

# THE REORGANIZATION OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY RECONSIDERED

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*The reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary, leading to the withdrawal of J. Gresham Machen, Oswald T. Allis, Cornelius Van Til, and Robert Dick Wilson, is identified often as a triumph of modernism in its conflict with fundamentalism in the churches in the 1920s. However, a consideration of the situation at Princeton and of the events which took place within and outside the institution leads to a different conclusion.*

*The controversy at Princeton involved evangelical Presbyterians, all claiming loyalty to the tradition of the seminary. The conflict arose due to competing philosophies of seminary education and differing solutions for dealing with liberalism in the denomination. In this confrontation, pitting one evangelical faction against another, Princeton Seminary suffered privately and publicly. The denomination was called upon to assist in resolving the problem. The solution enacted by the denomination resulted in the departure from the seminary of some of the most capable defenders of the evangelical faith.*

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## INTRODUCTION

AT the centennial celebration of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1912, institution president, Francis Landey Patton, declared that "the theological position of Princeton Seminary has remained unchanged."<sup>1</sup> At the sesquicentennial celebration, Hugh T. Kerr stated: "It is no secret that many contemporary professors at the seminary feel completely out of touch theologically with their predecessors of a generation or more ago on such issues as Biblical criticism, apologetics, the sacraments, and the interpretation of the Westminster

<sup>1</sup>Francis Landey Patton, "Princeton Seminary and the Faith," in *The Centennial Celebration of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (n.p., n.d.) 354.

Confession of Faith."<sup>2</sup> The events which paved the way for this significant and precipitous theological shift are the focus of this study.

The historical background of these events is very familiar. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy was at full intensity. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was particularly involved in the conflict through its affirmation of the five "essential and necessary articles"<sup>3</sup> declared by the General Assemblies of 1910, 1916, and 1923. A response to the 1923 statement was printed and is known as the "Auburn Affirmation," a document which served as a challenge to the General Assembly regarding the prerogative of that body to impose doctrinal interpretation upon the church. To this challenge were affixed the signatures of nearly 1300 ministers.

In the midst of this conflict within the denomination, Princeton sought to proclaim the traditional orthodox Presbyterian position. The importance of this seminary in the struggle both within the denomination and in the larger fundamentalist-modernist controversy has been stated by many. Princeton has been called "the intellectual center of the fundamentalist reaction to the rise of modernism,"<sup>4</sup> "the West Point of orthodoxy,"<sup>5</sup> and "the academic center of conservative Christianity in the United States."<sup>6</sup>

Various interpretations have been offered concerning the issues that led to the reorganization of the seminary in 1929 and ultimately the departure of J. Gresham Machen, Robert Dick Wilson, Oswald T. Allis, and Cornelius Van Til from the faculty to serve at the newly-founded Westminster Theological Seminary. Louis Gasper has written that the problem was "over the question of the infiltration of liberal professors on the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary."<sup>7</sup> That there were no liberal professors on the faculty during the controversy makes this view untenable. Carl McIntire, a student at Princeton during the conflict, has affirmed that reorganization was the result of the strategy of liberal denominational leaders to silence the conserva-

<sup>2</sup>Hugh T. Kerr, *Sons of the Prophets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) xii-xiii.

<sup>3</sup>1) inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, 2) the virgin birth of Christ, 3) the death of Christ as an offering to satisfy divine justice, 4) the resurrection of the physical body of Christ, and 5) the supernatural character of the miracles performed by Christ (General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., *Minutes* 10:2 NS [1910] 272-73).

<sup>4</sup>George P. Hutchinson, *The History Behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod* (Cherry Hill, New Jersey: Mack, 1974) 175.

<sup>5</sup>George W. Doller, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University, 1973) 88.

<sup>6</sup>John W. Hart, "The Controversy Within the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., in the 1920's with Special Emphasis on the Reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary," (unpublished senior thesis, Princeton University, 1978) 1.

<sup>7</sup>Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963) 16.

tive voice at Princeton.<sup>8</sup> Again, the facts discredit the theory. The conflict at the school had been developing for a decade before the denomination was requested to investigate the problem by members of the boards at Princeton.

A popular interpretation expressed by some evangelicals is that the reunification in 1869 of the traditional Old School Presbyterianism and the more moderate New School faction rendered inevitable a broadening of the denomination as a whole and of Princeton Seminary as a part.<sup>9</sup> It is true that one might expect a spirit of moderation as a result of this reunification but to declare that the fall of Princeton was an *inevitable* result is to leave the realm of historical study. No *necessary* link between the reunion of 1869 and the reorganization of Princeton has been found.

It is the thesis of this study that the tragedy of Princeton is the failure of two competing faculty factions to work harmoniously. It was demonstrated in that failure that a house divided against itself cannot stand. This division of the faculty revolved around two issues: (1) the requirements of seminary education, and (2) the nature of the church.

#### THE ISSUES

##### *The Requirements of Theological Education*

The generation which witnessed the early development of American theological modernism and its antagonist, American fundamentalism, also saw changes effected in the approach to seminary education. Lefferts A. Loetscher wrote:

The relation between the American churches and their theological seminaries was a reciprocal one: the theology that the seminaries taught at any particular time was soon widely held throughout the Churches; and contrariwise, changes in the Churches' activity and thought, reflecting changes in American social and cultural life after the Civil War, created demands for changes in the curricula of the seminaries.<sup>10</sup>

Two significant steps were being taken by some seminaries: the dropping of Hebrew requirements and the movement toward an elective system of instruction.<sup>11</sup> The impact of this movement was felt strongly at Princeton where instruction was based on a fixed curriculum established in outline form by the General Assembly when the

<sup>8</sup>Carl McIntire, *The Death of a Church* (Collingswood, New Jersey: Christian Beacon, 1967) 144.

<sup>9</sup>Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940) 16.

<sup>10</sup>Lefferts A. Loetscher, *The Broadening Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954) 74.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 74-75.

church gave birth to the school. The areas prescribed were "Divinity, Oriental and Biblical Literature, and in Ecclesiastical History and Church Government, and on other such subjects as may be deemed necessary."<sup>12</sup> Princeton Seminary had as its educational purpose "to propagate and defend in its genuineness, simplicity, and fullness, that system of religious belief and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Plan of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church; and thus to perpetuate and extend the influence of true evangelical piety and gospel order."<sup>13</sup>

Benjamin B. Warfield claimed that adherence to the guidelines established by the General Assembly and the Plan of the Seminary was the chief responsibility of the Princeton curriculum.

In this outline it is required of every student whose preparation for the ministry shall be made in this Seminary, that he shall engage in the thorough study of Biblical Criticism, Apologetics, Dogmatics, Church History and the various branches of Practical Theology. These five departments of study, it will be at once perceived, constitute the essential divisions of what is called "Theological Encyclopedia," and when arranged in scientific order will be recognized as a scientifically complete theological curriculum. Every one who would obtain a comprehensive knowledge of theological science, in other words, must give adequate attention to these five disciplines: Apologetics, Exegetics, Historics, Systematics, and Practics; and in these five disciplines the circle of theological sciences is complete.<sup>14</sup>

Earlier, Warfield had written: "The curriculum is the place only for those courses which, when taken together, will provide a comprehensive survey of all the theological disciplines and fundamental training in each."<sup>15</sup> The time spent in each of the five theological disciplines should be equal, with the exception of Old and New Testament exegesis, each of which should receive as much time as the other four categories.<sup>16</sup>

Warfield also recognized a need for students to have a knowledge of the Bible as a whole, a knowledge which some suggested should be met

<sup>12</sup>General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, *Minutes* (1789-1820 Inclusive) 454.

<sup>13</sup>*Plan of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, 4.

<sup>14</sup>[Benjamin B. Warfield], "Report of the Faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary to the Board of Directors on the Curriculum of the Seminary," Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, 29 April 1903, 2.

<sup>15</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Constitution of the Seminary Curriculum," *The Presbyterian Quarterly* 38 (October 1896) 426.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 427-28.

through the addition of courses on the English Bible to the curriculum. Warfield, though in sympathy with the goal of producing ministers knowledgeable in the Bible, declared: "Our theological seminaries can never make 'the English Bible' the basis of their instruction, or a thorough knowledge of it the main object of their efforts."<sup>17</sup>

Over the objections of Warfield and the rest of the faculty, the Board of Directors responded positively to a student petition calling for instruction in English Bible. Samuel S. Mitchell was added to the faculty to offer extra-curricular instruction in English Bible and was succeeded after a term by W. W. White. In 1905, the seminary hired Charles R. Erdman to the Professorship of English Bible and Practical Theology. Among his responsibilities, Erdman was to develop the English Bible program so that it might become a more fully integrated part of the Princeton curriculum rather than an extra-curricular pursuit. In this endeavor Erdman came into disagreement with other faculty members and was called upon to address the directors concerning the problems. As a result the directors added two hours to the curriculum for the Practical Theology department in its teaching of English Bible.<sup>18</sup>

These additional hours given to that study did not receive the full support of the faculty. Warfield introduced "a resolution that elective studies based on the English Bible should not be allowed as minors in the course for the post-graduate B.D. degree."<sup>19</sup> Paul Martin, registrar at Princeton from 1906 until 1932, wrote:

However, Dr. Warfield served notice upon the Registrar that Dr. Erdman's elective courses would not receive his necessary approval as minors in the registration by candidates of B.D. courses in the Department of Systematic Theology and maintained this ruling through the succeeding years. It can be said without fear or contradiction that disparagement of Dr. Erdman's courses has been a state of mind of the "majority" of the Faculty through his whole term as professor.<sup>20</sup>

A student rebellion in 1909 resulted in the formation of a sub-committee by the Board of Directors to investigate complaints about the quality of education at the seminary. In opposition to the claim of

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 436.

<sup>18</sup>Princeton Theological Seminary, Minutes of the Board of Directors, Meeting of 4 May 1908.

<sup>19</sup>Paul Martin to W. O. Thompson, 23 December 1926, Correspondence Concerning Machen Case 1925-1927, Robert E. Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Warfield, the subcommittee concluded that the Plan did not establish a definite curriculum. It concluded that the Plan provided for a "finished product which is desired, and within the scope thus generally indicated, it places upon the Board of Directors, under the General Assembly the duty of framing the proper curriculum for furnishing that product."<sup>21</sup> The subcommittee also concluded that there were too many hours required in the three year program.<sup>22</sup> It stated further that changes in twentieth century culture required an alteration in curriculum to meet the need of proper ministerial education and preparation. "A half-century ago we were largely a homogeneous people; to-day the floods of immigration and the swift development of our city-centers have changed the character of our people, and the church faces a complex situation unimagined a hundred years ago."<sup>23</sup>

In making suggestions contrary to the faculty thinking, the subcommittee touched on an important point.

We have learned from recent graduates, men say of five to fifteen years in the ministry, who are intensely loyal to everything in Princeton, that sometimes weeks at a stretch have been consumed in lectures in certain of the departments upon subjects of remotest interest to the pastor—as they strongly affirm, of no interest whatever—while other matters in the same department, which are very important to the pastor, have been practically overlooked. It is intimated by way of explanation that this is so because professors who had themselves never been pastors have no true conception of the relative importance of different subjects to the actual work of the ministry, and because, naturally enough they assume that the more difficult parts of the work call for the fuller treatment and the harder study.<sup>24</sup>

Again it fell to Warfield to defend the curriculum as spokesman for the faculty. Regarding the requirements of the Plan of the Seminary Warfield said that they "do not need amending: they need only be carried out more fully."<sup>25</sup> In response to the faculty defense, the subcommittee toned down the changes that were recommended initially. The basic three year course remained unaltered except for the transferal of one hour of English Bible to the extra curriculum or post-graduate program in order to make room for an hour dealing

<sup>21</sup>"Report on the Supervising Committee of the Board of Directors of Princeton Theological Seminary," October 1909, 6.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>25</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Fundamental Curriculum of the Seminary* (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1909) 9.

with "the Church's relation to practical problems."<sup>26</sup> The issue, however, was far from settled.

Patton resigned as president of the seminary in 1913 and a search was conducted for a replacement. The Board of Directors turned to one of its own members, J. Ross Stevenson, pastor of the Brown Memorial Church in Baltimore. Stevenson previously had served on the faculty of McCormick Seminary, teaching ecclesiastical history at his alma mater. He was not a Princeton man either by training or service. Thus the new president was viewed with suspicion by some of the Princeton faculty. J. Gresham Machen wrote home: "Stevenson's notions about theological education are ruinous—they are especially bad with regard to New Testament work—and then of course you know what an extremely weak man Stevenson is."<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, Sylvester W. Beach, a member of the Board of Directors, wrote to Stevenson:

But my chief joy in your coming is the assurance that it means a new and great epoch in our Seminary's history. Princeton once held leadership in the theology and movement of our Presbyterian church. For some years that has been lost. Why this has happened is a matter of little comparative importance. The point is, how to regain the lost ground? [sic] The first pre-requisite is head-ship in the seminary who knows and understands the practical problems of our day not less than the theological issues. The seminary needs a leader to train leaders evangelical and evangelistic, with a clearly defined message & mission. The problem of the Church to-day is the missionary problem. The church will gladly follow the lead of any man who will show the road to the heart of a lost world.<sup>28</sup>

The two contrasting views of Machen and Beach continued until the time of reorganization in 1929. Ned B. Stonehouse wrote that 1914, the year of the election and inauguration of Stevenson, "marks the dividing line in the history of the Seminary."<sup>29</sup> Paul Woolley looked back to 1902, when Stevenson was elected to the Board of Directors, and declared: "It was an evil day for the seminary, for pious and believing though he was, he had no understanding of, or love for, the

<sup>26</sup>"Report of the Supervising Committee of the Board of Directors of Princeton Theological Seminary," n.d., 7.

<sup>27</sup>Cited in Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 216.

<sup>28</sup>Sylvester W. Beach to J. Ross Stevenson, 2 July 1914, Confidential letters and documents of J. Ross Stevenson, Robert E. Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton.

<sup>29</sup>Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 212.

great tradition which the theologians had been building for ninety years."<sup>30</sup> Rian wrote concerning Stevenson: "He came to Princeton not appreciating fully its theological position and emphasis and at the same time accepting the office of president on the terms set forth in the Plan of the seminary which he interpreted in the plain sense but which interpretation had never been enforced at the institution."<sup>31</sup> He added:

From the standpoint of administration Dr. Stevenson conceived of his position as that of the real head of the institution who was to have a leading part in forming its policies, choosing its professors, inviting men to address the students and representing the seminary before the Church. One who did not know the history of Princeton and its administrative policy would be likely to accept that interpretation of the president's position from a reading of the Plan of the seminary. On the other hand, the faculty had always believed that the president was little more than the presiding officer who, with his colleagues, decided on the entire educational program for the institution.<sup>32</sup>

In his inaugural address, Stevenson emphasized that Princeton Seminary was the seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and that it was "bound to heed the demands of the age as interpreted and emphasized by the Presbyterian Church."<sup>33</sup> Stevenson's desire that the seminary serve the whole church is not to be misunderstood as demonstrating a lack of theological conviction. The president contended that his approach was that of the early Princeton leaders who thought it proper to seek to train men who held doctrines hostile to those espoused at Princeton with the hope of reconciling such men to the theological position of the seminary.<sup>34</sup>

Shortly after the inauguration of Stevenson, there was another move for change in the curriculum. The Board of Directors requested that a faculty Committee on Curriculum be formed and meet with the Curriculum Committee of that board in consideration of possible changes. Warfield, John D. Davis, Erdman, Frederick W. Loetscher and J. Ritchie Smith comprised the faculty committee.

Reacting to a proposal for reduced curriculum (a cutting back of hours included in the required program of instruction), Warfield staunchly defended the current program. Summarizing the losses in the proposed curriculum, Warfield wrote:

<sup>30</sup>Paul Woolley, *The Significance of J. Gresham Machen Today* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977) 11.

<sup>31</sup>Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, 65.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>33</sup>J. Ross Stevenson, "Theological Education in Light of Present Day Demands," *The Princeton Theological Review* 14 (January 1916) 83.

<sup>34</sup>President's Report to the Board of Directors, Princeton Theological Seminary, 11 November 1925, Princeton.



The reductions proposed aggregate no less than two hundred and forty hours for the fundamental departments of Hebrew, Apologetics, Old Testament, New Testament, Church History and Didactic Theology. These two hundred and forty hours make a whole half-year of sixteen weeks instruction in the seminary at fifteen hours weekly (or of fifteen weeks at sixteen hours weekly).<sup>35</sup>

Such reduction was disastrous for Warfield, who also opposed a curriculum heavy with elective courses. He was convinced that the majority of the students would not elect hours in the areas he considered fundamental but would opt for the easier branches of seminary study which offered equal credit.<sup>36</sup> The real problem which faced the seminary, as Warfield saw it, was that college students were coming to the seminary inadequately prepared. His desire was that the seminary take such men and meet their needs not by lowering requirements but by preparing them to meet established standards.<sup>37</sup> This attempt would require certain propaedeutic courses, particularly Greek grammar, which would have to be taught to the student to prepare him for seminary—but such courses would be added to his program rather than supplant existing requirements.<sup>38</sup>

Two proposals were considered by the committees on curriculum: (1) that the number of hours be reduced, and (2) that elective courses be introduced for programs leading to graduation.<sup>39</sup> Warfield opposed both proposals in a minority report.<sup>40</sup> The faculty, after two meetings of discussing the proposals and a tie vote on the question of reduced curriculum, approved the reduced curriculum by a nine to four vote. Warfield, William Brenton Greene, Jr., Caspar Wistar Hodge, and Geehardus Vos cast the negative votes.<sup>41</sup> Machen favored the proposal only because he had concluded that it would be the best offer that would come before the faculty.<sup>42</sup> The action of the faculty was interpreted by the Curriculum Committee of the Board of Directors as a

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Notes on Certain Proposed Readjustments of the Curriculum* (Princeton, New Jersey: Privately printed, 1914) 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield to the Committee of the Board of Directors on the Curriculum, 3 November 1914, Montgomery Library, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

<sup>38</sup> Warfield, *Notes on Certain Proposed Readjustments*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> "Report of the Faculty Committee on Curriculum," Princeton Theological Seminary, in Minutes of the Board of Directors, 5 December 1914.

<sup>40</sup> The Minority Report of the Faculty Committee on Curriculum in Minutes of the Board of Directors, 5 December 1914.

<sup>41</sup> Minutes of the Faculty, Princeton Theological Seminary, 16 January 1915, Princeton.

<sup>42</sup> Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 219.

sign of dissatisfaction with the current curriculum and a reduced curriculum was implemented.<sup>43</sup>

Warfield was greatly disturbed by the turn of events and began to absent himself from faculty meetings. For the six month period during which Stevenson was in Europe ministering to servicemen during World War I, Warfield was present at every faculty meeting. At Stevenson's return, Warfield once again attended faculty meetings rarely.<sup>44</sup> Machen was disappointed, also, and may have left the seminary had it not been for the influence of his department chairman and close advisor, William Park Armstrong.<sup>45</sup> Machen feared that the emphasis on the practical aspect of the curriculum by Stevenson might result in a "pious liberal" filling a chair on the faculty.<sup>46</sup> Machen would watch Stevenson's actions closely.

The curriculum revision just surveyed did not cause the reorganization of Princeton, but it did serve to polarize the faculty and introduce further division.

### *The Nature of the Church*

With the developing modernism in American churches, conservative men had to initiate a strategy for dealing with the new theology. Some men became quite militant and publicly called for the ouster of modernists from their churches while others took an irenic stance, waiting for time and proper denominational procedure to alleviate the situation. At Princeton, Machen assumed, not voluntarily, the leadership of the militant force. Stevenson and Erdman sought an irenic solution to the problem of liberalism in the church. Opposed to liberal theology, the Stevenson-Erdman party sought the solution to the matter through proper Presbyterian court action. The denomination had been quite careful to establish machinery for handling problems of false teaching and false practice.

It is important to note that the militant party at Princeton consisted of the men who taught the exegetical and theological courses, those areas in which liberalism differed greatly from orthodoxy. The moderates at Princeton were, for the most part, the men in the area of practical theology who were concerned especially about the people in the pew and their needs rather than about theological debate. Only Greene among the militants had had pastoral experience. Everyone on the moderate side at Princeton had held significant pastorates. An example of the difficulty as it existed at the seminary can be illustrated

<sup>43</sup>Report of the Curriculum Committee to the Board of Directors in Minutes of the Board of Directors, 16 February 1915.

<sup>44</sup>Minutes of the Faculty, 1915-1921.

<sup>45</sup>Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 219.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 220-21.

by a letter written to Machen by a student transferring from Princeton to another institution.

As one student remarked to me, "How many on the faculty know anything about real pastoral work, from their own experience?" Or of what value is it to the student that his professor is the leading Hebrew scholar of the world, if in class he prances up and down and yells spasmodically at the top of his lungs, and tells jokes most of the hour? Such a class is ridiculous in the extreme [sic]. When attending this class even the ardent lovers of Princeton would joke about going to "the circus." Merely to rant for an hour against modernism may split the ears of the groundlings, but it cannot but make the judicious grieve.<sup>47</sup>

Such an attitude is only matched by the words of a leading professor from whom I quote the following exact statement as given with great gusto during a class lecture, "You shouldn't care one snap of the finger whether one soul in your congregation believes what you say or not. It is God's truth you are giving those damn sinners."<sup>48</sup>

The first important clash relating to the nature of the church concerned the matter of involvement in the Plan of Union of 1920. This proposal was not for a complete organic union but was a plan for a federation.

Under the provisions of the Plan, the Council of "The United Churches" would have authority, if and when member denominations desired it, to direct consolidation of missionary activities, but such consideration was not mandatory and could be "accelerated, delayed, or dispensed with as the interests of the Kingdom of God may require." The Plan also envisaged the transfer of at least some functions from denominational to a central administration but did not specify any particular transfers.<sup>49</sup>

Stevenson, vice-president of the Committee on Church Cooperation and Union of the PCUSA, presented the recommendation before the General Assembly of 1920, due to the fact that the committee chairman was on his deathbed.<sup>50</sup> The recommendation offered to the assembly was that the denomination officially enter into cooperation with other churches as long as only churches of evangelical persuasion were involved.<sup>51</sup> Erdman supported the proposal while Warfield,

<sup>47</sup> Alfred G. Fisk to J. Gresham Machen, 25 June 1926, Machen Archives, Montgomery Library, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Samuel McCrea Cavert, *Church Cooperation and Unity in America: A Historical Review 1900-1970* (New York: Association, 1970) 327.

<sup>50</sup>J. Ross Stevenson to J. Gresham Machen, 23 November 1923, Machen Archives.

<sup>51</sup>General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., *Minutes* NS 20 (1920) 121.

Hodge, Greene, Machen, and Allis opposed it. Machen summarized his opposition: "At the General Assembly in Philadelphia in 1920, there was launched the most dangerous attack not only upon the Reformed Faith but upon the Christian Religion in general which had appeared in America in recent years."<sup>52</sup> Stevenson wrote to Machen that when he had become aware of the inadequacies of the plan he "secured its rejection" in the Baltimore presbytery.<sup>53</sup> Machen was not satisfied with Stevenson's statement because the president had presented the plan to the assembly and had not advocated its rejection there. He wrote to Stevenson: "A man who loves the Reformed Faith with all his heart and believes that no matter what other churches or other individuals may think is true, will, I think, defend it whether it is popular or not and will carry his defence of it out into the public councils [sic] of the Church."<sup>54</sup> The proposal died for lack of support in the presbyteries, but the cleavage between the factions on the Princeton faculty had widened.

Machen's opposition to the new trends in the churches is expressed most clearly in his book, *Christianity and Liberalism*. He wrote that liberalism was not a Christian faith and, in fact, belonged "in a totally different class of religions."<sup>55</sup> He concluded that the church was in a state of weakness because it "has been unfaithful to her Lord by admitting great companies of non-Christian persons, not only into her membership, but into her teaching agencies."<sup>56</sup> He added that "separation between the two parties in the Church is the crying need of the hour."<sup>57</sup>

With this understanding of Machen it is not difficult to ascertain why he had an aversion to the approach of Stevenson, who was not outspoken in his criticism of liberalism. Stevenson's confession of orthodoxy was not sufficient. Machen looked for a public proclamation by Stevenson regarding the issues which plagued the church. Not witnessing such a profession, Machen classified the president as indifferent.<sup>58</sup> He held the same opinion of Erdman.<sup>59</sup>

The approach of Machen to the church has been interpreted variously. Loetscher considered the viewpoint to be Anabaptist.<sup>60</sup> Clifton E. Olmstead considered it "closer to Congregationalism" than

<sup>52</sup>J. Gresham Machen to J. Ross Stevenson, 24 November 1923, Machen Archives.

<sup>53</sup>Stevenson to Machen, 23 November 1923.

<sup>54</sup>Machen to Stevenson, 24 November 1923.

<sup>55</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923) 7.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 159.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 160.

<sup>58</sup>Machen to Stevenson, 24 November 1923.

<sup>59</sup>J. Gresham Machen to Mrs. A. L. Berry, 21 March 1924, Machen Archives.

<sup>60</sup>Loetscher, *The Broadening Church*, 117.

to the Presbyterian doctrine.<sup>61</sup> Machen believed that the church was a voluntary society with no one forced to join. Therefore, requiring certain standards for entrance to and maintenance of membership was appropriate.<sup>62</sup> He stated:

In order, therefore, that the purity of the Church may be preserved, a confession of faith in Christ must be required of all those who would become church members. But what kind of profession must it be? I for my part think that it ought to be not merely a verbal confession but a credible confession.<sup>63</sup>

In arguing for the purity of the church, he added:

To that end, it should, I think, be made much harder than it now is to enter the Church: the confession of faith that is required should be a credible confession; and if it becomes evident upon examination that the candidate has no notion of what he is doing, he should be advised to enter upon a course of instruction before he becomes a member of the Church.<sup>64</sup>

Machen viewed the tests of a credible confession not as challenges to the standing of an individual before God but only as a means of determining "with the best judgment that God has given to feeble and ignorant men, a man's standing in the Church."<sup>65</sup>

This approach of Machen is not that of the Princeton tradition. Charles Hodge conceived the church to be a body of those who profess Christ.<sup>66</sup> For him the *true* church existed within the greater circle of the *professing* church and it was not only impossible but even evil to seek to purge the church of unbelievers.<sup>67</sup> It is not the right of the people, nor do they have the wisdom, to judge the profession of the one confessing faith.<sup>68</sup> A. A. Hodge continued this approach at Princeton with his teaching that the church was a "mixed community" that was not to experience separation until the end of the age.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>61</sup>Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1960) 551.

<sup>62</sup>Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 166-67.

<sup>63</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *What Is Faith?* (New York: Macmillan, 1925) 155-56.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 156-57.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>66</sup>Charles Hodge, "Visibility of the Church," *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 25 (October 1853) 680.

<sup>67</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1871-72) 3. 572.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 3. 545.

<sup>69</sup>Archibald Alexander Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, (rev. ed.; New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1878) 618.

Machen's position caused him conflict with Erdman when the latter was candidate for the position of moderator of the General Assembly in 1924. Erdman did not repudiate the support of modernists who backed him in the race. Machen could not understand how a man could claim to be of the Reformed faith and not fight for it publicly against modernists. In his militant approach, Machen appealed to the public at large through the printed word and the spoken testimony with the desire to rid the church of liberal leaders and influences. He did not seek a final verdict on matters pertaining to liberalism through the recognized judicial system of the Presbyterian church.

Stevenson, in defense of his approach to the church, looked to the Princeton heritage which he thought he exemplified. He emphasized that the toleration which he advocated was "the same in kind and degree which the fathers of the seminary, Dr. Alexander, Miller, and Hodge advocated a hundred years ago."<sup>70</sup> He referred to the fact that the early Princeton professors were considered moderates in their approach to the method of purifying the church in agreement with the position of the Princeton fathers.

They maintained that every effort to reform the church, or to promote its purity and edification should be made in a constitutional way, i.e., through the medium of regular constitutional judicatories. They referred to Old School men who found it more easy to make sweeping assertions regarding corrupt opinions in the Church, or complain to the General Assembly by signing an Act and Testimony, than to do their duty as members of their respective Presbyteries.<sup>71</sup>

Stevenson insisted that Princeton Seminary remain loyal "to the Standards of the Presbyterian Church as enjoined and safeguarded by the General Assembly," and he insisted upon "constitutional methods of government and discipline in dealing with error and corruption within the Presbyterian ministry."<sup>72</sup> Princeton, as a Presbyterian institution, should find its professors not in opposition to "the fundamental principles of Presbyterian Church government."<sup>73</sup> Stevenson assumed such a position himself rather than make statements as a representative of Princeton in opposition to the rising tide of liberalism in the denomination. He contended that the president had no sanction to make such statements.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup>J. Ross Stevenson, "Communication from President Stevenson," *The Presbyterian* 96 (8 July 1926) 6.

<sup>71</sup>J. Ross Stevenson, *The Historical Position of Princeton Seminary* (New York: N.p., February, 1928) 10-11.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>74</sup>J. Ross Stevenson, Report to the Board of Directors, 11 November 1925, in Minutes of the Board of Directors, Princeton Theological Seminary, 11 November 1925, Princeton.

In facing charges that he wished to make Princeton into an inclusive seminary reflecting various viewpoints of the church, Stevenson wrote: "As I know in my own mind and heart, I wish to state most emphatically that I do not want such an 'inclusive' seminary at Princeton as would include Modernists, Liberals, or those of whatever name, who are disloyal to the Standards of the Presbyterian Church."<sup>75</sup> That Stevenson did have concern about liberalism in the church is apparent from his reference to Union Seminary in New York as being a "Seminary for destructive liberalism."<sup>76</sup>

Erdman followed the same approach to the church as Stevenson. He wrote to Armstrong: "my purpose has been and is to be absolutely loyal to our Church Standards in their more conservative interpretation; to abide strictly by constitutional processes in dealing with those whose teachings are not in harmony with these Standards; and further, to faithfully support the Boards and agencies of our Church."<sup>77</sup> Erdman's attitude toward liberals is a reflection of his interpretation of 2 John 10.

We should note at once, however, that the reference here is to teachers who claim to be official and authoritative, and to such treatment of them as plainly would indicate sympathy with their errors and support their professed efforts to overthrow fundamental truth. John does not forbid ordinary courtesy, he does not encourage impoliteness or churlishness or unkindness or cruelty.<sup>78</sup>

Erdman faced mounting criticism because of his view.

The problem of liberalism in the Presbyterian church confronted all of the faculty members at Princeton. Wilson, Vos, Greene, Armstrong, Hodge, and Allis—men involved in exegetical and doctrinal instruction and, with the exception of Greene, lacking pastoral experience—lent their support to Machen's contention that the church was in great peril and that it was the place of Princeton Seminary to enter the fray on the side of militant orthodoxy. On the other side of the issue was a minority consisting of Stevenson, Erdman, Smith and Loetscher. These men of significant pastoral experience tended to be churchmen who sought solutions to denominational concerns through constitutional procedure. This latter group, concerned with ministering

<sup>75</sup>Stevenson, "Communication from President Stevenson," 6.

<sup>76</sup>*Report of the Special Committee to Visit Princeton Theological Seminary to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, May, 1927) 57.

<sup>77</sup>Charles R. Erdman to William Park Armstrong, 18 December 1926, Letters concerning Machen, J. Gresham, 1925-1926, Robert E. Spcer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton.

<sup>78</sup>Charles R. Erdman, *The General Epistles: An Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1919) 194.

to the whole denomination, feared the attitude by the faculty majority which might isolate the seminary from the church. Stevenson voiced this concern to the Board of Directors in 1924.

One hundred and thirty-three students, or sixty per cent of the entire body, belong to the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. This is a slight increase over last year, but according to reports which came to us, McCormick, with a smaller total enrollment, has a larger number of Presbyterian students than we have. The number of candidates for the ministry graduating from our Presbyterian colleges varies from year to year, and we naturally expect a fluctuation in the enrollment which we have each year from a particular college. However, we find upon inquiry that Princeton Seminary does not get the proportion of students to which her standing in the theological world entitles her.<sup>79</sup>

This situation may have resulted from Princeton's strong conservative position. Due to its reputation for strict orthodoxy, conservatives from other church bodies were attracted. At the same time, most of the conservatives in the Presbyterian church were not located in the northeast. Other seminaries within the denomination were dividing the evangelical students with Princeton.

Events at Princeton which dramatized for the public the division within the faculty hampered the institution in its endeavor to attract students. The controversy surrounding the ouster of Erdman as faculty adviser to the Student Association, a position he had held since 1907, triggered concern which eventuated in the reorganization of the seminary. Whether in accord with the facts or not, Machen was accused of engineering the removal of Erdman from the office. The print media presented Machen as the leader of a fundamentalist faction which stood in opposition to Erdman.<sup>80</sup> Though the reports show evidence of being misleading, Machen's stock in the Presbyterian conflict took a tumble from which it would not recover. Samples from the letters addressed to Erdman from self-confessed conservative pastors and leaders contain the following statements:

Personally, I am "sound" in my loyalty to the Confession of Faith—a fundamentalist; but the Lord have mercy on that brand of fundamentalism that cannot endorse you as spiritual adviser to the students of Princeton Seminary.

<sup>79</sup>Princeton Theological Seminary, Minutes of the Board of Directors, Meeting of 14 October 1924.

<sup>80</sup>New York Times, 6 April 1925; Public Ledger (Philadelphia), 6 April 1925; New York Herald Tribune, 6 April 1925; Trenton Evening Times, 7 April 1925, reproduced in *Documents Appended to a Statement by J. Gresham Machen*, ed. by J. Gresham Machen (Princeton: Printed, not published, 23 November 1926) 42-51.



I am very conservative myself but may I never be guilty of an open attack upon one who like yourself stands for the whole truth as contained in the Word of our blessed Lord.

Princeton has always stood for the fundamentals and I know that you have always stood for them too. Most of our Princeton men are fundamentalists at heart. What is dividing the church of today is not the question of doctrine so much but rather the question of Christian charity and Christian Spirit.

I wonder if Machen and the rest realize that they are doing untold harm—dividing the evangelical element in the church as you wrote to Kennedy. Why should orthodoxy have such a trend towards intolerance and Pharisaism? Conservatism without love sours quickly.

Those of us who [sic] are out on the field are truly distressed at the conditions which seem to be so prominent in the Seminary. We are praying that the right attitude will prevail, that the hatred and malice which seem to emanate [sic] from the seminary to flood secular and religious papers will be removed. I have heard no less than a dozen men say that if they had students for ministry they would not know where to send them today—certainly not to Princeton. We are with you in prayer and hope that something definite will come to weld hearts together and to remove the stigma from the beloved institution.<sup>81</sup>

A letter to Machen demonstrates a similar concern:

I am writing to make it clear that, if I must choose between the contending groups, I must decide for the one represented by Dr. Stevenson and Dr. Erdman. In aims and motives I rank the groups on an equality. Also, both groups worship the same Christ and hold the same historic facts as basic. But there is no doubt in my mind that the methods of your group are not in accord with a full orb'd Christian faith. Christ's program for us does not include the negative attitude of condemnatory judging and labelling our co-workers but it is His desire that His followers proclaim a positive message for *Him*. This is the program of Dr. Stevenson and Dr. Erdman—hence, I cast my lot with them. No one deprecates more than I, the fact the paganism has, to some extent, been supplanting the Gospel, in some Presbyterian pulpits, but certainly this is not true of any members of the Seminary Faculty. Further, it is my opinion that the way to silence the un-Evangelical voices is not by personal vituperation but by calm prayerful consideration of the matter by our regularly established Church Courts. Let us not be panic stricken and frantic as if God's truth will fail unless we attack in personal ways the ones unfaithful to their ordination vows. God's Truth through God's Spirit is sure to win but remember that the New

<sup>81</sup>Letters concerning position as Student Advisor, Robert E. Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton.

Testament blessing of the Spirit is for all Christ's Followers and not for a special few. Why not take Christ at His word and leave this matter to the consensus of judgment of our Spirit guided Presbyters and Commissioners?<sup>82</sup>

The conflict between Erdman and Machen reached beyond the halls of Princeton. Erdman ran unsuccessfully for the position of moderator of the General Assembly in 1924 but was victorious after being nominated in 1925. Erdman did not have the support of Machen, his colleague. Having to answer once again for his failure to denounce those who backed him from a liberal persuasion, Erdman responded:

I believe in opposing heresy on the part of any one who is troubling the church. I believe that the procedure should be in a kindly spirit and in accordance with the law of the church. If any men of more liberal theological views desire to vote for me, it is, of course, their privilege to do so. The platform on which I stand, however, is that of old-fashioned orthodox and Christian spirit and constitutional procedures.<sup>83</sup>

In spite of this statement, the conservative periodical, *The Presbyterian*, continued to oppose Erdman due to his unwillingness to separate himself publicly from liberal support.<sup>84</sup>

At the General Assembly of 1926, Erdman and Stevenson both spoke against the nomination of Machen to the chair of Apologetics and Christian Ethics at the seminary. The assembly had the responsibility of confirming the nomination. Erdman's words were reported as follows:

I am not speaking with any personal animus. This is not a theological question. Princeton is true to the standards of the Presbyterian Church. Nor is it to be questioned that Dr. Machen has been a defender of the faith. What has been questioned is whether his temper and methods of defense have been such as to qualify him for the particular chair where his whole time will be devoted to the defense of the Christian faith.<sup>85</sup>

Erdman expressed the opinion that debate should not continue on the issue of Machen's appointment since a committee had been formed, at the request of certain members of the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees at Princeton, with the purpose of investigating the problems

<sup>82</sup>S. Earl Owing to J. Gresham Machen, 14 May 1925, Machen Archives.

<sup>83</sup>"Dr. Erdman's Statement," *The Presbyterian Banner* 111 (7 May 1925) 5.

<sup>84</sup>Editorial Note to "Is Dr. Erdman Labelled?," *The Presbyterian* 45 (14 May 1925) 12.

<sup>85</sup>New York Herald Tribune, 3 June 1926, cited in *Documents appended to the Statement by J. Gresham Machen*, 101-102.

existent at the seminary. In an unprecedented action the assembly refused to confirm Machen's appointment, choosing to await the report of the committee.

#### THE INVESTIGATION

The response at Princeton to the organizing of an investigating committee was mixed. Martin, the registrar, is an example of those who looked at the probe as one which would get at the issue and help solve the problem.<sup>86</sup> Machen, on the other hand, viewed the committee as "purely partisan" and not capable of producing an objective report.<sup>87</sup>

The process of investigation was to include interviews with alumni, faculty, and board members. Alumni interviews revealed various opinions regarding the situation at the seminary. Some thought the problem was the inability of Stevenson to bring harmony and cooperation. Others saw the division as an outgrowth of the conflict between Machen and Erdman. A third opinion placed the blame at the feet of Stevenson and Erdman for their opposition to the will of the majority of the faculty. A fourth perspective was offered by those who concluded that Machen was the source of the trouble.<sup>88</sup> That the problem was one of faculty dissension is clear.

It seemed to be the consensus of opinion that much of the difficulty in Princeton could be found in the Faculty; that the situation which had developed was greatly to be deplored, because of the effect upon the students, and the unfavorable impression made upon prospective students, who, finding the spirit of contention prevailing, preferred to attend some other seminary. One pastor spoke of three young men of his church, at different times in his ministry, whom he had turned toward Princeton, but who went elsewhere, because of the situation which they found.<sup>89</sup>

Interviews with faculty members substantiated the conclusion of serious disharmony among the faculty. Stevenson testified that there existed "a difference of attitude within the faculty toward the Presbyterian Church of today, toward General Assemblies and their leadership, the Assembly of 1924 excepted, and towards the boards, agencies and enterprises of the Presbyterian Church".<sup>90</sup> He asked:

But should the faculty on this or any other account take itself seriously and assume the functions of a board of censors, or a board of strategy

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>87</sup>J. Gresham Machen to Maitland Alexander, 8 August 1926, Machen Archives.

<sup>88</sup>*Report of the Special Committee to Visit Princeton Theological Seminary*, 5.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 153.

for the whole Church in general and the Presbyterian Church in particular? This is just what has taken place in Princeton Seminary within the past three years under the active leadership of Dr. Machen. He has made his diagnosis of conditions in the Presbyterian Church and has given it wide publicity, and he has also prescribed a drastic method of treatment as being the Church's only hope.<sup>91</sup>

Armstrong, speaking on behalf of the majority of the faculty, stated that they

maintain that the Institution has been historically affiliated with the doctrinal point of view in the Church known as the Old School. They are not aware that the reunion of Old and New Schools required the surrender by the Institution at that time of its doctrinal position and they are unwilling that this position be surrendered now when the differences in the Church are concerned not with two forms of the Reformed Faith but with the very nature of evangelical Christianity itself.<sup>92</sup>

Included with the statement from Armstrong was a document submitted by C. W. Hodge to the Board of Directors in which he wrote: "In conclusion, I would add, that it thus appears that two entirely opposite attitudes toward truth or doctrine exist here and in the Church at large, so that no peace between them is either possible or desirable."<sup>93</sup>

Machen expressed his opinion regarding the real issue at Princeton. "It concerns the maintenance of the historic position of Princeton Seminary in the defense of the faith. The majority of the Board of Directors and the majority of the Faculty are in favor of a policy which I think will maintain that position; the President is in favor of a policy which I think will break it down."<sup>94</sup>

Machen did not wish to be understood as passing judgment upon the religious views of Stevenson but was concerned lest the broad approach to the church espoused by the president would serve as "the instrument in breaking down the witness of an institution to that faith."<sup>95</sup> He restated this point: "I am very far indeed from asserting that Dr. Stevenson is a Modernist; but I am convinced that if his policy prevails, Princeton Seminary will be in a very few years a Modernist institution."<sup>96</sup>

Machen concluded his statement by arguing that, in a day of theological divergence, the faculty majority at Princeton ought to have

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 117

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 118.

a right to be heard and to continue the instruction which exemplified the heritage of the Old School tradition that belonged to Princeton. In addressing the committee particularly, he said: "Whatever be your own attitude toward our theological and ecclesiastical views, I cannot help hoping that you will hold that our distinctiveness is to be respected even when it is not shared, and that the internal affairs of Princeton Seminary are to be left, of course with the retention of the Assembly's veto power, to the orderly working in the Board of Directors and in the Faculty, of the principle of majority rule."<sup>97</sup>

Allis supported the statements by Armstrong and Machen. He laid the responsibility for the problem in the seminary at the door of the president. He concluded:

It is now, I believe, inescapably plain that the president is determined to carry out his policies in the face of the open opposition of the majority of his Faculty, and furthermore and most important of all, that he is prepared to use every means in his power, especially those means which his position of leadership as the President of the Seminary has placed at his disposal, to undermine their influence and to change this Seminary from its position of strict adherence to the traditions of historic Presbyterianism to one in which all shades of beliefs which are now tolerated within the Church, even though they be clearly out of harmony with its Standards, will be more or less tolerated even if not approved. This policy the majority of the Faculty feel it their duty to resist and oppose.<sup>98</sup>

Smith supported the president and his approach. He defined his position as he defended Stevenson.

I would not have any system of inclusion, which included elements hostile to that system, and the only inclusion I would recognize is the inclusion of all those who hold that system pure and entire, and yet cherish within the limits, certain minor differences of opinion. I differ from my brethren in this respect, that it seems to me is about the position of the President of the Seminary. If this is not his position, and if he is inclined to bring into the Seminary or into the representation of the Seminary in any degree, what we call the liberal or modernistic elements, I should oppose him as heartily as any of my brethren, but because I do not think he holds that position, because I have satisfied myself in public utterance and in private utterance, that his attitude is that which I have been indicating, I have been inclined to support him.<sup>99</sup>

Stevenson declared that Smith had represented him accurately. "If I ever meant the Church would recognize heresy, and men who do not

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 153.

believe in the authority of the Scriptures, who do not accept the Virgin Birth, if I have ever meant any intimation of that kind, I would make public apology, because I do not hold to anything of that kind."<sup>100</sup>

Loetscher raised some pertinent questions in his testimony.

The question, therefore, that has divided us as I see it is this. How far may we go in the exercise of Christian charity toward those who differ with us in regard to the attitude that we ought to take toward matters in public debate? How far does my loyalty to conviction prevent me from exercising Christian charity toward my brother in the ministry?<sup>101</sup>

Testimonies by members of the boards continued the theme of faculty division and the issues that had caused the cleavage. The committee concluded that one of the factors which was behind the problem was the existence of two boards serving to govern the institution.<sup>102</sup> The Board of Directors was the original governing board. A Board of Trustees was added to maintain the seminary in its legal status in the state of New Jersey. The directors were involved with the faculty and educational direction. The trustees were to deal with financial and corporate matters. The boards, like the faculty, had come to be divided over the issues but their division was not public. The investigating committee proposed reorganization of the seminary under one board of control.<sup>103</sup> After two years of further debate and publication of views, the reorganization was effected. A new thirty-three man board was to be appointed. Eleven members from each of the existing boards were nominated along with eleven men from outside these boards. Two men chosen, Asa J. Ferry and W. Beatty Jennings, had been signers of the Auburn Affirmation. Machen refused to serve under such a board and left the institution to establish Westminster Theological Seminary. With him went Robert Dick Wilson, Cornelius Van Til, and Oswald T. Allis.

The separation of these men from the faculty was not the wish of the new board. Their absence from the seminary at Princeton cost that institution some of its best young leadership. In 1930, John Murray left Princeton after a year of service and joined the faculty at Westminster. These men represented the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, and Apologetics. Their defection from Princeton was a severe blow to its future conservative leadership. The question can be raised as to what effect the continued presence of these men at Princeton might have had on a future generation of students. At the

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

same time it must be admitted that the strict Presbyterianism and separatism espoused by these men made it impossible for them to continue careers there. Lefferts Loetscher concluded: "It was best for both parts of the seminary's tradition that open bifurcation came at last, and that each could develop more fully and consistently its inherent implications unhampered by a really alien tendency."<sup>104</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary and the subsequent departure of four professors brought the dawn of a new era for the institution. That reorganization was neither the result of a modernist-conceived plan to capture the seminary nor an inevitable consequence of church reunion. The issue was rather the division among the seminary faculty members over theological curriculum and over the nature and needs of the Presbyterian church. This division resulted in the loss of students as well as pastoral support. The situation cried out for a resolution that evangelical men were unable and/or unwilling to achieve.

The Princeton story serves as an example to evangelical colleges and seminaries. Men and women who are in agreement on essential doctrinal matters and confessional statements must avoid polarization and disharmony which can result when issues are not resolved in the spirit of unity, peace, and love.

<sup>104</sup>Loetscher, *The Broadening Church*, 147.