

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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## *Clark and His Correspondents: Selected Letters of Gordon H. Clark*

Compiled by Douglas J. Douma and Edited by Thomas W. Juodaitis

*Editor's Note: The Publisher's Preface, Foreword, and following letters are taken from the forthcoming book Clark and His Correspondents: Selected Letter of Gordon H. Clark Compiled by Douglas J. Douma and Edited by Thomas W. Juodaitis. The new paperback is 288 pages with an Appendix of a List of Extant Letters and will be available in early July for \$12.71 (Retail is \$16.95 less 25% discount of current sale).*

### **Publisher's Preface**

Douglas J. Douma has done a masterful job of collecting and compiling letters written by, to, or about Gordon Haddon Clark, while he researched the life and thought of Gordon Haddon Clark for his biography of Clark titled, *The Presbyterian Philosopher: The Authorized Biography of Gordon H. Clark*. The selected letters in this volume give even more background information and detail to Douma's biography, and as he states below in his Foreword, "they are best read as a companion to the biography." The reader is in for a treat as Clark interacts with friends and foes alike in the following pages.

Please note that the formatting has been standardized somewhat for this volume of *Selected Letters of Gordon Haddon Clark*. Original emphasis appears in **boldfaced** type. Titles of books, journals, books of the Bible, and foreign language phrases appear in *italics*. Many abbreviations have been replaced with full text. Compiler or editor notes have been inserted in [brackets] and in *italics*. Letterhead appears in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. An introduction of the circumstances of the letter appears before certain letters.

Thomas W. Juodaitis

### **Foreword**

This volume contains selected letters of Gordon H. Clark (1902–1985) from among those collected and compiled during research for *The Presbyterian Philosopher: The Authorized Biography of Gordon H. Clark*. Though the letters are interesting in their own right, and though some context has been included with them in this volume, they are best read as a companion to the biography.

The letters range in date from 1921–1985, though most were written after 1936. Prior to that year, Clark lived in his hometown of Philadelphia in close proximity to friends and family. Then in 1936, he accepted a visiting professorship at Wheaton College, moved from Pennsylvania to Illinois, and began writing letters more frequently.

Most of Dr. Clark's letters were typed, but handwritten ones were not uncommon especially in his latter years. For the sake of readability, all letters in this volume have been typeset. If one were to look at the originals, however, one would notice that the fonts of Clark's typed letters reveal four different periods corresponding to four typewriters. His earliest typewriter in the 1920s (used to type sermons and class papers, not correspondence) printed relatively small letters with significant space between them. From some time in the 1920s until 1936, a second font is noticeable. Then from 1936 through the 1960s a third font is evident. The fourth and final font of distinctive style is evident in letters from 1970 through 1984.

Special thanks are due to the following archives for permission to reproduce letters: PCA Historical Society, Westminster Theological Seminary, Wheaton College Special Collection, Sangre de Cristo Seminary Clark Library, and The Trinity Foundation; and to individuals who provided letters: Lois Zeller, Betsy Clark George, Ellen Schulze and Genevieve Long, Greg Reynolds, and Nancy Dyrness. Credit is also due to Jaime Rodriguez Jr., Errol Ng,

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and Samuel Colón for their help typing up many of Clark's letters.

Douglas J. Douma

[*Dr. J. Gresham Machen, Professor at Princeton Seminary to Rev. David S. Clark, Pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, and father of Gordon H. Clark*]

39 ALEXANDER HALL  
PRINCETON SEMINARY  
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

October 2, 1921

Rev. David S. Clark, D.D.,  
Philadelphia

My dear Dr. Clark:

I have read with the greatest interest your exceedingly able review of Professor Foster's book in the *Presbyterian*. It is, of course, far more than a book review. Professor Foster represents the thinking of a large part of what is called, rightly or wrongly, "the religious world." You have given an admirably clear exposition of the whole modernist position, and your criticisms go straight to the point. Particularly instructive is the way in which you are able to connect these present day popular tendencies with their roots in Schleiermacher and others. I feel greatly heartened by the presence of such a true defender of the faith in the pastorate in Philadelphia.

I hope I may see you before long.

Faithfully yours,  
J. Gresham Machen

[*This is the earliest extant letter of Gordon H. Clark. At this time he was a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania.*]

2438 N. 19 St., Philadelphia  
October 25, 1928

My dear Dr. Machen,

About two years ago I troubled you for a bibliography to aid me in a course on "Christian Thought." You were very kind and your suggestions helped me greatly.

There were reasons why I addressed you at that time. First, I regarded you, and still do, as the greatest figure and one of the greatest intellects among Evangelicals today. And second, it was my purpose, when I chose to teach philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania rather than study theology at your Seminary, to defend and promulgate an Evangelical faith in Christ. The door has indeed been opened. I do not regret my choice.

The present occasion for writing to you is a new opportunity. Eight young Evangelicals, two of whom are instructors here, one a graduate, five students, have inherited a decrepit liberal society. We are putting on a series of meetings for students. In November we shall explain our aims to them, in December we shall hold a meeting in honor of Bunyan, later we shall have a symposium on the Atonement and any activities which commend themselves. Would you therefore care, sometime you happen to be in Philadelphia to stimulate and encourage us by a talk on something that would be profitable to us? The only remuneration we would offer is a happy heart and a good dinner. At such a dinner there would be present the eight Evangelicals and as many others as may be interested — how many I have as yet no way of even guessing, for we are just beginning.

If this appeals to you, and you can hardly dream how earnestly I hope it does, we can start to talk about a date in January or February. Be assured, my dear Dr. Machen, of my profoundest admiration for you and your work.

Quite Sincerely,  
Gordon H. Clark

October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1928

Professor Gordon H. Clark  
2438 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

My dear Mr. Clark:

Your letter of October 25<sup>th</sup> has interested me deeply, and I can imagine few things that will give me greater pleasure than to meet with your group, in accordance with your kind invitation. I could probably be with you on any evening during the week, although on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons I have a class from 3 to 4 p.m. and so could not get to Philadelphia quite so early in the evening as on other days. Saturday evening would be a bad time for me, since I am frequently off on preaching trips over Sunday. On Monday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, I have an engagement to speak in New York, and on Monday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, I have an engagement to speak at Dartmouth College. Other days during January and February seem to be pretty fine.

What you say about the group of evangelicals is wonderfully encouraging to me. I do rejoice with all my heart in an effort of that kind. And I am gratified more than I can say by the way in which you speak of me.

Very sincerely yours,

[J. Gresham Machen]

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2438 N. 19 St., Philadelphia  
March 9, 1929

Dear Dr. Machen,

Your speech last Monday night was great! And I think you make clear to a doubtful one what sort of choice is involved, I mean under the guise of "interpretation." We thank you heartily and enthusiastically.

Enclosed is a copy of one "examination" which I intend to give to my students. They will have a month to write it. Perhaps something will occur to you. Question four is weak in references. There is no hurry for I shall not use this until May. I find it hard to keep my class studying the *Gospels*, they want to argue about predestination, possibility of miracles, demons, *etc.*

I hope your mother is constantly improving and that you are always in the best of health and spirits.

Quite Sincerely,  
Gordon H. Clark

[*The earliest of many extant letters between Gordon Clark and J. Oliver Buswell (1895-1977), then President of Wheaton College*]

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
THE COLLEGE

June 17, 1933

The Rev. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., D.D.  
President of Wheaton College  
Wheaton, Illinois

Dear Sir,

To be quite honest it was financial conditions at this university which prompted this letter of application for a position at Wheaton, but further reflection adds that my religious convictions would make Wheaton more agreeable than secular institutions. As to those convictions I mention as references the Dr. J. Gresham Machen, the Rev. H. McAllister Griffiths, and the Rev. William Jones whom you probably know as the General Secretary of the League of Evangelical Students. For scholarly attainments I should refer you to Dr. E. A. Singer, Jr., and Dr. H. B. Smith, both of the philosophy department of this university.

May I, then, apply for a position of professor or assistant professor of philosophy? My history is as follows: Born in 1902, son of a Presbyterian minister, and now an elder and Sunday School Superintendent, I was graduated from this university in 1924; in 1929 I was married and received my doctorate in philosophy; I have taught philosophy here since 1924 with the exception of one semester when I was sent to the Sorbonne. The courses I have offered at various times are: Logic, Ethics (collaborated with Professor T.V. Smith of Chicago in producing a textbook, *Readings in Ethics*,

published by F.S. Crofts & Co., N.Y.), Plato in English — both graduate and undergraduate, the New Testament, the Hellenistic Age — graduate, Aristotle in English — graduate, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in Greek, Plato's *Timaeus* in Greek, History of Ancient Philosophy, History of Modern Philosophy.

If you are favorably disposed, I should of course be happy to answer any questions which might occur to you.

Yours very truly,  
[Gordon H. Clark]

February twenty-eight, 1936

Professor Gordon H. Clark, Ph.D.  
3617 Locust Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

My dear Professor Clark,

We shall probably be adding a professor of philosophy to our staff next fall. I feel led of the Lord to lay the situation frankly before you. The enclosed blank, I think, contains nothing with which you are not familiar. There are points which we ought to discuss and if you are inclined to give favorable consideration to an invitation from us, we shall be glad to pay your expenses for a trip from Philadelphia for a conference some time in the near future.

I am sending you from the publishers Samuel Kellogg's *Are the Pre-millennialists Right?* This book, I think, gives a very clear statement of what is sometimes regarded as an esoteric doctrine.

I wanted to get in touch with you when I was in Philadelphia last Monday but had no opportunity.

Prayerfully awaiting your reply, I am

Yours in Christian Fellowship,  
J. Oliver Buswell

P.S. I am afraid this letter does not convey even a small portion of the earnestness with which I lay this matter before you. Your Christian testimony has been so clear-cut and so courageous, I feel quite certain that all minor problems can be brought to a proper understanding.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PHILADELPHIA  
THE COLLEGE  
PHILOSOPHY

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936

Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr,  
Wheaton College  
Wheaton, Illinois

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Dear Dr. Buswell,

The contents of your recent letter come to me as somewhat of a surprise, since I did not know until last night that you were looking for a professor of philosophy.

This reply is merely an acknowledgment; however I can say that the prospect is attractive from many points of view. Naturally, tearing oneself up by the roots from the spot in which one grew cannot be done without some thought and reluctance.

In the next few days I shall fill out the blank you enclosed and add to it what statements I think proper. I shall be happy to receive Samuel Kellogg's book and to study it most carefully.

I was also hoping to see you last Monday and asked Griffiths if he had any engagements with you. He had none; and as you were no doubt in great demand by your former students at the dinner, I did not think it wise to intrude, however welcome I might have been. If the blank, the next letter, and papers are tentatively satisfactory to you, I shall be more than happy to take advantage of your generosity and come out to Wheaton. There are educational policies to be discussed, library facilities to be appraised – and now I am far beyond the set limit of acknowledging with extreme pleasure your kind consideration.

Yours in His service,  
Gordon H. Clark

March 3, 1936

To the President, the Trustees, and all the Authorities of  
Wheaton College.

Dear Sirs,

The following is a personal confession of faith. Since I am unable conscientiously to affirm all the elements of your doctrinal platform, since also I wish to affirm some doctrines not mentioned therein, and since there should be no misunderstanding in the matter, it seems wise and honest not to answer Part Two, question 3, with a categorical yes or no.

First, I accept the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* as containing the system of doctrine which the Bible teaches, and I believe the Bible teaches no other system.

Second, I believe that the Bible is, not merely contains, the Word of God; that therefore it is without error, and that it is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. This result was obtained by the Holy Spirit inspiring holy men, and this inspiration is both plenary and verbal.

Therefore, third, I believe everything in the first five articles on page four of the application blank, but desire to add these words: "and the merit and righteousness of his sinless life." I believe in salvation through the shed blood of Christ. He paid our penalty instead of our paying for it. But

the ground of justification is the complete and finished work of Christ, not his death apart from his sinless life.

I accept articles six, eight and nine.

With respect to article seven, I hold to what I consider the traditional Calvinistic position. I believe that Christ will return, visibly, bodily, with flesh and bones as he appeared after the resurrection. I do not believe it will be a premillennial return. I consider the framers of the *Westminster Confession* wise in not too strictly defining the succession of future events, and I should add that I am perturbed at some modern tendencies to chart the future. I am not sure that I am a postmillenarian, nor an amillenarian; but I cannot affirm that I am premillenarian. I am quite willing to discuss fully and freely this or any other article of faith.

I should like to add that I am a strict Calvinist of the supralapsarian type. I realize that this is not the most popular type, but I find it most consistent and most in accord with the Word of God.

With respect to the standards of life, I am willing to accept the rules at the bottom of page four, though as you see in my remarks they have not been exactly my rules heretofore. I shall be happy to teach and to write, as I have been doing, against the various forms of socialism; and I have always supported the prohibition movement.

Part Two, question 9, I answer as follows. The teacher is under the same obligations to the student as he is to any acquaintance or friend. If the student has not accepted Christ, it is the teacher's duty as a Christian to explain the way of salvation. If the student is a Christian, it is their common duty to edify each other. The particular task of imparting certain instruction and of inspiring the student to study may modify the methods of fulfilling these obligations, but it does not annul them.

Permit me again to say that if any of the above answers and statements are vague, or stand in need of amplification, I am ready to oblige.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,  
-Gordon H. Clark-

**Reformation at 500 Conference**  
Please return the blue registration form if you are planning to attend The Trinity Foundation's Reformation at 500 Conference October 27 and 28, 2017 in Johnson City, Tennessee. There is still plenty of room available.