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An Answer to the Charges Made by the President, his Associates, and the Board of Southwestern against the Eleven Ministers of Memphis and W.S. Lacy

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W. O. Sherrill

AN ANSWER

To

The Charges made by the President

his Associates

and the Board of Southwestern

against the Eleven Ministers of Memphis

and W. S. Lacy



By

W. S. LACY

FOREWORD

To the Presbyterians of the Controlling Synods:

Having borne my testimony in the pamphlet—"Southwestern at the Cross-Roads" I hoped to leave the issue in the hands of my brethren of the controlling Synods.

However, a barrage of publicity seems to have been organized, making the other ministers and myself the targets, and in this way an effort is made to conceal the real issues with a SMOKE-SCREEN. I expected a discussion, but was painfully surprised when my motives were impugned and my character and veracity assailed.

While self-defense would be sufficient, the real impelling motive is that Southwestern be a real Presbyterian Institution, and that the **great and vital issues be not decided on the false grounds of expediency**. So it becomes my duty to indicate some of the inconsistencies in statements and positions of Dr. Diehl and his associates.

Luther, Calvin, Knox, Thornwell, Dabney, Peck, and others were compelled to use pamphlets in their struggle for the Truth. This practice has been necessary through the ages. If, when there is no other way open to us, we follow the example of such godly and illustrious men and are criticized for so doing, let critics make the most of it.

Yours fraternally,

W. S. LACY

September 1, 1931.

The Eleven Memphis Ministers, others, and myself are falsely accused of being opponents of Southwestern, and we again denounce as untrue any assertion that we are foes of its President. On the other hand, we claim the moral and legal right to advocate the President be a true exponent of our Church in respect to beliefs, attitudes, and practices. We also emphatically assert that the Presbyterian Synods should settle the question without any outside interference, and that it is indecorous and impertinent for those who know little, and possibly care less, about the Southern Presbyterian Church, to endeavor to sway the councils of our Church.

A minister is reported as fleeing from Mississippi to Memphis to escape the "flood of pamphlets" with reference to Dr. C. E. Diehl. The poor man should have realized that he was rushing into the very floodgates of pamphlets, statements, and publications. Only one pamphlet originated in Mississippi—my pamphlet, "Southwestern at the Cross-Roads," and the number of these mailed was insignificant compared with the large deluge supervised by Dr. Diehl.

"SOUTHWESTERN AT THE CROSS-ROADS" UNANSWERED

Scores of letters have been received endorsing and commending "Southwestern at the Cross-Roads." Dr. Diehl and the chairman of his board, being unable to answer the evidence presented, have side-stepped, in declaring that it was useless to reply to "untrue charges." What other kind of charges can be answered? It would be much more sensible to say that it is useless to reply to true charges. After widely advertising that they "would issue formal answers," why were they not able to do so?

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE "MOUTHPIECE"

In the official magazine of Southwestern an article has appeared, and Dr. Diehl has had a flood of reprints made with which he deluged the Synods. No doubt this "mouthpiece" has done his best, and the inaccuracies in my pamphlet which he has pointed out were the only ones that they could find. They are as follows:

First, on page 8: Dr. Moldenhawer, the distinguished propagandist of the Auburn Affirmation, was invited by Dr. Diehl to attend the commencement and **make the baccalaureate address**, and not to receive an honorary degree.

Second, on page 11: A word was misspelled.

THESE ARE ALL. NO ARGUMENT OR CONCLUSION IS AFFECTED.

Considerable space is consumed in the reprint from the "Southwestern Alumni Magazine" ridiculing my pedagogy because I indicated that the vagaries of Modernism and Rationalism were being made too attractive. Dr. Diehl says, "Teaching and requiring children to learn, study, and memorise the Shorter Catechism violates every pedagogical principle." When I object to teaching which is contrary to, or subversive of, the truths of the Shorter Catechism and Confession of Faith, they ridicule my pedagogy as "antiquated" and "medieval." Oh Pedagogy, Pedagogy! what crimes are committed in thy name! I believe with all my heart in teaching the truth and at the same time pointing out all that which is dangerously erroneous. I believe in instructing our young people as to the value of good food, and warning them against that which is poisonous and destructive to health and life.

The following sample of many letters received indicates the impression made by my pamphlet upon unbiased and fair minded men.

Rev. W. S. Lacy, D. D.,
Jackson, Mississippi.

My Dear Dr. Lacy:

I have received "Southwestern at the Cross-Roads" published by you. You have rendered a great service to the cause of Christian Education in our Church, if our Church proposes to maintain "THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS."

It seems to me that you dealt with this very much to be deplored situation in a fair and dispassionate manner.

I trust that the people of our Church who love it and have its interests at heart may be aroused to the gravity of the situation and take such steps as are necessary to save Southwestern from rationalism and worldiness, and keep it a pure and living fountain whence shall flow continually, streams of young life, anchored in faith to the Bible—God's inspired and infallible Word; and consecrated in life to Christ and His Church for sacrificial service.

As Southwestern is now conducted, I do not consider it a suitable place to develop the leadership of our Church.

Fraternally,

The following from a distinguished Ruling Elder of our Church:

" - - - May I suggest that you have the wrong title to your pamphlet. Has not Southwestern passed the Cross-Roads, and do not the Modernists and the Secularists now have practically complete control of the situation? It looks that way to me."

There is quite an inclination to wash our hands of the whole affair, but is that the course that Presbyterians should take? No, in God's name "They shall not pass." "Fresh courage take, ye trembling saints."

WALKER WELLFORD'S DIATRIBE AND HIS REWARD

Mr. Walker Wellford takes the center of the stage for Dr. Diehl. He labels his pamphlet "Facts," and for his services was rewarded at the recent commencement with A GOLD SEAL AND WAS ACCLAIMED THE ALUMNUS WHO HAD RENDERED THE GREATEST SERVICE TO SOUTHWESTERN (Dr. Diehl?) DURING THE PAST YEAR. In presenting his so-called "Facts," among other things, Mr. Wellford says:

1st—That Dr. Lacy is a very poor preacher.

2nd—That "The ones making the most noise are the ones that either with-held support or gave it very little."

3rd—"It is agreed that Dr. Lacy started the controversy."

4th—"Dr. Lacy expected to get a chair on Bible."

Mr. Wellford seems to charge me with everything that was said by anybody, everybody, or nobody. He mentions the ministers of Memphis, but his diatribe is directed especially against Dr. J. P. Robertson and myself. Answering, personally, I would say that it is a matter of no great concern to the Synods whether or not I am a poor preacher, but whether, in my pamphlet, I told the truth is a matter of great and vital interest. I am sure that Mr. Wellford thinks that I am a poor preacher. When he heard me preach I was urging that honesty and other good reasons should impel Presbyterians to pay the subscription which they had made. Mr. Wellford had made a large subscription which was past due and not a cent had been paid on it. My sermon was a complete failure as far as he was concerned, as evidenced by the fact that he still failed to pay. Some three years later when another campaign was on, we finally collected ONE-TENTH of the amount he had originally subscribed.

Replying to Mr. Wellford's criticism "The ones making the most noise are the ones that either withheld support or gave it very little," the records will show that Mr. Wellford subscribed more than five times as much to Southwestern as I did and that I paid twice as much as he paid, and more than I subscribed. This is as of September 30, 1930.

As to his statement, "It is agreed that Dr. Lacy started the controversy," I would call attention to the following on page 25 of "Dr. Diehl's Record," which is his own compilation of "The Official Report of the Hearing of the Charges preferred by Eleven Presbyterian Ministers - - - February 3, 1931, etc." Dr. Diehl says, "When I appeared before the Board of Directors on May 31, 1917, I told the Board that they ought to think very carefully about whether or not they wanted me in that position, in view of the fact that criticisms of my orthodoxy had been widely disseminated over the Church." In the "Findings of the Board," page 33, again referring to May 31, 1917: "This discussion was entered into at Dr. Diehl's own request, before he accepted the presidency of the college, because there were then in circulation rumors that he was "unsound in the faith."

Many months before I made any public statement our beloved Dr. A. B. Curry, in an address before the Presbyterian Pastors' Association of Memphis, said—"I told Dr. Diehl, 'You are a Modernist.'" "According to Dr. Diehl's views of inspiration there would be as many Bibles as there are thinking minds." He also described Dr. Diehl's views as "most dangerous."

Some months ago a pastor in one of the controlling Synods said in a public address—"Twelve years ago when I left the Synod the controversy about Dr. Diehl was raging. Two years ago when I returned the same controversy was raging."

I, W. S. Lacy, accepted Dr. Diehl's statement in our first conversation about my coming to Southwestern when he said—"You will hear that I am not sound in the faith, but I am." When I learned more of his views and attitudes I became uneasy, but not until he called me into his office several years after the college was established in Memphis and said—"You and Dr. Curry ought to know what I believe," and then indicated portions of the Old Testament that he did not accept,

and later teachings of the New Testament that he would set aside, did I make up my mind that I could not follow him and planned to leave Southwestern as soon as practical. It was only a few months ago that I added my testimony to the great volume of testimonies that had gone before. So, neither Mr. Wellford nor any one else can truthfully maintain that I started the controversy.

As to the assertion—"Dr. Lacy expected to get a chair on Bible:" this is a gratuitous assumption on the part, first of Dr. Diehl and echoed by Mr. Wellford. It is strange indeed that when Mr. Wellford was definitely informed that this statement was false, and when he had no proof and could get no proof to the contrary, he willfully publishes an untrue statement.

We cannot believe that such a pamphlet as Mr. Wellford's, that is permeated and saturated with misleading, unjust, untrue, and defamatory statements, can do other than defeat its own end. DR. DIEHL IS A PARTY TO ALL THIS IN HAVING THE SOUTHWESTERN OFFICE MAIL, WITH AN ENCLOSURE, GREAT NUMBERS OF MR. WELLFORD'S PAMPHLETS.

The following is a permanent record in the United States Government Archives, giving Mr. Wellford's testimony. This is the man who attacked me.

Extract from:

"Hearings
Before a
Sub-Committee of the
Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads
United States Senate
Seventieth Congress
Second Session

January 31, February 1, 2, 4, and 5, 1929."

United States
Government Printing Office
Washington: 1929."

Page No. 127

The Chairman: All right.

Representative Taylor: Mr. Wellford, inasmuch as you have seen fit to reflect on my character in the inquiry, I will

ask you this: You are a great prohibitionist, are you not, in Memphis?

Mr. Wellford: Yes, I am a prohibitionist.

Representative Taylor: You believe in the rigid enforcement of the prohibition law?

Mr. Wellford: Yes, sir.

Representative Taylor: And you would not wink at or aid or abet in a violation of the law in any way?

Mr. Wellford: I never have.

Representative Taylor: And it is not a fact that you are engaged in the manufacture of barrels and kegs, and that most of them are charred?

Mr. Wellford: I am engaged in the manufacture of barrels and kegs, and some of them are charred. I have been in the business for forty years.

Representative Taylor: Do you know why they are charred?

Mr. Wellford: For the purpose of coloring liquor.

Representative Taylor: For the purpose of coloring liquor?

Mr. Wellford: Yes, sir.

Representative Taylor: And you are in that business?

Mr. Wellford: Yes, sir: and have been all my life. I advertise it in the papers.

Representative Taylor: You are proud of it, are you, that you are aiding the bootlegger?

Mr. Wellford: I have one of the best equipped factories in the world for that purpose.

The Chairman: Do you sell these barrels and kegs to bootleggers?

Mr. Wellford: I do not know who they are sold to. They are sold mostly to wholesale grocers and shipped all over the United States.

Representative Taylor: But you manufacture them to color liquor?

Mr. Wellford: I manufacture them.

Representative Taylor: To color liquor to deceive the buyer about the age of the liquor?

Mr. Wellford: I do not deceive the buyer. The only way that liquor can be legally colored is in a charred barrel, I understand.

Representative Taylor: And you are deceiving the people?

Mr. Wellford: I am not deceiving anybody. I am merely manufacturing the same barrel that has been manufactured from time immemorial for that purpose.

Representative Taylor: And still you are a firm believer in the rigid enforcement of the prohibition law?

Mr. Wellford: Yes, sir."

ANOTHER MOUTHPIECE WHO DID NOT PAY

Dr. Diehl's chairman of the Board, Mr. E. B. LeMaster, declares—"All charges are untrue."

This is the most outrageous misrepresentation of a group of Presbyterian ministers ever known to us. We could understand that such a thing might be said of one minister, but that eleven pastors, other ministers, and myself should have deliberately conspired to publish scores of fabrications, is unthinkable. One of the greatest Elders in the Church voluntarily said to me, "They can't make me believe that you and all those other ministers didn't tell the truth."

Boards, chairmen, and presidents should be servants of the Church and NOT ENDEAVOR TO BECOME ITS MASTERS.

Most amazing and colossal is the statement of the Board, of May 12th, in which they call on all friends to denounce our statements as false and untrue, but in no way do they indicate wherein any statement is false or untrue. Every fact we affirmed, if false could have been so proven. To illustrate, I said Dr. Curry said—"Dr. Diehl you are a Modernist, etc." Dr. Curry was present and, of course, in no wise challenged the statement. The Board could have asked Dr. Curry if he made these statements, but did not do so. Now, without saying one word they ask you to "denounce (it) as false."

DR. DIEHL'S OWN TESTIMONY

Dr. Diehl edited "The Official Report of the Hearing of the Charges Preferred by Eleven Presbyterian Ministers - - - February 3, 1931 - - -." The title is so long that for brevity we designate it "Dr. Diehl's Record."

A distinguished jurist of Mississippi having examined "Dr. Diehl's Record" said that it convicted him of everything of which he was charged.

Dear reader, please examine the following and then decide

for yourself. We list them under three headings: FINANCES, PERSONALITIES, AND BELIEFS, and give two illustrations under each. More could be given from his own Book, but space forbids.

1st—Finances

(A.) In "Dr. Diehl's Record," page 20, is the following:

"Dr. Vance: Well, will you give it?"

Dr. Diehl: Well, in looking over the minutes last night, I saw the total assets of the institution, as they were put down, were \$309,000.00, I think.

Dr. Vance: How much of that was endowment?

Dr. Diehl: Well, that is the total assets.

Dr. Vance: Did that \$309,000.00 include the value of the grounds and buildings?

Dr. Diehl: It included the buildings. I do not think it included the grounds."

It is passing strange that he should make the above statement, when no one ever valued the grounds at over \$25,000.00 and when year after year he had formerly reported the assets as over \$500,000.00, and E. F. Leathem and Co., the auditors, reported the assets when Dr. Diehl assumed the presidency as \$509,000.00.

(B.) On page 16, Dr. Diehl says, "It is said that Dr. Wallace Buttrick and Mr. Thorkelson declined to aid Southwestern because we had borrowed money from the endowment fund. **That is not true.** They were disappointed to find that we had done that. They regretted it, but said that they understood the situation, and were quite willing not to let that damn us, **provided we never did it again.** The reason they did not help us, and the reason they did not give us \$500,000.00 as Dr. Buttrick wanted to do, and wanted to make that the last act of his official administration, was because of the mortgage indebtedness. That is all."

THERE WAS NO MORTGAGE INDEBTEDNESS AT THAT TIME. Then how can Dr. Diehl truthfully say it was the mortgage indebtedness? The day after the visit of Dr. Thorkelson, Dr. Diehl wrote Dr. Thorkelson a long letter, the principal part of which was another effort to justify the use of the Sacred Trusts Funds, or Endowments. The letter was written from Clarksville, and Dr. Diehl sent me a copy, certifying it with his own hand. **It was misuse of endowment that lost the \$500,000.00 indicated by Dr. Buttrick.**

2nd: Personalities. (See "Dr. Diehl's Record," page 22.)

(A.) In the open meeting of the Board, Dr. Diehl stated that two of the Memphis ministers, who were of the petitioners, Rev. A. C. Dudley and Rev. J. V. Johnson, had hinted to him that they would like to have positions on the Southwestern faculty. Mr. Dudley said, "It is a tremendous falsehood." Dr. Johnson telegraphed that it was untrue, and later accompanied by two prominent pastors in our Church waited upon Dr. Diehl, and Dr. Diehl acknowledged that what he said about Dr. Johnson was not true, and that he had made the statement because he was mad. He promised to make public apology for his statement, but failed to do so.

(B.) Dr. Diehl said that it was his "firm belief" (page 21) that if he had offered me the professorship in Bible, I would have been quiet. There is not a scintilla of truth in his assertion, and he knew this when he made it.

3rd: Beliefs

(A.) In respect to inspiration one of a number of passages will suffice. Dr. Diehl said, "I do not believe in the first part of Genesis." Later, he said, "I do not believe the history and science of Genesis." This would not help the matter because most of Genesis is history and science in relation to God. Before the Board he modified this again and said, "I said I did not think it was a scientific treatise."

Is he a man of indefinite convictions, or is he making his statements as expediency dictates, and is it possible that he may yet say, "There is no conflict between Genesis and true science?"

(B.) To the four Memphis ministers who waited upon him Dr. Diehl said, "I hold no set theory of the atonement."

The Bible teaches that **Jesus Christ died on the Cross of Calvary in the sinner's stead to pay the penalty of man's sin and thereby satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God.** This is the interpretation of our Confession and the Vicarious Atonement. It is either true or false and **there is no middle ground.** Dr. Diehl must accept or reject it.

Before the Board on Feb. 3rd he said, "I told them decidedly that I believed in the vicarious atonement, but that I had no theory of the atonement that **satisfied my mind**; that it was—that I thought there was probably some truth in all the theories of the atonement." The Bible says nothing about theories, but teaches the Atonement as **the great central truth**

of the Christian religion. As to not "satisfying my mind" this again indicates Rationalism and makes the mind instead of God's Word the ultimate authority. No minister or ruling elder in our Church can be sound in the Faith, who does not hold the Vicarious Atonement without equivocation or reservation.

RECAPITULATION

1st: In "Southwestern at the Cross-Roads" I quoted what Dr. Diehl said to Dr. A. B. Curry, a number of Presbyterian ministers, and myself about the inspiration of the Bible and presented incontrovertible proof of his Rationalism, and of his dealing in a Rationalistic way with the plain teachings of Christ; and we are prepared to present more proofs.

2nd: I proved from Southwestern's records and elsewhere, his efforts to modify the ownership and control of Southwestern, so as to make its relation to the Church only nominal.

3rd: I charged Dr. Diehl's administration with the misuse of endowment, and extravagance and cited ample proofs and can present more proofs.

4th: I charged Dr. Diehl with being **unacceptable** to a large proportion of the Presbyterian constituency, and this is established beyond any reasonable doubt.

These are troublous times. It is distressing that there should be cause for dissension within the ranks of the Church when all her strength is needed against a common foe. And yet **no army can survive that lacks discipline and loyalty within its ranks.**

Conditions at Southwestern under Dr. Diehl's administration are disturbing the harmony of the four Synods. Though exposing and correcting be painful, we must resolutely deal with the situation or suffer irreparable loss.

For the present I rest the case upon "Some of the Evidence Supporting the Petition of the Eleven Presbyterian Ministers of Memphis" as set forth in my pamphlet "Southwestern at the Cross-Roads." It has had very limited circulation and if any lover of the truth desires any additional copy, or copies and will let me know, I will be glad to send same.