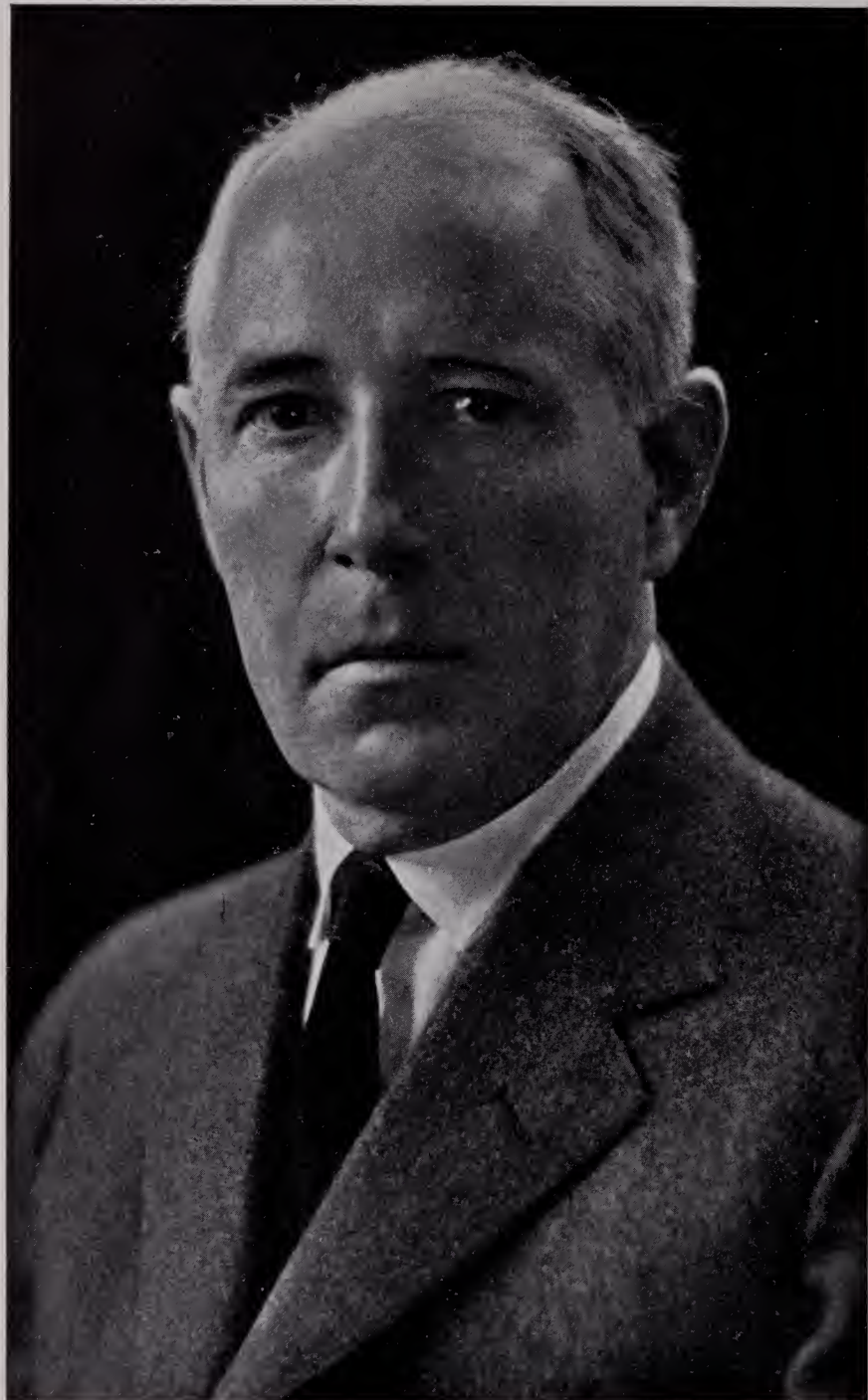


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The Princeton Seminary Bulletin





WILLIAM PARK ARMSTRONG
1874-1944

The Princeton Seminary Bulletin

VOL. XXXVIII

PRINCETON, N.J., JUNE 1944

No. 1

A NEW STATUS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

THE creation of the Council on Theological Education of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is a landmark in the history of Presbyterian Seminaries. After a lapse of nearly a century, theological education becomes once again the concern of the whole denomination. The way has at length been opened for the seminaries to make a creative contribution to the life and thought of the Church as a whole, in a way that was impossible in recent generations of Presbyterian history.

The new Council, which is probably the most representative body in the Presbyterian Church, including in its membership, not only representatives of the seminaries, but also of the Church Boards, the Colleges and the Church at large, has proposed to itself four principal aims:

I

The first aim of the Council on Theological Education is to *achieve solidarity among the seminaries of the Presbyterian Church*. We have happily reached a point in Presbyterian history when no unworthy rivalry inspires the leadership of the Church's seminaries. Those responsible for their direction are bound together by a close and understanding friendship. While devoted to the development of their individual institutions, they set the interests of the church as a whole above that of institutional glory. It is their hope and prayer, that as they work together in the cause of theological education, and put themselves at the service of the Church, they may succeed in bringing about such a unity in the Presbyterian family as it has not known in many decades.

As a contribution to inter-seminary solidarity and the welfare of sister seminaries which experience a more difficult time in their efforts to serve the Church, Princeton Seminary has accepted a reduced share of the Church's benevolences. While the consequent reduction in income may seriously affect our Seminary's budget, it is hoped that this circumstance may be offset by two compensating factors: the development and gratitude of sister seminaries, and a firm resolve on the part of friends of Princeton that their personal gifts and prayers shall be correspondingly increased, in order that the program of this Seminary may not have to be curtailed.

II

The Council aims, in the second place, to *make Presbyterian seminaries second to none in educational efficiency*. It is inspired by no less an ideal than that the denominational centers for the training of Presbyterian ministers shall be equal, and if possible,

superior, in material resources, in the calibre of their faculties, and in the number and quality of the students who attend, to the best non-denominational seminaries in the country.

For many years past, considerable numbers of Presbyterian students have been educated for the work of the ministry in institutions to the theological right or left, which have no connection with the Presbyterian Church. God forbid that any Presbyterian churchman, or even the Presbyterian General Assembly, should restrict the liberty of a Presbyterian student in determining under what auspices he should prepare for the Church's ministry. It is undoubtedly true, nevertheless, that one of the factors that have contributed to the lack of cohesiveness in the Presbyterian Church and to extremist tendencies within its fellowship, has been the great diversity in the type of theological education received by Presbyterian ministers in recent generations. There is no inherent reason why a denominational institution should be less truly ecumenical in spirit than one which is related to no church in particular. What the Ecumenical Church stands most in need of at the present time is a type of theological education which shall combine intelligent, and even critical loyalty, to one great tradition, while being committed to the best interests of the Church Universal. This is the ideal which the Council on Theological education envisages for the seminaries of the Presbyterian Church in the new era.

III

To awaken a sense of ministerial vocation among the youth of the Presbyterian Church is the third aim of the Council. In these last times, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America has not been producing a sufficient number of candidates out of her own membership to man her vacant congregations, and to carry on the great missionary enterprises at home and abroad to which the Church is committed, and for which other churches hold her responsible. How painful is the reflection that there are churches in the denomination which have not produced a single candidate for the Christian ministry for a whole century! This disgrace must be wiped out in the years immediately before us. Why should industry and commerce, law and medicine, education and politics claim so large a proportion of Presbyterian youth? The Church falters in her witness, and slips steadily from the place of national Christian leadership which she once occupied, because her sons have grown cold in their loyalty. Christ and the times require that the Presbyterian ministry shall have the best that Presbyterian homes and Presbyterian congregations can produce.

Not only young men, but also young women are now needed. In the period into which we are entering, there will be an increasing place for women in the service of the Presbyterian Church and of the Church of Christ in general. The Council on Theological Education is interested in recruiting the ablest representatives of Presbyterian womanhood for the whole time service of the Church. Lay training, especially the training of women, must become a major concern.

IV

Finally the Council on Theological Education aims *to make theology missionary*. Too long has theology been regarded among Christian people in the United States, and even in the Presbyterian Church which has been traditionally theologically-minded,

as a body of knowledge useful only to prove one's orthodoxy on official occasions, or in a hard pinch. Christian theology, Reformed theology in particular, must now move out from historical archives, from library shelves, from Seminary classrooms, from the atmosphere of ecclesiastical gatherings, from the altercations of dry controversialists, with all of which it has been too long and too exclusively associated by the Christian mind in America. The Queen of the Sciences must be arrayed in worthy garments, inspired afresh with a crusading mission, conducted through the highways and byways of national life, and ushered into the confused arena of contemporary thought.

Theology must be made missionary again. The Council on Theological Education, in cooperation with the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, is arranging, accordingly, for Traveling Institutes of Theology to carry the equivalent of Seminary "refresher" courses to strategic areas of the United States. The new program will begin in the summer of 1945. More and more, from now onward, Presbyterian seminaries will organize special institutes, each one on its own campus, where courses will be offered for ministers and lay people. The Council has also in mind the needs of Presbyterian chaplains, and measures are being taken for the organization of special courses for chaplains, against the day when the War ends and the process of demobilization begins.

The new review, *THEOLOGY TODAY*, whose first number has had a marvelous reception in Presbyterian and non-Presbyterian circles, is a symbol of the fact that the new missionary role of Christian theology is being recognized and promoted. In this new journal, the representatives of several of our Presbyterian and other seminaries collaborate. Their Alma Mater, which has a major stake in the success of this literary effort, expects that Princeton Seminary alumni shall lend it their support with their traditional loyalty.

Streaks of light along the whole horizon pierce the darkness; Christian crusaders hear the alert; they are on their way to the gathering places. Lead on, O King eternal!

J. A. M.