lives and energies repelling as enemies those who want to be friends, whose enthusiasm and talents are needed in the common cause. It is foolish consistency which causes the best minds in our Church to argue for four years without reaching a common understanding as to the definition of terms. It is this foolish consistency which makes the professors unfit to exercise practical and inspirational leadership.

It might be consistent to demand that every church member be truly Reformed. It might be consistent to demand that the Church use wine and unleavened bread in observing the Lord's Supper. It might be consistent to insist on a closed communion. It might be consistent to bar members of oath-bound secret societies from membership in the Church. But what kind of a Church would we have if we insisted upon being consistent in these instances? Let us have the consistency of the jewel-like quality which makes the Reformed faith the only adequate answer to the heresies and paganism of our day.

*Samuel J. Allen*

Until what is now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was formed the graduates of Westminster Seminary, particularly those who entered the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., were distinguished by their militant stand against modernistic unbelief. Shortly before the formation of the O. P. C., another emphasis became apparent. It manifested itself in articles against modern-dispensationalism and the non-Reformed character of much of what is called fundamentalism, as for instance its tendency toward independency and its failure to interpret correctly the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. This emphasis was necessary because it was increasingly evident that the judicial cases before the courts of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. would be decided in a manner that might cause the formation of a new denomination. If so, an effort had to be made to enlighten followers as to what constitutes a real Presbyterian Church. We were determined that whatever Church were formed would be a real Presbyterian Church, not only as to creed (as witness the removal of the 1903 amendments to the Westminster Confession of Faith after our formation) but also as to practice. We were determined not only to believe the Reformed faith, but to preach and practice it as well. All of us are still determined in this. I now think that the formation of the Independent Presbyterian Board was a mistake, but that does not alter the fact that the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. made decisions which make it impossible for a minister or a layman to remain in it and contend for the faith. Those decisions made imperative the formation of such a body as the O. P. C. I now think the fight on Christian liberty was a frightful mistake, but we cannot turn back history. We have the O. P. C. and every officer therein is pledged to make it a real Reformed Church. I believe there is agreement on this point. The late Dr. J. Gresham Machen certainly was in agreement with this added emphasis.

The professors of Westminster Seminary in the present controversy firmly believe that they are standing where Dr. Machen would have them stand. I do not presume to know where Dr. Machen would stand in the Clark case, the Mahaffy case, the Rian case, the Tichenor case, the Gregory case, the Hamilton case. (Only one of these was an official case, but the others were relentlessly grilled to ascertain whether or not they held to the alleged heresy or heresies of Dr. Clark.) But I do know and unhesitatingly state that regardless of where he stood he would not have become less militant against Modernism than against Bible-believing Christians, particularly those who claimed to be Reformed and have suffered for what they considered the Reformed faith.

There is a passive militancy and an active militancy. Passive militancy consists of writing and speaking against unbelief without actually coming into contact with unbelievers. Active militancy is the type which seeks out the enemy to dislodge them from an entrenched position and to destroy them (God willing). Both are needed. Dr. Machen possessed them both. The professors seem to have the passive type against modernism and the active type against other Bible-believers who call themselves Reformed.

*Samuel J. Allen*

The clergy and members of the O.P.C. have ever been on the defensive on the subject of "growth". It is a very touchy subject for the simple reason that there has been comparatively little growth numerically in our denomination. What is true of our denomination is even more true of Westminster Seminary.

The apologists for this condition are apt to say that "we cannot expect any rapid growth if we are going to be true to the Reformed faith and be a truly Reformed Church. Instead of worrying about lack of growth we should worry about growth." "With growth comes impurity and errors of every kind" is the line that has often encouraged pastors as they seek to gain converts to the Reformed faith.

Orthodox Presbyterian ministers are experts on this defeatist topic. The Reformed faith, say they, is the full-orbed gospel; it is an enemy to the natural man and all his schemes to save himself and the world. We cannot expect the natural man to be interested therein. Again we cannot expect our present non-intellectual age and non-doctrinal age to be enthusiastic about the Faith which is probably more intellectual and doctrinal than any other in Christendom. Pessimism has ever pervaded our ranks and appears in many instances to have borne the fruit of a martyr-like joy in our comparative purity.

To lack this exalted attitude and to think that growth may be the mark of God's approval on our ministry is one of the signs of an impure inclusivist who should not be elected to any standing committee of our Church according to the martyrs. I profess to be an inclusivist in this respect. There is very rarely any excuse as to why a born-again gospel minister is not successful in winning souls to Christ. In saying this I am condemning myself probably more than any other minister in our denomination. Our lack of enthusiasm in our work cannot be blamed on others but sometimes I think that perhaps it is due to trying to win people to a system of doctrine rather than to Christ. People must be won to Christ before they can be truly enthusiastic about the Reformed faith.

I am also an inclusivist in that I think that a person can be a minister and an elder of our Church who is a Premillennialist or an exponent of the Moody type of evangelism, or a believer in the so-called separated life, or a believer in cooperation with other Bible-believing evangelicals in the battle against Modernism and other enemies of the Gospel. The professors and others probably believe this also; but I may go further than they when I state that every minister or elder of this type if qualified is as much entitled to the confidence of the Church and election to the Standing Committees as they are.

I am not an inclusivist in the sense that I will tolerate Arminianism or Modernism within our fold, or in the sense that I favor union with other Bible-believers on any other basis than agreement in doctrine, or in the sense that I desire growth more than purity of doctrine, and neither is anyone else that I know in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

*Samuel J. Allen*

On May 22, the 14th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church will meet at Cedar Grove, Wisconsin.

The most important business at that Assembly is in my opinion the election of members to the various Standing Committees of the Church. These Committees furnish leadership for the denomination in its mission and educational work.

I do not think that it would serve the best interests of our Church to have these Committees dominated by the professors and those who apparently approve their policy 100%.

I want to review some reasons for this conviction.

1. There is at least a strong isolationist tendency in the make-up of most of these men making it practically impossible for them to cooperate with anyone who does not agree with them 100%.

2. There is a definite psychology among them which causes them almost without exception to expend their energies against those whom they deem enemies of their viewpoint, and woefully weak in boldly coming to grips with avowed and open enemies of the Gospel. They have therefore not provided the practical and inspirational leadership needed by the O.P.C. Such leadership demands a continual offensive against the enemies of the Gospel, the world, the flesh, and the devil and to win precious souls to Christ.

3. These failures are very likely to make them obstructionists as in my opinion some of them were when they failed to approve the appointment of Rev. and Mrs. Floyd Hamilton to serve in Korea.

4. These failures also account for their large contribution to the turmoil and endless controversies which have plagued our Church since its inception and particularly in the last five or six years. They have been experts in making mountains out of mole-hills. The battle on Christian liberty, the battle about the Committee of Nine, the battle about the ordination of Dr. Gordon Clark with all the skirmishes accompanying it could all have been avoided if they had exercised practical judgment and Christian charity.

Take the case of Dr. Clark--In the report on the doctrine of incomprehensibility signed by Professors Stonehouse and Murray, there is an admission that the complainants erred in assuming that the teaching of Reformed theologians on the subject was uniform; there is also an admission that some of the statements of the complainants were infelicitous and misleading. But these men hold in the same report that Dr. Clark should have seen that in its main thrust the Complaint could not possibly have meant that man cannot know God. They are demanding of Dr. Clark and the men who wrote the Answer to the Complaint a discernment and a charitable attitude which, if they themselves had exercised the same attitude when they first charged Clark with the heresy, denied by him repeatedly, of making men omniscient, would have spared the Church the awful experience through which it is passing.

They have treated and continue to treat former friends as the basest of heretics; and despite the admissions of the above-mentioned report, they insist on making the so-called Clark case a test of orthodoxy for ministers of the O.P.C.

In my opinion it would be catastrophic to continue such men in leadership.

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