

THE
ATTACK UPON PRINCETON
SEMINARY

A PLEA FOR FAIR PLAY

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FOREWORD

The action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, meeting at San Francisco, in adopting the Report of the Special Committee to visit Princeton Theological Seminary, has raised an issue upon which the entire future character of the institution depends. In treating of this issue, I shall not deal with the personal attack that has been made upon me. My real sorrow has been due not to the personal indignity that I have suffered by the actions of the last two General Assemblies, but to the fact that I have been the occasion, though certainly not the underlying cause, of the danger which now besets the Seminary. That fact gives me, I think, a right to say something in defence of the institution that I so dearly love. There are others far better qualified than I—both by their own ability and by their official position—to defend the institution, and no doubt they will defend it. But since my name has been given such a special, though purely accidental, prominence, I think that I may be permitted to say what my attitude is. In doing so, I am speaking in my own name alone. Since many things have been said about my views regarding the situation, some of them true and some of them untrue, I think that I have a right to say plainly, for myself, what those views are.

I. FOR WHAT DOES PRINCETON SEMINARY STAND?

For over one hundred years Princeton Theological Seminary has stood firmly for the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God and for the vigorous defence and propagation of the Reformed or Calvinistic system of doctrine, which is the system of doctrine that the Bible teaches. This conservative stand of the institution has been due—certainly since 1870, when the present method of electing the professors was introduced—simply and solely to the conservative majority in the Board of Directors. But now, by action of the last General Assembly, that Board is to be dissolved and the control of the institution is to be placed in different hands. What is now a majority in the affairs of the Seminary is to become a minority, and the policy of the institution is to be reversed.

Both parties in the present debate are, indeed, professing adherence to “the historic position” of Princeton Seminary. Even the Board of Trustees, the Board which, as distinguished from the Board of Directors, has had charge of the material, as distinguished from the spiritual, affairs of the institution, has professed such adherence. But since one member of the committee which the Trustees have appointed to co-operate in effecting the proposed reorganization, is actually a signer of the “Auburn Affirmation,” it is evident that the term, “historical theological position of Princeton Theological Seminary,” must be used by the Trustees in a sense widely different from ours. The Auburn Affirmation asserts as plainly as words can express it that even acceptance of the virgin birth and of certain other basic articles of our faith is *not* necessary for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. Does such an Affirmation represent the

Princeton position? To anyone who knows the history of Princeton Seminary, the answer will not be difficult.

The truth is that despite all differences of opinion it is not impossible, whatever one's own personal attitude may be, to determine what the Princeton position is. The question what that position is, is quite distinct from the question whether it is right or wrong. And with regard to the former question, as distinguished from the latter, there is a certain unanimity of opinion among outside observers whether they are friends or foes. Princeton Seminary is known for what it really is, not only by those who have hitherto controlled its destinies, but also by a great host of opponents throughout the world.

What, then, is it for which we at Princeton stand?

I

In the first place, we stand for the complete truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God. It is often said that the Bible is infallible in the inner, religious sphere, but fallible like other books when it comes to deal with external history. We reject any such distinction. Our religion is no bottomless mysticism, but it is the Christian religion; and the Christian religion is founded squarely upon events, like the death and resurrection of our Lord, that took place in the external world. Unless the Bible can give us knowledge of those basic events, it can be no infallible guide for our souls.

Thus we hold that the Bible is not partly true and partly false, but true throughout. In saying that, we are well aware of the favor that we are sacrificing. There are many who would be inclined to treat with respect what we say about many things—what we say, for example, even in defence of the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of our Lord—but who regard us as having placed ourselves beyond the pale of serious consideration when we hold that the Bible is true from beginning to end. It would be convenient, therefore, for us to keep

in the background what we believe about this point, and thus to retain a larger measure of favor from the modern Church. Much could be said, from the point of view of policy, in favor of such an attitude. But it is an attitude which we can never adopt. There is to our mind no profession more despicable than the profession of teaching when one thing is said in the classroom and another thing to the Church at large. And so we say plainly, to the ruin, in many quarters, of our reputation, but with the approval of our consciences, that we hold the Bible to be free from the errors that mar other books, to be the blessed, holy, infallible Word of God.

We do not, indeed, *begin* with that conviction in our defence of the Christian religion; and so we can find common ground for discussion with many whose view of the Bible is very different from ours. When, for example, we argue in favor of our belief in a personal God, we do not base our argument at all upon the infallibility of the Bible; what we say in that sphere, therefore, may commend itself to many whose view of the Bible is very unfavorable indeed. Or when we defend our belief in the resurrection of our Lord, again our argument is independent of the question whether the Bible is infallible or not. Even prior to any belief in the infallibility of Scripture, a scientific treatment of the sources of information will, we think, lead the historian to hold that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead on the third day. There are many Christians who can go with us that far, and yet cannot accept our view of the Bible; and we rejoice in the measure of their agreement with us. Our view of the Bible is not the beginning, we think, but it is rather the end, of any orderly defence of the Christian religion. First the general truth of the Bible in its great outlines as an historical book, and the supernatural origin of the revelation that it contains, then the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God—that is the order of our apologetic.

Nevertheless, although we do not begin with the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture, we do come to it in the end; and when we have come to it, we build upon it our orderly exposition of the Christian faith. As apologists, in other words, we end with the infallibility of Scripture, but as systematic theologians we begin with it. Systematic theology, we think, logically begins at the point where apologetics has left off. Apologetics establishes the full truthfulness of the Bible, and then systematic theology proceeds to set forth the teaching that the Bible contains.

II

But what is it that the Bible contains? That question brings us to our second point. We have just said that Princeton Seminary stands for the full truthfulness of the Bible. In the second place, it stands for the Reformed or Calvinistic faith as being the system of doctrine that the Bible contains.

The Bible, let it be noted, contains, on our view (which is also the view expressed in the ordination pledge of ministers and elders in our Church), not merely this doctrine or that, but a *system* of doctrine. A system differs from a mere agglomeration in the inter-relation and mutual necessity of its parts. And so we cannot agree with those who isolate one part of the system from the other parts as being alone necessary as a basis for Christian work. Very profoundly, for example, do we differ from those who omit the doctrines of grace—the Bible teaching about sin, the Bible answer to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?"—from the things that they regard essential as a basis for co-operation among various ecclesiastical bodies at home or on the mission field.

As over against such a reduced Christianity, we at Princeton stand for the full, glorious gospel of divine grace that God has given us in His Word and that is summarized in the Confession of Faith of our Church.

We cannot agree with those who say that although they are members of the Presbyterian Church, they "have not the slightest zeal to have the Presbyterian Church extended through the length and breadth of the world." As for us, we hold the faith of the Presbyterian Church, the great Reformed Faith that is set forth in the Westminster Confession, to be true; and holding it to be true we hold that it is intended for the whole world.

But it would be the greatest mistake to think that the issue with regard to Princeton Seminary stops there; it would be the greatest mistake to suppose that the difference concerns merely the question whether we are to stand for the full heritage of our Reformed Faith or are to content ourselves (in the statement of what is essential) with some lesser creed. No, the difference cuts even deeper than that. It concerns not merely the question as to the *content* of the doctrine that we are to set forth, but rather the attitude that is to be assumed with regard to *all* doctrine as such. It concerns not merely the question whether we are to teach this or that, but the question whether what we teach we are to teach with our whole hearts and in clear-cut opposition to the present drift of the times.

The policy of President Stevenson with regard to Princeton Seminary has sometimes been represented as an "inclusive" policy. There is certainly an element of truth in such a representation. Never has Dr. Stevenson given any clear indication, by the policy that he has followed as President of the Seminary, that he recognizes the profound line of cleavage that separates the two opposite tendencies within the Presbyterian Church, and the necessity that if Princeton Seminary is to be true to its great heritage and true to the moral obligations involved in the distinctive basis upon which it has always appealed for support, it must, in this great contention, definitely and unequivocally take sides. Such recognition, which we seek in vain in President Stevenson, would not necessarily prejudice the question whether

both tendencies should be tolerated within the Presbyterian Church; but it would certainly mean at least that Princeton has the right and indeed the very solemn obligation of maintaining a *distinctive* position within the larger unity of the Church. It is true, then, that Dr. Stevenson's policy is in a very important sense an inclusive policy, and that such an inclusive policy is contrary to the obligations which, on account of its entire history, Princeton Seminary has very solemnly assumed.

But although in one sense the policy with which we disagree is an inclusive policy, in another sense it is not inclusive at all. Formally it is inclusive, but in its deeper meaning and in its practical applications it is very exclusive indeed. No one who has observed with the slightest care the policy of the President can think that if that policy prevails any man who is consistently conservative or evangelical in the ecclesiastical issue of the present day will have the slightest chance of being elected to a chair in Princeton Seminary. The only men who will be tolerated in the Faculty will be men who hold a complacent view of the state of the Church, who conceal from themselves and from others the real state of religious opinion in the world, and who consent to conform to the opinions of the party dominant for the moment in the councils of the Church. The Seminary under the new policy will be inclusive of those who obscure the great issue of the day; but it will be exclusive of those who have determined to warn the Church of her danger and to contend earnestly for the faith.

If that policy becomes dominant in Princeton Seminary, then the Princeton position has very definitely been given up. And if the change is wrought by ecclesiastical action, then all the high-sounding words which have recently been uttered about peace and tolerance will be mocked. In that case, there will be liberty in the Presbyterian Church for Modernists; but none for conservatives; and those who hold the conservative view will have to go

elsewhere for the maintenance of those convictions that are dearer to them than life itself.

III

We have seen that Princeton Seminary stands in the first place for the complete truthfulness of the Scriptures as the Word of God, and in the second place for the Westminster Standards as containing the system of doctrine that the Scriptures teach. In the third place, Princeton Seminary holds that both these things—the full truthfulness of Holy Scripture and the system of doctrine that our Standards set forth—need, and are capable of, intellectual defence.

Hence we cannot agree with those who think that a theological seminary ought to devote less time to the defence of Christianity and more time to the propagation of it. Certainly it is a grievous sin to propagate what is incapable of defence. The basic question about any message that may be propagated is the question whether it is *true*; and that question has been raised with regard to the Christian message in such insistent fashion in the modern world that the challenge must above all things be squarely and honestly met.

In meeting the challenge, we are fully conscious of the magnitude of our task. We cannot agree at all with those who despise the adversaries in this great debate, who think that the "critics" are to be disposed of with a few general words of adjectival abuse. For our part, we have profound admiration for the great masters of modern criticism; we are fully conscious of their intellectual greatness; we respect them to the full. Who would not admire the imposing reconstructions proposed by a Baur or by a Bousset, or the massive learning of a Schürer, or the brilliancy and versatility of a Harnack, or the incisiveness of radicals like Wrede in Germany or our own American Dr. McGiffert? Certainly we respect such scholars, opponents though they are of all that we hold most dear. Some of them may have re-

spected us in turn; but whether they respect us or not, we shall continue respecting them. They are wrong, we think; all their learning is devoted to the impossible task of reconstructing on naturalistic principles what was really an act of God. But though they are wrong, they are wrong in a grand and imposing way; and they cannot be refuted either by a railing accusation or by a few pious words.

So we try to divest our students of the notion that there is any royal road to sacred learning; we try to divest them of the notion that they can lead the modern Church without a knowledge of the original languages of Scripture and without the other tools of research. Above all we try to give them a sense of the magnitude of the modern debate. We try, indeed, to lead them to faith; but we do not try to lead them by encouraging them to ignore the facts. On the contrary, we believe that Christian faith flourishes not in the darkness but in the light, and that a man's Christian conviction is only strengthened when he has examined both sides. We do, indeed, encourage men to come to Princeton Seminary. For them to do so, we think, is only fair. Historic Christianity deserves, we maintain, at least a hearing before it is finally given up; it is not fair to hear only what can be said against it without obtaining any orderly acquaintance with what it is; and to learn what it is men should listen not to its opponents but to those who believe it with all their minds and hearts. So we do invite men to Princeton. But after they have studied at Princeton, indeed even while they are studying here, the more they acquaint themselves with what opposing teachers say, the better it seems to us to be. We encourage our graduates, if they can, to listen to the great foreign masters of naturalistic criticism; we desire them to hear all that can be said against the gospel that we believe.

No doubt such a program is full of perils. Might it not be safer for our future ministers to close their ears

to all modern voices and remain in ignorance of the objections that the gospel faces in the modern world? We reply that of course it might be *safer*. It is safer to be a good soldier in comfortable barracks than it is on the field of battle. But the great battles are not won in that way.

Thus we encourage our students to be fearless in their examination of the basis of the faith. Let no one say that such a program is unduly negative—that it involves too much examination of opposing views, and too little positive presentation of the gospel that we believe. Nobly do the graduates of Princeton Seminary refute any such accusation. What is it that the Church values in Princeton Seminary? Is it not the positiveness and definiteness of the gospel message that our graduates proclaim; is it not that our former students, amid the vagueness of much modern religious teaching, know so clearly where they stand? No, the teaching of Princeton Seminary is not negative, but positive; all our examination of objections to the gospel is employed only as a means to lead men to a clearer understanding of what the gospel is and to a clearer and more triumphant conviction of its truth.

But the attainment of such conviction leads, for many men, through the pathway of intellectual struggle and perplexity of soul. Some of us have been through such struggle ourselves; some of us have known the blankness of doubt, the deadly discouragement, the perplexity of indecision, the vacillation between "faith diversified by doubt," and "doubt diversified by faith." If such has been our experience, we think with gratitude of the teachers who helped us in our need; and we in turn try with all our might to help those who are in the struggle now. Nothing can be done, we know, by trying to tyrannize over men's minds; all that we can do is to present the facts as we see them, to hold out a sympathizing hand to our younger brethren, and to commit them to God in prayer.

We cannot, indeed, seek to win men by false hopes; we cannot encourage them to think that if they decide to stand for Christ they will have the favor of the modern world or necessarily of the modern Church. On the contrary, if we read the signs of the times aright, both in the Church and in the State, there may soon come a period of genuine persecution for the children of God.

“If I find Him, if I follow,
What His guerdon here?
Many a sorrow, many a labor,
Many a tear.”

Such, we are inclined to think, will be the lot of those who stand against the whole current of the age. It is not an easy thing to oppose a world in arms; nor is it an easy thing to oppose an increasingly hostile Church. But when one does so, with full conviction, what a blessed, inward peace!

Such is the peace to which many of our students have attained. Small has been our part in such a result; it has been the work of God. But by the blessing of God's Spirit, through the use of whatever means, there has been emanating from Princeton during the last few years a current of warm Christian life that has refreshed those whom it has touched. It has found a noble expression in the new League of Evangelical Students; but it has found an even nobler expression in the experience of individual men. Conviction has issued here truly into Christian life.

What shall be done with this type of warm and vital Christianity that has been issuing from Princeton? It may come squarely into conflict, at some points, with the present leadership of the Church. But because the fervent piety of our recent graduates of Princeton Seminary may be opposed at some points to the ecclesiastical machinery, it does not follow that that ecclesiastical machinery should be allowed to crush it out. Long has been the conflict, during nineteen centuries, between ecclesiastical authority and the free and mysterious oper-

ation of the Spirit of God. But under our Presbyterian institutions the tyrannical practices to which ecclesiastical authority has elsewhere resorted are an anomaly and a shame. And so we have some hope that the present tyrannical proposal about Princeton Seminary may yet be rejected and that Princeton may yet be saved.

II. HOW THE ATTACK WAS MADE

It was observed at the beginning of this pamphlet that by action of the General Assembly of 1927 the Board of Directors of Princeton Seminary, to which the conservative policy of the institution has been due, is to be dissolved and control is to be placed in the hands of what is now a minority, so that the policy will be reversed.

In the process by which this result has been attained, the first important step was the coming of Dr. J. Ross Stevenson as president of the Seminary. Dr. Stevenson was, indeed, received with cordiality by the Faculty, and for some years enjoyed the confidence of the Board of Directors. But in the course of time it became evident that he was seriously out of sympathy with the traditions of the institution and with the policy advocated both by the Directors and by the Faculty.

Under these circumstances, two courses of action were open to him.

In the first place, he might have resigned his position. In that case, the distinctiveness of the institution would have been preserved. Dr. Stevenson would have been perfectly free to pursue his own policy elsewhere; for there are many institutions and agencies which maintain exactly the same complacent view of the present state of religion which we think is so dangerous in a president of Princeton Seminary. But the distinctiveness of Princeton within the larger communion of the Presbyterian Church would in that case have been preserved. The thoroughgoing conservatives in the Church would have been allowed to retain at least one institution that represented their view.

This choice was rejected by Dr. Stevenson. Instead of recognizing the distinctiveness and relative autonomy of the Seminary's life, instead of abiding by the principle of majority rule within the institution's Board of Directors, he preferred to appeal from the policy of

that Board to the larger tribunal of the General Assembly. The result of such appeal is the action of last May, by which the Board of Directors is to be abolished, and, instead, there is to be a single board of control which will undoubtedly support Dr. Stevenson's views. This action, we think, is extremely unjust; and we are appealing to the Church at large to reverse the decision next year, before the reorganization of the institution is actually put into effect.

Such reversal would not necessarily mean that the General Assembly is itself opposed to Dr. Stevenson's policy or in favor of the policy of the Board. But it would mean simply that the Assembly recognizes the right of various theological seminaries to maintain distinctive views within the larger communion of the Church. Princeton Seminary is not the only seminary in the Presbyterian Church. There are other seminaries; and they represent widely different points of view. Why should the distinctiveness of no other seminary be interfered with except the seminary that most clearly maintains the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God? Why should "Liberal" seminaries be left alone, and only this conservative seminary be destroyed? The truth is that unless the disruption of the Presbyterian Church is to take place at once, the conservatives in the Church, no matter how extreme their attitude may be thought by others to be, must be allowed to have at least one seminary that clearly and unequivocally represents their view. If the conservatives are to be retained in the Church at all, they must have at least one theological institution, not that *others* think is sound, but that *they* think is sound. Princeton Seminary is such an institution, and the interference with its distinctive character that is contemplated by the action of the last General Assembly would be an act of the greatest injustice. Against such injustice, we appeal to the sense of fair play among the rank and file of the Presbyterian Church.

III. THE CAUSE OF THE STRIFE

It has already been pointed out what a very extreme measure was adopted by the last General Assembly with regard to Princeton Theological Seminary. The Board of Directors, which has hitherto governed the institution in spiritual matters and has preserved for it its distinctive character, is to be dissolved, and a new board of control is to be formed. Thus Princeton Theological Seminary, as it has been so long and so honorably known, is to be destroyed, and we are to have at Princeton a new institution of a radically different kind.

What ground is assigned by the Committee in charge for such an extreme measure, for such a policy of "frightfulness," with respect to an ancient and widely respected institution?

The answer is simple. It is that there is strife within the institution, and that to settle that strife the institution must be reorganized.

In reply, we say that of course there is strife within the institution, but that the strife can be ended in a very simple way—a way that does not at all involve, as the action of the last Assembly does, the destruction of the Seminary and the founding, instead of it, of a new institution.

What is the cause of the strife at Princeton? The answer is simple. The strife is caused by the fact that certain members of a minority in the councils of the Seminary have been unwilling to recognize the rights of the majority. Such recognition of the rights of the majority is the very foundation of ordered society; without it there can be no peace either in the Church or in the State. It is that principle which has been violated by some of the minority in Princeton Theo-

logical Seminary; and the result is the condition which we all deplore.

Never was a minority more fairly or more courteously treated than the minority in Princeton Seminary. Its rights were respected to the full; indeed, the only question is whether the majority both in the Faculty and in the Board of Directors did not err by an excessive forbearance; possibly if the majority had exercised its power in a more prompt and vigorous way, the present situation might have been avoided. But that fault, if fault it be, was surely a fault in the right direction; and certainly it did not deserve the savage treatment which has been meted out to it by Dr. Thompson's report.

At any rate, some members of the minority in Princeton Seminary were unwilling to recognize the rights of the majority; and to such unwillingness is to be traced all of the strife in which the institution has become involved.

The first notable instance of this attitude in the minority was found in President Stevenson's failure to resign his position when it had become evident that he was hopelessly out of accord both with his Faculty and with his Board of Directors. Possibly it may be objected that the Board ought formally and publicly to have requested his resignation. But in countless cases, not only in educational institutions but also in individual congregations and in other bodies, such a measure does not need to be resorted to; an administrative officer, despite full conviction that he is right and the majority wrong, resigns his position in the interests of peace. Never was a resignation, from such a point of view, more imperatively demanded than the resignation of President Stevenson. We hear much about peace at Princeton Seminary; but if it was really peace, and not something else, that was desired, the resignation of the President was the means by which it was to be secured.

The second notable violation of the peace of the institution was of a more positive and public kind. It was

found in the letter which Dr. Charles R. Erdman published in *The Presbyterian Advance* for January 22, 1925. That letter contained an extraordinary personal attack upon certain of Dr. Erdman's colleagues in the Faculty. In justification of the attack, no evidence has been produced; and yet no apology for the attack, or repudiation of it, has ever been offered. Naturally such an unprecedented public attack by one professor upon the character of his colleagues was made the basis of widespread newspaper publicity. The publicity had many ramifications, but the great bulk of it—perhaps all of it—is to be traced ultimately to Dr. Erdman's attack upon his colleagues in *The Presbyterian Advance*. That attack it was that brought the institution into the undignified and misleading publicity which has given rise to such widespread regret.

Since the publication of Dr. Erdman's letter, the supporters of the minority have done everything in their power to fan the fires of controversy and thus to prevent the institution from being at peace. An instance of such activity is the newspaper agitation about Dr. Erdman's alleged ejection from the alleged Faculty position of Adviser to the Student Association. The students had formed or were forming a "League of Evangelical Students." The majority of the Faculty thought it was a splendid expression of Christian convictions; it warmed our hearts, in these days when the devotion of so many has grown cold, to find these young men giving spontaneous expression to their belief in the Bible as the Word of God and holding out a helping hand to their fellow-students in other institutions who are struggling manfully against the drift of the times. Dr. Erdman, rightly or wrongly, thought otherwise about the League; yet against the will both of students and of Faculty his supporters desired him to hold a position in which his attitude toward the League might have killed the whole movement at its birth.

But that is only one manifestation of the root of the

whole trouble. The real cause of the strife at Princeton is that some members of the minority, despite the most fair and generous treatment by the majority, have been unwilling to recognize the rights that a majority unquestionably has.

For such a situation there are two possible remedies. In the first place, the majority may be ejected and the minority placed in control. That is, in essence, the remedy that is involved in Dr. Thompson's report and that has been approved in principle by the General Assembly of 1927. Possibly it may bring "peace" at Princeton. But it will do so at the expense of justice; and the result will be simply to drive men of conservative or evangelical views out of the Presbyterian Church.

The other remedy is that the continuity and relative autonomy of the institution should be recognized, and that the authority of the Board that has maintained the distinctive position of the Seminary should be continued. That solution, quite irrespective of the question whether the President's policy or the policy of the Board is in itself right, is the only solution which is in accordance with justice. So long as thoroughgoing conservatives are to be tolerated in the Presbyterian Church at all, they should be allowed to have at least one institution that clearly and unequivocally represents their view.

IV. TWO BOARDS OR ONE BOARD

The real question at Princeton, as has already been pointed out, is the question whether the conservative majority now in control of the institution is to be ejected and the present minority represented by Dr. Stevenson is to be placed in charge.

The particular means by which this result is to be attained is the establishment, to replace the present Boards of Directors and Trustees, of a single board of control. The question whether we are to have one board or two boards has, indeed, sometimes been represented as though it were a mere administrative question; but in reality it is a question upon which the whole character of the institution depends. Maintain the authority, in spiritual affairs, of the present Board of Directors, which alone has kept the institution (so far as its theological position is concerned) what it is, and Princeton will continue to maintain its historic stand in the defence and propagation of the faith that is taught in the Word of God; substitute for that authority the authority of a single board of control, and the fine old institution, with all its noble traditions, will be dead.

Conceivably, indeed, there might, under other circumstances, be a single board of control which would maintain the conservative position of Princeton Seminary. That would be, indeed, even under the best of circumstances, extremely difficult; for government by a single board is a very dangerous form of government for a theological institution. Almost certainly it would involve the presence on the board of business men who know little or no theology; and in theological matters ignorance is nearly as likely to throw an institution into the hands of the enemies of the faith as is positive disloyalty to

the Word of God. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the form of government which underlies all our Presbyterian polity is essentially sound—one body in charge of spiritual affairs, another body in charge of the investment of funds. That is the polity that underlies the present "Plan" of Princeton Seminary. Any essential departure from it would, even under the most favorable circumstances, be dangerous in the extreme.

But that question is purely academic. Whatever may be the abstract possibilities in the case, there can be no doubt but that under the present circumstances—particularly under the guidance of the overwhelmingly partisan Committee of Eleven which has been appointed by authority of the General Assembly—any single board of control that by any possibility would be nominated would represent a policy diametrically opposed to the policy that has made Princeton Seminary what it is.

What is it, after all, that makes Princeton Seminary a conservative institution? Certainly it is not the general control of the institution by the Presbyterian Church; for other theological institutions under the Presbyterian Church represent very different points of view. Nor is it the Board of Trustees; for that Board has not been concerned with theological matters, but only with the investment of funds and with the care of the material resources of the institution. Why is it that the present Faculty of the Seminary is sound in the faith? The fact that the Faculty is sound has been mentioned with approval by many persons in connection with the present debate and particularly by the General Assembly's Committee. But to what is the soundness of the Faculty due? That is the really important question. Most emphatically, it is not due to the Board of Trustees; for that Board has never in the whole history of the institution chosen a single professor. Every professor who has been chosen for the Faculty since 1870, when the General Assembly ceased to elect the professors, has been chosen by the Board of Directors. Thus if the

Church approves of the soundness of the present Faculty, the credit for such soundness should be given to the Board of Directors and to the Board of Directors alone; it is solely to the Board of Directors and not to the Board of Trustees that the maintenance of the distinctive evangelical position of Princeton Seminary is due. To turn the spiritual affairs of the institution over to a secular corporation like the Board of Trustees would be to desert an agency that is tried and true, in these most dangerous times, for one which, to say the least, is quite untried. How would the individual congregations throughout the country like it if their board of trustees, chosen for an entirely different purpose, should suddenly replace the sessions and assume control in spiritual affairs? Yet in the case of an educational institution the injustice of such a revolution would certainly be greater still.

All that would be true even if the attitude of the Board of Trustees, in theological matters, were merely unknown, and not positively known to be hostile to the policy for which the institution has always stood. Even then, an agency that is tried and true would be being deserted for one that is quite untried. Most amazing is the attitude of those who claim to be conservatives and yet are willing to take such a step. In these days when the whole current of the world is contrary to the evangelical position which the Seminary holds, and when a most vague and misleading use of traditional terminology so often conceals the true radicalism of men's views—in these perilous days, men who claim to be conservatives are willing to turn over the delicate and difficult task of steering a great institution through the troubled waters to a Board which in these matters has, to say the least, never been tried!

But in reality the situation is not even so favorable as that. It is not merely that the Board of Trustees is not known to be favorable to the historic position of Princeton Seminary; but there are certain positive indications that it is opposed to that position. Its opposi-

tion is made clear, to say nothing of less palpable indications, by one fact which cannot possibly be concealed. It is a fact that the Board of Trustees not only has among its members, but has actually appointed to the Committee dealing with the momentous question of the reorganization of the Seminary, a signer of the Auburn Affirmation. The Auburn Affirmation may be obscure in many particulars, but at the central point it is plain enough. In language that cannot be mistaken, it declares that acceptance of the virgin birth of our Lord, together with four other basic articles of the Christian faith, is *not* essential even to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church. And yet the Board of Trustees is willing to appoint a signer of such a document to a committee which is to help determine the fate of Princeton Seminary! In view of that fact, the contention of those who say that no doctrinal issue is involved in this Princeton question and that the work of reorganizing the institution is in safe hands—this contention is seen to be quite absurd.

We are not concerned in the slightest, in this connection, with the doctrinal position of individual members of the Board of Trustees; it is quite possible for men whose own position is of an evangelical kind to be very dangerous guides with regard to the doctrinal policy of an institution; an uncritical optimism about the views of others is fully as dangerous to the maintenance of the things for which an institution like Princeton has always stood as is unsoundness in one's own views. We are not objecting, moreover, to the continuance of the Board of Trustees in the prerogatives which it now enjoys. Those prerogatives are of a very important kind, and we are as far as possible from desiring to see them interfered with. But those prerogatives do not include, and never have included, the determination of the doctrinal position of the Seminary.

The matter is really quite plain. Princeton Seminary is a conservative institution simply and solely because

of the conservative majority in its Board of Directors. That Board has had a continuous history of over one hundred years, and since 1870 its members have been elected not by the Assembly, but by the Board itself. In the election of its members it is subject, indeed to a veto power of the General Assembly; but the Assembly, very wisely, has refrained from exercising this power, and has allowed the distinctiveness of the institution to be preserved.

What is the result? The result is that Princeton Seminary is still loyal to the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God. In that position it stands, among the older institutions of theological learning in the English-speaking world, practically alone. That may be an unpalatable fact, but a fact it is all the same. The other older institutions, in Great Britain and in America, have one by one drifted away; but Princeton stands firm for the truth of God's Word and for the gospel of redemptive love that the Word proclaims.

For the maintenance of this position, which is so directly contrary to the whole drift of the times, something more than personal orthodoxy has been required. There has also been necessary an unceasing vigilance. Suppose the complacent attitude of Dr. Stevenson with regard to the state of the Church had prevailed in the Board of Directors, who can think that the evangelical position of Princeton Seminary would have been maintained? Suppose the opinion of the minority in the Board had been the opinion of the majority, can anyone think that Princeton would be a conservative institution today? Two members of the minority group in the Board of Directors of Princeton Seminary have recently, in an official letter to the Church, actually made the assertion that "our Church stands united in the great truths of the Gospel." It is indeed amazing that such distinguished men—distinguished for their services to our Church and to the Christian world—should make an assertion that is so manifestly contrary to the facts; but they certainly

have made it, and it represents just the attitude in which the imminent danger to Princeton Seminary lies. If Princeton Seminary comes into the hands of men who, in these days, in the face of the Auburn Affirmation and of plain indications without number, think that "our Church stands united in the great truths of the Gospel," then the long and honorable history of the institution in the propagation of the gospel has indeed come to an end.

As opposed to such dangerous complacency; the vigilance of the majority in our Board of Directors, its willingness to face the real facts in the world of religious thought, has accomplished the remarkable achievement of maintaining the position of Princeton Seminary in an age of defection and doubt. Despite the drift of the times, our institution still defends the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God, and still propagates, with all its rebuke to human pride, with all its proclamation of God's wondrous love, the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord.

Is such a position to be tolerated in the Presbyterian Church? If it is to be tolerated, to say nothing of its being approved, then let the distinctiveness of the institution's life be respected, and let the authority of the Board of Directors be maintained; if it is not to be tolerated, then let the Church put into effect Dr. Thompson's policy of ruthless "frightfulness"; let the Board of Directors, after its long and faithful service, be wiped forcibly out of existence; let there be a new governing board in which what is now a minority shall become a majority; and thus let the policy of the institution be reversed.

The choice should not be difficult among those in our Church who are devoted to the truth of the Bible. Even supposing we have presented the issue with undue sharpness, even supposing there were a *chance* (as in point of fact there is not) that a new, single board of control might maintain the conservative position of the Semi-

nary, it would still remain true that a certainty would be deserted for something that is quite untried. The present Board of Directors not only *might* maintain the conservative position of the Seminary, but *has* actually done so; it has done so against opposition of all kinds, and it has done so in the presence of an uncritical complacency that is in such matters far more dangerous than direct attack. Will the evangelical people in the Church join the present hue and cry against such a Board; will they desert an agency that is tried and true for one that is uncertain at the very best? Or will they insist upon fair play? That is the question that confronts the next General Assembly.

One thing is clear—the really important matter is not the question whether the election of one or the other professor is to be confirmed. But it is the question of the *control* of the institution. If there is a majority of one vote in the new board of control for the policy now represented by the minority, then it does not make the slightest difference how many conservative members, up to that limit, are chosen for that board. In that case, Princeton Seminary, as it has been known and honored for a hundred years, will be dead, and there will be substituted for it a new institution of a radically different kind. And circumstances being what they are, there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone acquainted with the facts where control in the new single Board will lie. Princeton Seminary, as a conservative institution, can be saved only by the defeat of the whole ruthless proposal—only by leaving the control of the institution (in spiritual matters) in the hands of the Board that has made it what it is.

V. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEES

It has been shown in what has already been said that the real question concerning Princeton is the question whether the distinctive character of the institution is to be preserved by the continuance of the Board of Directors that has made it, so far as its theological position is concerned, what it is, or whether, by the formation of a new board of control, a new institution is to be founded that shall be of a radically different kind. That question was raised by the appeal of President Stevenson at the Baltimore Assembly against the policy of the Board of Directors, and by the consequent appointment of Dr. Thompson's Committee.

The ecclesiastical situation was such that Dr. Stevenson's contention was almost certain to be successful. It was almost certain to be successful because the whole machinery of the Assembly was in the hands of one party to the dispute, the party to which Dr. Stevenson belonged.

At the Baltimore Assembly, the retiring moderator was Dr. Charles R. Erdman, who has been the most vigorous advocate of Dr. Stevenson's policy in the councils of the Seminary, and the most vigorous opponent of the majority of his colleagues. Dr. Erdman, as moderator, had appointed a strongly partisan "Commission of Fifteen," which had checked the threatened departure of the Modernists who objected to the judicial decision declaring the virgin birth to be an essential doctrine of the Church, and which in its first report had engaged in a somewhat veiled but really very bitter attack upon the conservative party in the Church. Dr. Thompson, the new moderator, who appointed the Princeton investigating com-

mittee, was one of Dr. Erdman's appointees on the Commission of Fifteen, and had himself, by a report to the Indianapolis Assembly in 1923, shown his thoroughgoing opposition to the things for which Princeton stands in the field of theological education. The committee that Dr. Thompson appointed was of a thoroughly partisan kind. One of its members was Dr. Luccock, who had previously been appointed to the chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries by Dr. Thompson, and who in that position had already led the attack upon Princeton in a very vigorous way. There was no offset to this appointment; no representative of those members of the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries who opposed Dr. Luccock's report was given a place on Dr. Thompson's committee. In general, it would be difficult to imagine a more perfect example of a partisan committee.

From such a committee no impartial report could reasonably have been expected. And yet one could scarcely have anticipated quite such unfairness as that which characterizes the report that was actually produced—the misrepresentation of various kinds, the omission of vitally relevant evidence, the unjudicial tone throughout. It is safe to say that seldom has a more unfair document been submitted to a body such as the General Assembly of our Church.

Such a document never could have been submitted with any reasonable certainty of its being adopted if time had been allowed for the commissioners to peruse it with any care and for the persons whom it attacked to prepare their defence. Quite essential, therefore, to any certain adoption of the report was the delay in the publication of it until over a month after the time prescribed by the rules of the General Assembly. And so, in this unfair manner, the destruction of our largest Seminary, which has had a continuous history under its Board of Directors for a hundred years, was railroaded

through the Assembly almost without any consideration at all.

Final adoption of a plan for the new control of the institution is, indeed, postponed until May, 1928; and the Committee of Five has been enlarged to become a Committee of Eleven. But there is no likelihood that the enlarged committee will be much more impartial than the old.

Indeed, it might conceivably be questioned whether the appointment of an impartial Committee was not precluded by the very form of the instructions which the Committee received from the Assembly. As a matter of fact, at any rate, the Committee of Eleven is overwhelmingly partisan. Little sympathy will be found among the great majority of its members for the position that the Seminary has maintained.

Thus the entire ecclesiastical machinery by which Princeton Seminary is to be destroyed next May has been under the control of one of the two parties to the dispute. It is hardly to be expected that such procedure will bring any sort of conviction to those who are of a different way of thinking. And surely such a policy of "frightfulness" is rather a singular method of promoting peace.

The whole action would be stopped if the rank and file of the Church were given the slightest real voice in the questions in dispute. In particular, if the laymen whose well-justified fear with regard to the Church's maintenance of the necessity of belief in the virgin birth of our Lord was quieted by the repetition of the Apostles' Creed last May, had had the slightest inkling of what is really going on, we may be sure that our strongest centre of evangelical Christianity would not be so ruthlessly crushed out.

But the present method of procedure is such that the laity is given little voice. If the commissioners to the Assembly next year were men who had sat in the Assembly this year, the matter could be given genuine consideration. But unfortunately the great majority of

commissioners in 1928—probably almost all of the lay commissioners—will be men who were not at the previous Assembly. They will be, for the most part, men totally ignorant of the Princeton situation; and they will naturally not understand that the men in charge of the whole ecclesiastical machinery are in reality active partisans in the dispute. And so, without any real consideration at all, and with the best intentions in the world on the part of the lay members of the Assembly and on the part of many ministers, a very great injustice may be consummated. In view of the inexperience and lack of information of the bulk of the commissioners, the ecclesiastical machinery may again be supreme. The only hope is that the sound Christian heart of the Church, despite all the obstacles, may become genuinely interested at last in this supremely important matter, and that thus there may be fair play.

It is to the rank and file of the Church that we must make our appeal. We do so not altogether without hope. From the human point of view, indeed, everything is against us. The men representing the fine old institution, which is now being done to death, are for the most part entirely without skill in the arts of ecclesiastical politics, while their opponents are in full control of the machinery of the Church. We cannot hope to win this battle by any reliance upon human influences or by any concealment of the real issue. Our only hope for victory is by a frank appeal from the present ecclesiastical authorities to the rank and file of the Church. We have a just cause; and the inner heart of our Church, we hope, is still sound. If the facts could only be made known, we think that justice would be done.

VI. THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

In discussing "the future of evangelical Christianity," we do not mean the ultimate future. The ultimate future, according to the great and precious promises of God, is sure; if evangelical Christianity is true, it cannot ultimately fail.

But the future of which we are speaking is the immediate future. The gospel will triumph in the end; but meanwhile we are living in a time of conflict when we need to ask what it is God's will that we should do.

In that time of conflict, an epoch will unquestionably be marked by the reorganization of Princeton Seminary, if such reorganization is finally authorized by our General Assembly next May. What we shall have here is not merely the destruction of a single institution, but an event typical of a mighty movement of the times. The end of Princeton Seminary will, in some sort, mark the end of an epoch in the history of the modern Church and the beginning of a new era in which new evangelical agencies must be formed.

What we shall have in the destruction of Princeton is nothing less than the severing of almost the last link, in the English-speaking world at least, between present-day evangelicalism and the traditions of a glorious past. Formerly, evangelical Christianity was rooted in a fine, scholarly tradition; the great universities, in Great Britain, in Protestant Europe, and in America, were in some instances the direct products of the Reformation, or at any rate were thoroughly devoted to the propagation of the Protestant faith. But now the universities have all, or nearly all, deserted the faith which they formerly held. There are here and there evangelical Christians in the

faculties of the great universities of Europe and America; but such men are, to say the least, few and far between. For the most part the universities are hostile or indifferent to the evangelical faith.

What is true of the universities in general is also true of the theological faculties. Not one of the older theological colleges in Great Britain, so far as I know, holds really, in any consistent way, to the evangelical position; and in America almost the same condition prevails. But in America, unlike Great Britain, one notable exception—not to prejudice the question whether there are others—is to be found. It is to be found in Princeton Theological Seminary. At Princeton, the oldest seminary of our Presbyterian Church still maintains the unpopular evangelical cause.

In that position Princeton has come to stand, among the older institutions of theological learning, almost alone; and its uniqueness has won for it a certain measure of respect. Robertson Nicoll, the distinguished editor of the *British Weekly*, intimated in a letter to James Denney written in 1894, that "the only *respectable* defenders of verbal inspiration" (as *he* called it) were the Princeton school of Warfield and William Henry Green.¹ In that intimation he was no doubt indulging in rhetorical exaggeration; no doubt there were really other defenders of plenary inspiration (as *we* call it) who were well worthy of respect. And yet the utterance was at least near enough to the truth to deserve being well taken to heart. Since the time of Robertson Nicoll's letter, the distinctiveness of Princeton has become even more marked. It may be questioned in some quarters whether *we* are still "respectable" in our defence of the full truthfulness of the Bible, but it will be widely admitted that if we are not respectable in such a position no one else is.

This solitary position of Princeton will, of course, seem

¹ *Robertson Nicoll, Life and Letters*, by T. H. Darlow, (1925), p. 341.

to many men to be due simply to the fact that we are supporters of a hopelessly discredited cause and adherents of a creed outworn; in the march of progress, it will be said, we have been left hopelessly behind. But of course there is another possible way of looking at the matter. Instead of holding that we have been left behind in the march of progress, one might also conceivably hold that in a time of general intellectual as well as moral decadence we are striving to hold aloft the banner of truth until the dawn of a better day.

Which of these views is correct is of course a question far too great to be dealt with here. But this much at least can be said—the solitary position of Princeton in the modern world, though it has brought opposition, has also brought opportunity. As other avenues of evangelical learning have one by one been closed, earnest seekers after truth have turned to Princeton in their need. And so we have had in recent years a magnificent body of students from all over the world—from New Zealand, from South Africa, from Protestant districts on the continent of Europe, from Scotland, from the North of Ireland, from the Far East. Our students have come, moreover, not merely from many lands, but from many ecclesiastical bodies. The great Methodist Church has sent us many splendid men; the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Lutherans, the Baptists, have all been notably represented; members of the various Reformed bodies throughout the world have looked to us for training in the faith that they hold in common with us. And of course our greatest privilege of all has been to serve a large body of students from our own American Presbyterian Church. Never has the prestige of our ancient institution been quite so wide as it is today. It is almost pathetic to observe the eagerness with which Princeton is looked to by men all over the world who in the face of the prevailing Modernist tyranny love the Bible as the Word of God and cherish the full gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such an institution it is that is being attacked by the ecclesiastical leaders in our Church. If the present committee of the General Assembly works its will, there will be no really evangelical seminary at Princeton after next May. Let no one deceive himself into thinking that the transition will stop half way; let no one think that although Princeton relinquishes the entirety of the Reformed Faith, it will stop in the mediating position represented by some of the advocates of the present proposed change. No, the lesson of experience in these matters is only too plain. Such movements do not stop half way. The institutions that have drifted away from the Christian faith have begun not with definite Modernism, but with just such doctrinal indifferentism, just such ignoring of the real seriousness of the issue, as that which appears in those who are attacking the present control of Princeton Seminary today. We do not need, therefore, to discuss the personal views of the men who are engaged in the attack; for although they may not be Modernists themselves, the inevitable result of their policy will be to make Princeton a Modernist institution in a very few years.

The transition may, indeed, be disguised. It is possible that some members of the present evangelical faculty may prefer to continue in their professorships even after the control of the institution has passed into hostile hands; and possibly there may be an avoidance for some years of any election of honest and outspoken Modernists to fill vacant chairs. But no one who has the slightest inkling of what is going on can possibly doubt but that the really decisive step will have been taken if the authority of the Board of Directors is destroyed next May.

It may seem at first sight strange that in a church professing to be evangelical a seminary which is just now at the height of its success—attracting a very large body of students from all over the world, holding the respect even of some who disagree most strongly with its position, looked to with almost pathetic eagerness by

evangelical people in many communions and in many lands—it may seem strange that such an institution should be the one that is singled out for attack. But the truth is that Princeton is being attacked not in spite of its success, but because of it. The warm and vital type of Christianity that has emanated from Princeton—the type of Christianity that not only proclaims the gospel when it is popular to proclaim it, but proclaims the gospel in the face of a hostile world, the type of Christianity that resolutely refuses to make common cause, either at home or on the mission field, with the Modernism that is the deadliest enemy of the cross of Christ, the type of Christianity that responds with full abandon of the heart and life to the Saviour's redeeming love, that is willing to bear all things for Christ's sake, that has a passion for the salvation of souls, that holds the Bible to be, not partly true and partly false, but all true, the blessed, holy Word of God—this warm and vital type of Christianity, as it has found expression, for example, in the League of Evangelical Students, is disconcerting to the ecclesiastical leaders; and so Princeton Seminary, from which it emanates, must be destroyed. Such has often been the fate of those who have felt compelled to warn the Church. The ecclesiastical machinery rolls smoothly on, and the Church proceeds to destroy that wherein its real safety rests.

Ecclesiastical action can never, indeed, destroy vital Christianity from human hearts. No one who has come into close contact, for example, with these young men who have formed the League of Evangelical Students can suppose that such consecration can ever be vanquished or discouraged by hostile actions of the organized Church. Vital Christianity never will be crushed out of the world by action of Church legislatures or courts. The gospel of Christ is still enshrined, even in these sad, cold days, in the hearts of men.

But though vital Christianity cannot be destroyed by ecclesiastical action, it may be driven out of the Pres-

byterian Church; and in driving it out a very important step will be taken by the General Assembly if it adopts the reorganization plan for Princeton Seminary next May.

If that step is taken, no good can be accomplished by concealment of the loss. On the contrary, it will be the duty of evangelical Christians to consider carefully and prayerfully what ought to be done. One thing, of course, is clear—there will be imperative need of a truly evangelical seminary to take the place of the institution that will have been lost. The greatest weakness of evangelical effort in many parts of the Christian world today is the absence of any sound source of ministerial supply; Christian people are trying vainly to keep the waters sweet when the fountain is corrupt. It will be a sad day if Presbyterianism in America falls into such a condition as that. If Princeton is lost, there must certainly be a new institution that shall not conceal the really great issue of the day, but that shall contend earnestly for the faith.

But even if such an evangelical institution is founded, a vast deal will certainly have been lost. Who can measure the value of an institution like Princeton? Even its material equipment could hardly be replaced, even by unlimited resources. Its library is a magnificent instrument of research that has been built up by the loving care of generations of evangelical scholars. Without such an instrument it is almost impossible to engage, in any intelligent way, in the defence and exposition of the faith. And such a library could hardly be replaced at all today, even by the expenditure of many millions of dollars. But even more valuable than such material equipment is the high tradition of Princeton, a possession that can never possibly be measured in any external way. No, it is no light thing when such an institution as Princeton passes into hostile hands.

We think, therefore, that before such a loss is acquiesced in, every effort ought to be made, between now

and next May, to see whether the loss may not be avoided and Princeton may not yet be saved. Princeton could be saved still, if the evangelical people in our Church had any understanding of what is going on. Indeed, even among those who disagree with our position regarding the great religious issue of the day there are some, we think, who will hardly be willing to stoop to methods so unfair as those which were employed by Dr. Thompson's Committee last year; and if there are any persons in our Church in whom evangelical convictions are really clear and strong, they will engage earnestly in prayer that the continuity of Princeton Seminary may be preserved and that thus we may have at least one institution in the Presbyterian Church that shall proclaim clearly and without compromise the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as it is found in God's Word. Even among the present ecclesiastical leaders, the men whom we have been obliged by conscientious reasons to oppose, there may be some who, when they really come to consider the matter, may shrink back from the ruthless measure that has been proposed. At first sight, it may seem so easy to crush the troublesome conservatives by destroying their Princeton base of supply. But possibly the leaders may come to see, on sober second thought, that even from their point of view the end is being attained at too great a cost, that in running rough-shod over the principles of liberty in the Church they are really harming their own cause, that theological pacifism will hardly prosper in the long run if it is stained with crime. Thus we have hope of every man; and we shall rejoice with all our heart if the present leaders of the Church show that although they are against us in many matters they prefer at least to fight with weapons that are fair.

But our chief appeal is to the rank and file of our Church. We have a just cause; and the heart of the Church, we hope, is still true. If the whole body of the Church could only be acquainted with the facts, we think that Princeton might be saved next May.

APPENDIX I

Dr. Thompson's Proposal to Abrogate the Plan of the Seminary.

At the General Assembly of 1926, the following statement (see Minutes, p. 168) was made by Dr. William O. Thompson, Chairman of the Special Committee to Visit Princeton Seminary:

"Notice is hereby given that at a meeting of the General Assembly to be convened in May, 1928, a resolution will be proposed for adoption abrogating the Plan of the Theological Seminary in the United States of America at Princeton, New Jersey, adopted by the General Assembly in the year 1811, and all the amendments, and additions thereto, and all the by-laws, rules and regulations made in pursuance thereof."

With regard to this statement, at least two things need to be said.

In the first place, the extreme radicalism of the proposed action should be noted. The "Plan" of the Seminary which is to be abrogated is the only document fixing the purpose, doctrinal standards, and relations to the Presbyterian Church, of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey. Yet that Plan, according to Dr. Thompson's proposal, is to be abrogated not partially but in its entirety. Such a proposal shows how incorrect it is to hold that the contemplated change at Princeton Seminary involves merely an improved organization of the existing institution. In reality, it involves the destruction of the institution. The "Plan" is the document from which Princeton Seminary derives its existence; if the "Plan" is abrogated, the Seminary ceases to exist.

In the second place, the proposal to abrogate the Plan

is clearly illegal. It was made, as Dr. Thompson expressly says (see Minutes, at the place already cited), in order to conform to Article I, Section 3, of the Plan, where the method of amendment is set forth. That section reads as follows:

"Sect. 3. The General Assembly shall, at all times, have the power of adding to the Constitutional Articles of the Seminary, and of abrogating, altering or amending them; but in the exercise of this power, the contemplated additions, abrogations, alterations, or amendments, shall, in every case, be proposed at one Assembly, and not adopted till the Assembly of the subsequent year, except by a unanimous vote."

But this section clearly does not permit the abrogation of the entire Plan; it only permits the abrogation or amendment or addition of individual articles. No doubt the intention of Dr. Thompson is to propose a new Plan or Constitution for the Seminary at the next General Assembly to take the place of the one that shall have been annulled. Otherwise the Seminary would be left for an entire year without any constitution at all, without any document fixing the control of the Seminary by the Church. What that would mean may perhaps be doubted; it might be held to mean that the Assembly had formally relinquished its rights in the Seminary at Princeton. At any rate, no such thing is intended by Dr. Thompson; for his Committee has proposed—though only in the most general terms and not at all in the form of a legal amendment—a one-board control of the institution. That one-board control could not possibly be established without the adoption by the Assembly of some "Plan" or constitution to take the place of the one which Dr. Thompson's proposal would destroy; and indeed the recommendations of Dr. Thompson's Committee adopted by the General Assembly expressly include a recommendation that the enlarged Committee shall re-

port to the next General Assembly "for approval and adoption the new plan for the administration of the Seminary."

But this action of the General Assembly is plainly illegal; the adoption of a new constitution of the Seminary by the General Assembly of 1928 would plainly be in violation of the solemn pledge contained in the present Plan. The present Plan requires that amendments shall be proposed at one Assembly and not adopted until the next. The purpose of this provision is perfectly plain. It is to prevent any hasty action by the General Assembly. The whole Church must be allowed to consider for an entire year any change in the Plan before it can finally be adopted. This provision applies of course to positive as well as negative changes. If a new article is to be substituted for an old one, not only the abrogation of the old article but also the exact wording of the new article must be before the Church for a year. But if the General Assembly of 1928 were free to adopt at once a new Plan to take the place of the one which Dr. Thompson proposes to abrogate, then the Assembly would be allowed to do in the case of the entire constitution what it could not do in the case of even the most unimportant article. The Assembly cannot adopt the most trifling article without a year's scrutiny of that article by the Church; yet according to this proposal, it could without such scrutiny adopt an entire new constitution!

Evidently such a supposition is quite absurd; and its absurdity simply affords an additional indication of what should already have been plain enough—that the power to amend the Plan and to abrogate individual articles does not involve the power to abrogate the Plan as a whole. So long as Princeton Seminary belongs to the Presbyterian Church at all, there must always be some Plan or constitution—no matter what changes in it may be made—to establish the relation of the Seminary to the Church.

The matter, therefore, is perfectly plain. The Gen-

eral Assembly cannot without violating a most solemn pledge adopt any changes whatever in the present Plan without a year's scrutiny of those changes in detail by the Church; and in particular it cannot without such scrutiny adopt the changes required to destroy the Board of Directors and establish a one-board control. The obligation of this pledge cannot lawfully be evaded by a proposal to abrogate the Plan as a whole.

The illegal proposal of Dr. Thompson, with the action of the Assembly directing the enlarged Committee to present a new plan for adoption in 1928, shows to what extreme lengths the Committee of Five was willing to go in order to prevent the Church from having adequate opportunity of scrutinizing the recommendations which the Committee may make. The civil courts would never for a moment sanction any such interpretation of Article I, Section 3, of the Plan of the Seminary as that which Dr. Thompson advocates. Yet that interpretation is presupposed by the Assembly's action. The General Assembly of our Church, therefore, stands here upon ground far lower than the common ethics of the world. We are quite aware that the Assembly acted in ignorance. But the Committee that recommended the action should stand profoundly discredited by those who value the honor of our Church. Article I, Section 3, of the Plan is perfectly plain. And certainly it constitutes a moral as well as a legal obligation of the clearest possible kind. Is the General Assembly to play fast and loose with such an obligation? And is a committee which advocates such action to be allowed to determine the fate of a great institution of learning?

Princeton Seminary

Princeton Seminary

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APPENDIX II

The Committee's Recommendations

The Recommendations of Dr. Thompson's Committee adopted by the General Assembly of 1927 (see Minutes, pp. 133 f.) are as follows:

The Committee, after due consideration, un-animously offers the following recommendations as its best judgment for a procedure on the part of the Assembly, having in mind the welfare of the Seminary and the preservation of all the precious history, traditions, sentiments, and loyalties of a century of service to the Church and the Kingdom of God.

1. That the Assembly appoint a committee of eleven members, of whom at least three shall be ruling elders of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America who are learned in the law, said committee to be constituted by the continuance of the present Committee and the appointment by the Moderator of six additional members, two of whom shall be members of the Board of Trustees of Princeton Seminary, two of whom shall be members of the Board of Directors of Princeton Seminary, and two of whom shall be from the Church-at-large; with the further provision that three of the six new members of the Committee shall be ministers and three of them ruling elders; that said Committee proceed to confer with the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors of the Theological Seminary at Princeton and co-operate with said Board of Trustees in obtaining such amendments to the Charter of the Seminary or such additional articles of incorporation, and preparing such ordinances or by-laws and taking such other action as they may be advised by counsel is necessary or proper to establish a sin-

[44]

gle Board of Control for said Seminary, define the relationship and recognize the right of control of the General Assembly under the existing trusts, so as to assure the rights of the Presbyterian Church in the trust property and its control over the instruction of the Seminary; and to co-operate in preparing a complete plan for the educational work of the Seminary under the administration of the new Board and under the direction and control of the Assembly; that in all such conferences between said Committee and said Trustees the present Board of Directors be requested to participate in an advisory capacity by the election by them for that purpose of a committee of five of their members. The enlarged Committee herein authorized is hereby directed by the General Assembly to report to the next General Assembly for approval and adoption the proposed changes or additions to the Charter, and the new plan for the administration of the Seminary.

2. That pending this reorganization, the appointment of Professor J. Gresham Machen to the chair of Apologetics and the appointment of Professor Oswald T. Allis to the Helena Chair of Semitics, be not confirmed and that the further consideration of these appointments be deferred until after the reorganization proposed in this report shall have been effected.

Respectfully submitted,

WILLIAM O. THOMPSON, *Chairman*,
GEORGE N. LUCCOCK,
WALTER L. WHALLON,
THOMAS E. D. BRADLEY,
RICHARD P. ERNST.

It has already been pointed out that the former of these two recommendations is clearly illegal. If the enlarged Committee reports "to the next General Assembly for approval and adoption . . . the new plan for the administration of the Seminary," it will be recommending an action which is in violation of a very solemn pledge.

[45]

Princeton Seminary.

Princeton Seminary

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Theological Seminary
1982

The Plan of the Seminary can only be amended by proposals made at one General Assembly and adopted at the next. This provision would be violated by the adoption of a new Plan by the General Assembly of 1928. Any changes in the Plan, whether large or small, must be before the Church, in their exact wording, for an entire year, before they can legally be adopted.

APPENDIX III

The Action of the Faculty

At its meeting on October 1, 1927, the first regular meeting after the meeting of the Assembly, the Faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary passed the following resolution:

The Report of the Special Committee to Visit Princeton Theological Seminary which was presented to and adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. at San Francisco (Minutes, 1927, pp. 87-134) is manifestly an ex parte document supporting the administrative policy of the President of the Seminary against the policy of the Board of Directors and of the Faculty. In the interest of the policy of the President and against the judgment of the Board of Directors, the Report recommended a single Board of control for the Seminary; and this recommendation was adopted by the Assembly, the Committee by illegally delaying the publication of its Report having deprived those opposed to this recommendation of the opportunity of presenting their view to the commissioners prior to the meeting of the Assembly. In addition to reporting as from the Trustees a gross misstatement concerning the Board of Directors (Minutes, p. 124; Report, p. 40), the Report contains among other things, a misrepresentation of the administration of the Scholarship Funds of the Seminary by the Faculty (Minutes, p. 95; Report, p. 11). It contains also a misrepresentation of a statement by the majority of the Faculty in a formal paper submitted to the Committee and printed in the Appendix of the Report (Minutes, p. 132, par. b; Report, p. 48, par. b; cf. Report, p. 70).

Believing that the proposal to establish a

Princeton Seminary.

Princeton Seminary

PERSON'S NAME

Princeton Theological Seminary
01982

