

HUGH T. KERR

Sons of the Prophets

*Leaders in Protestantism from
Princeton Seminary*



PRINCETON LEGACY LIBRARY

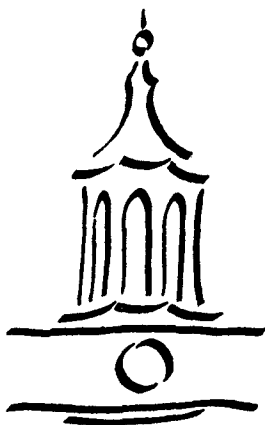
SONS OF THE PROPHETS

**Essays in Celebration
of the Sesquicentennial
Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, New Jersey
1812-1962**

SONS OF THE PROPHETS

*Leaders in Protestantism from
Princeton Seminary*

EDITED BY HUGH T. KERR



PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

1968

Copyright © 1963
by Princeton University Press
All Rights Reserved
L. C. card no.: 63-12665



Printed in the United States
of America by Princeton University Press
Princeton, New Jersey

*God of the prophets! Bless the prophets' sons;
Elijah's mantle o'er Elisha cast;
Each age its solemn task may claim but once;
Make each one nobler, stronger than the last.*

—*Denis Wortman (1835-1922)*

FOREWORD

THIS volume of essays in biography, criticism, and theology celebrates the sesquicentennial anniversary of Princeton Theological Seminary. The 150th year of the Seminary was extended to allow for special convocations, lectures, concerts, and publications. During this time, dignitaries and theologians of the Christian Church throughout the world have visited the campus, colloquies have been convened, hopes for the future and reminiscences of the past have been voiced. As one of its first decisions, the Sesquicentennial Steering Committee projected a series of publications to commemorate the anniversary events. This biographical volume is the first of that series to appear.

A sesquicentennial anniversary of a theological seminary is a rare enough event in America to merit some special attention. Prior to 1800, training for the ministry of the various Churches was pursued within the regular curriculum of the colleges or by means of apprentice tutoring in pastors' homes and studies. By 1850, and until the present, most such training, numerically speaking, has been undertaken in divinity schools sponsored or supported by specific denominations. Even in colleges and universities maintaining divinity faculties, often as not these are virtually independent administrations with separate classroom facilities, dormitories, faculty, and campus life.

The establishment of The Theological Seminary at Princeton by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1812 marked a turning point in American theological education. Within the last quarter of the eighteenth century, all learning was of a piece and could be adequately taught and studied in the schools and colleges, nearly all of which were Church-initiated. General education was also the context for professional studies in divinity, medicine, and the law. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, professional training became disengaged from the college curriculum, medical and

FOREWORD

law schools were established, and seventeen divinity schools and seminaries came into existence.

On the threshold of the nineteenth century, powerful elements in American life, both secular and religious, were forcing some radical changes in the older, more unitive educational and intellectual climate. The emergence of scientific studies, the expansion of the college curriculum, new economic and social responsibilities associated with democratic government, industrial development in the East and geographical movement toward the West—all such factors required the Churches to reconsider their own mission and message.

To complicate the situation further, there were also intramural conflicts within the Churches. As the denominations multiplied, they became more self-conscious, polemical, and defensive. The local "parson" found he was not always the undisputed intellectual "person" in the community. The western migration created a sudden demand for ministers that could not be met under the old training programs, and the rough and ready frontiersmen were less exacting in their requirements for an educated ministry. Religious and theological tides in the meantime were running between deistical, rational influences and pietistic, revivalistic enthusiasm.

In 1812 only the faintest hints of the significance of these factors were recognized. The faculty of the College of New Jersey at the time consisted of two men, the President and one other professor, both Presbyterian ministers. Together they taught the whole curriculum, mathematics and science, moral philosophy and literature. They were also responsible for the training of young ministers for the Presbyterian Church.

The plan to establish a theological seminary at Princeton was in the interests of advancing and extending the theological curriculum. It was not, as has sometimes been intimated, a sectarian withdrawal from secular university life. The educational intention was to go beyond the liberal arts course by setting up a postgraduate, professional school in theology. The plan met with enthusiastic approval on the part of the College authorities, for they were coming to see that

FOREWORD

specialized training in theology required more attention than they could give. As early as 1768 a professor of theology had been appointed to the faculty of the College, but he was dismissed the following year because of the added expense. Ashbel Green, who became President of the College some months after the Seminary opened, had already signified his support for the new seminary by accepting the position of President of the Board of Directors. A sort of "concordat," as Harold W. Dodds was later to describe it, was agreed upon at the time whereby the College promised not to establish a chair or department of theology so long as the Seminary remained in Princeton.

In many ways, 1812 was an inauspicious time for educational innovation. The new nation that had so recently fought for its life in a war of independence was too soon plunged into another war which to many, then as now, was both senseless and inglorious. There was also war abroad. Napoleon had invaded Russia, and the event sent a shudder through the cultural as well as the political marrow of Europe. The European universities shared in the general chaos, many buildings were destroyed, libraries were scattered, ideas were few and far between, scholarship was pedantic, reactionary, timid.

Nor was it a promising time from the religious and theological perspective. A quick inventory of the first decade of the nineteenth century shows no great hymns, no persuasive preachers, no pioneering Biblical studies, no new ideas in theological methodology. The epitaph of Andrew Flynn, Moderator of the General Assembly in 1812, noted that "he was distinguished for earnestness, solemnity, and pathos." Schleiermacher, the year before, had published his *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (Berlin, 1811), the full effects of which were not felt until a generation later (the book waited forty years for an English translation). But the nineteenth century had begun, and with it came a new optimism and buoyancy which few could possibly predict in the year of the Seminary's birth.

With less than a dozen students, Archibald Alexander was the only Seminary professor in 1812. He was joined the fol-

FOREWORD

lowing year by a second professor, Samuel Miller, who came to Princeton from the pastorate of the Wall Street Church in New York. Though the faculty of the Seminary was as big (or as small) as at the College, it was a venture of faith bordering on the foolhardy to lay elaborate plans for the future.

To read back over the wording of the original "Design of the Seminary" is to perceive the early growth of the modern development in theological education in America—though the Princeton innovators were not at all thinking of breaking new ground except in the literal sense. They were prophetic enough, however, and among other things the "Design" noted that the purpose of the Seminary was:

to unite in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of the heart, which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning; believing that religion without learning, or learning without religion, in the ministers of the Gospel, must ultimately prove injurious to the Church.

The dialectic suggested in the juxtaposition of piety and learning deserves some comment. It is an apt text for expounding the peculiar genius of Princeton Seminary and its view of theological education. The piety side of the formula stems from the accent on personal salvation, the experience of repentance and forgiveness, the Christian life of faith, justification and sanctification, the reality of the new man in Jesus Christ, all of which can be traced to the roots of American religion, whether of the Puritan, Calvinist, Lutheran, Quaker, Wesleyan, or "left-wing" Reformation traditions.

There were divisive opinions about the proper and improper means of eliciting and expressing inner religious experience. Revivalistic techniques were widely hailed by some but roundly denounced by others. Princeton Seminary men more often than not were found on the side of restrained, controlled emotion, but all agreed that piety in any form was not so much taught as caught. College revivals were extra-curricular at best. Though often starting on the campuses, it was in the churches and not in the colleges that personal salvation was

FOREWORD

nurtured. The saving of souls at home and abroad, the preaching of the Gospel whether fervently or decorously, the training of ministers in the craft of homiletics and the art of pastoral oversight, the establishment of congregations and the building of churches—these arts and skills could scarcely be included in any definition of college education.

So it was that Princeton Seminary, as was true of most other divinity schools, deliberately defined itself as a school of "that piety of the heart," a training center for Church leaders of all sorts, which specialized in preaching, the cure of souls, evangelism, and missions. This is one side of the Seminary's history illustrated most obviously in the statistics of the number of pastors graduated, the large proportion of alumni in missionary service, the local and ecumenical concern for the Church. To be sure, there were many at Princeton unsympathetic with much of the methodology of the new pietism and revivalism. But regarding the religious goals interpreted as personal salvation, "the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God," there was unanimity between thumping revivalists and proper Princetonians.

The other side of the piety-learning formula was equally important for the founders of the Seminary. The new institution was never described as a Protestant monastery or retreat, a place distinguished mainly for prayer and meditation. It was to be a school with teachers and students, library and books, ideas of the mind as well as convictions of the heart, all in the service of "solid learning." The library was one of the first major projects of the faculty, growing from the private collections of the professors to occupy, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, two fair sized but still inadequate buildings. The recently erected Speer Library building includes more than 200,000 bound volumes, 50,000 pamphlets, various special collections, and is so planned as to allow for doubling the total number of books. Even the "heretics" are present in the collection, and that, as Emil Brunner remarked when he visited Princeton for the first time, is the best test of the worth of a theological library.

The teaching of the original Biblical languages, Hebrew and

FOREWORD

Greek, has remained a prerequisite for the B.D. degree at Princeton Seminary despite the fact that the requirement has been dropped in many other seminaries. A long succession of quarterly reviews from the *Biblical Repertory*, begun in 1825, to *Theology Today*, begun in 1944, spans the history of the Seminary. Long before the Th.D. postgraduate program was inaugurated, many graduates became teachers in other institutions, college presidents, and founders of other seminaries.

Beyond all this, the Reformed tradition to which Princeton Seminary was committed has always magnified the intellectual integrity of the faith. Theology has been a highly respected word on the campus. Systems and structures of thought, reflection on the meaning and application of the faith, clarity of expression, and precision of definition—these are recognized norms for theological thinking. As a “confessional” seminary, the detailed doctrinal standard of the Westminster Confession of Faith was regarded not only “as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures” but as tangible evidence of the possibility of the intellectual articulation of the faith.

What has been said about piety and learning is not meant to suggest that Princeton Seminary had a monopoly on either. And it would be sentimental and untrue to suggest that the history of the Seminary at Princeton in the intervening 150 years has admirably illustrated the piety-learning dialectic in every possible way. The chronicle makes a mixed tale. It could hardly be shown that Princeton Seminary was tempted very far in the direction of an excessive emphasis on piety, as was the case in some schools and Bible institutes. The temptation at Princeton was more in the direction of a cloistered scholasticism patterned after post-Reformation orthodoxy. This was a highly cerebral theological tradition, but it often resulted in an intellectualism unrelated to vital religion, the currents of secular and scientific thought, and the practical life of the Church. 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

FOREWORD

as Biblical criticism, apologetics, the sacraments, and the interpretation of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

That not everything was touched with creative imagination in the process of theological reflection is made clear in several of the chapters of this book. Those who love the Seminary and know it best would want it that way. To celebrate the contributions that have been made by the Seminary does not mean uncritical adulation of everything or everyone past or present. This would not be in the best interests of the Seminary for it would violate the Protestant principle of *self-criticism*.

Basic to the Reformed faith, to which the Seminary has always been loyal, is the categorical imperative that the church, reformed, must ever be reformed (*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*). Even within the post-Reformation Westminster Confession of Faith, a section on "Synods and Councils" reads: "All synods or councils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both."

The purpose behind this volume of essays is the desire to present a dozen or so distinguished personages associated with Princeton Seminary over the years. The figures are mostly alumni, but there are also included the first professor, a lay trustee, a Japanese graduate student, a visiting lecturer. Each person, it is hoped, will in some way but not all in the same way reveal an interesting, representative, or even untypical aspect of the Seminary's long life.

The problem was not to find enough alumni to fill the pages but to choose a few from so many. Some arbitrariness no doubt crept in, and those familiar with the history of the Seminary will easily observe omissions. If it be asked why there is not a large selection of preachers and pastors, the somewhat lame but truthful answer must be that the choice was too invidious among such a large alumni body so notable in this category of ministry. One or two others who belong here have already been served by biographers or await a much

FOREWORD

fuller treatment than is possible here. In any case, this volume does not pretend to be a history of the Seminary. That, in fact, is already under way as a separate project, and, when it appears, a more comprehensive record and evaluation of the Seminary will do justice to the history that is here presupposed.

The distinguished group of authors in this volume were encouraged not only to write of the past but to speak their minds about the present. In some cases, today's theological education needs to reaffirm the substantial contributions of yesterday's leaders. But in other cases, the authors have obviously felt that the best way to celebrate the Seminary's 150th anniversary is to stand out from the Old Princeton so that all things may become new again.

The glory and the weakness of Princeton Theological Seminary are intertwined in its reputation for conservative, moderate theology. Whether this be taken as strength or limitation, the significant thing to observe is that, from the very first of its history, the Seminary produced independent, and sometimes revolutionary, minds who rejected any theological party line and instinctively accepted the apostolic injunction that "judgment must begin at the house of God." For these as for so many other alumni, the Seminary has reason to rejoice on this sesquicentennial anniversary.

There is much more to tell than is here unfolded in biographical essay and theological appraisal, but at least this needs to be told. Of special significance to alumni and friends of Princeton Seminary and Princeton University, this volume is of more than local interest. For one thing, it illustrates in an unusual and dramatic way the recreative power of the Protestant principle of self-criticism. For another thing, it discloses vast areas of American religious thought and history which are awaiting further research. It is astonishing but true that many of the men considered here in restricted space, in spite of their substantial contributions, have not generally received the scholarly attention they deserve from historians or theologians. In some instances they have not even been accorded the minimum recognition of a first class biography.

FOREWORD

Perhaps the most signal feature of these essays as a group is their tendency to look forward rather than backward. This surely augurs well for the future of theological education in America and for the future educated ministry of the Christian Church.

HUGH T. KERR

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	Hugh T. Kerr vii
I. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER (1772-1851)	
<i>Founding Father</i>	John A. Mackay 3
II. CHARLES HODGE (1797-1878)	
<i>Theology—Didactic and Polemical</i>	Leonard J. Trinterud 22
III. SAMUEL SIMON SCHMUCKER (1799-1873)	
<i>Lutheran Educator</i>	E. Theodore Bachmann 39
IV. JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN (1803-1886)	
<i>Evangelical Catholicism</i>	James H. Nichols 69
V. SHELDON JACKSON (1834-1909)	
<i>Christ's Fool and Seward's Folly</i>	Hermann N. Morse 82
VI. ASHBEL GREEN SIMONTON (1833-1867)	
<i>A Calvinist in Brazil</i>	M. Richard Shaul 100
VII. STEPHEN COLWELL (1800-1871)	
<i>Social Prophet before the Social Gospel</i>	Bruce Morgan 123
VIII. HENRY VAN DYKE (1852-1933)	
<i>Many-sided Litterateur</i>	Roland Mushat Frye 148
IX. FRANCIS JAMES GRIMKÉ (1850-1937)	
<i>Christian Moralist and Civil Rights</i>	Clifton E. Olmstead 161

CONTENTS

X. WALTER LOWRIE (1868-1959)	
<i>Man and Churchman Extraordinary</i>	
	Howard A. Johnson 176
XI. TOYOHICO KAGAWA (1888-1960)	
<i>Blessed Are the Poor</i>	Yasuo Carl Furuya 192
XII. JOSEF LUKL HROMADKA (1889-)	
<i>Theology and Ideology</i>	Charles C. West 205
THE CONTRIBUTORS	224

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Archibald Alexander Engraving by John Sartain after portrait by John Neagle. Courtesy Princeton Theological Seminary
- Charles Hodge Engraving by H. G. Wagner after portrait by Daniel Huntingdon. Courtesy Princeton Theological Seminary
- Samuel Simon Schmucker Portrait by unknown artist. Courtesy Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary
- John Williamson Nevin Engraving by John Sartain after portrait by Jacob Eicholtz. Courtesy Lancaster Theological Seminary
- Sheldon Jackson Reproduced from Clifford M. Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama*, Philadelphia, 1952
- Ashbel Green Simonton Courtesy Presbyterian Museum, Theological Seminary, Campinas, Brazil
- Stephen Colwell Reproduced from Henry C. Carey, *A Memoir of Stephen Colwell*, Philadelphia, 1871
- Henry van Dyke Photograph courtesy Mrs. Tertius van Dyke
- Francis James Grimké Reproduced from a "Souvenir Program of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C.," November 1916
- Walter Lowrie Reproduced from A. W. van Buren et al., *Dr. Lowrie of Princeton & Rome*, Greenwich, Conn., 1957
- Toyohiko Kagawa Photograph courtesy Mrs. Kagawa
- Josef L. Hromadka Photograph courtesy Clearose Studio, Princeton

SONS OF THE PROPHETS

I. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER

(1772-1851)

*Founding Father**

BY JOHN A. MACKAY

NOT infrequently, as history shows, the founder of an institution becomes its abiding image. When this happens, the institution manifests its genius and fulfills its destiny in the measure in which it reflects the spirit and dream of the person who brought it into being. This has been superlatively true of the theological seminary which was established in the New Jersey village of Princeton in the year 1812.

The Seminary's founder and first professor, Archibald Alexander, was described a century later by the church historian, John DeWitt, as "one of the largest and most disciplined intellects the American Church has produced." He can, without sentimentality, be regarded as the authentic soul and symbol of Princeton Theological Seminary. This Christian scholar and churchman, who throughout his long life lived on the frontiers of knowledge and the Church's total mission, is Princeton Seminary's most cherished and inspiring image.

I

Archibald Alexander was born on April 17, 1772, near Lexington, Virginia. His parents were Presbyterians of Scotch-

* The only important biography of Archibald Alexander was prepared by his son James Waddell Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander* (1854). See also W. B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, Volume III, 1857-1869, pp. 612-626; John DeWitt, "Archibald Alexander's Preparation for His Professorship," *Princeton Theological Review*, Volume III, No. 4, Oct. 1905, pp. 573-594; the bio-bibliographical account in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, Index Volume, 1871, pp. 42-67. Alexander's books and many unpublished manuscripts are in Speer Library, Princeton Seminary; correspondence and other materials are in Firestone Library, Princeton University.

SONS OF THE PROPHETS

Irish ancestry, as were so many other American colonists of the pre-Revolutionary era. Brought up in the lovely valley in which Lexington is located, young Archibald developed, in early youth, a passionate love of nature. This passion for the world around him, a veritable "emotion of the sublime," produced a life-long devotion to natural science.

Equally noteworthy was the profound religious temperament of this Virginia boy. Even before entering his teens, he developed a love for the Bible and for quiet meditation. In the years that succeeded the Revolutionary War, religion in American Presbyterian circles was of a very conventional and formalistic character. A Baptist lady of the period is quoted by the biographer of Archibald Alexander as remarking, "Presbyterians were sound in doctrine, but deficient in inward experience."¹ They reflected the spirit of the Scottish "Moderates," for whom the ethical, the dogmatic, and the aesthetic formed the core of religion, and who acclaimed cultural interests on the part of Church members as being more important than spiritual enthusiasm, which they in fact regarded with both suspicion and disdain. It is of interest to observe that a great Princetonian of an earlier period, John Witherspoon, had engaged in an historic debate with the Moderates immediately before leaving his native Scotland to become President of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University.

In an atmosphere marked by hostility to any manifestation of ardor in Church life, where the exciting phenomenon of religious conversion was frowned upon as most un-Presbyterian and something to be discouraged, Archibald Alexander passed through a profound experience of spiritual change. While still in his seventeenth year, he entered upon a new epoch of his life. Following a period of intense dissatisfaction with himself as he was, and anxiously longing for a personal acquaintanceship with God as Saviour, he joined that succession of "new men in Christ" which includes St. Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards. A year

¹ James W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander*, New York: Scribner, 1854, p. 39.

ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER

before his death, when he was seventy-eight years of age, Alexander would still return in intimate conversation to the time when his natural religiosity became evangelical faith, when Jesus Christ became a transforming reality in his life and the object of his passionate devotion.

This decisive, though quite undramatic, experience shaped Alexander's thought and behavior through all the coming years. Like that famous Spaniard, Raymond Lull, he could say of Jesus Christ, "I have one passion in life and it is He." Thus Alexander came to approach all questions concerning the human and the divine from a profoundly Christo-centric perspective. "His peculiar piety," said Cortlandt van Rensselaer while delivering the memorial oration after Alexander had passed away, "was the basis of his excellence." This piety, which had its origin in spiritual rebirth, its pivotal center in Christ, its charter in Holy Scripture, its pattern in New Testament sainthood, and its objective in Christian witness in the Church and in the world, was poles apart from the purely emotional and individualistic piosity of the religious zealot. While he proclaimed the importance of zeal, Archibald Alexander never ceased to deprecate "zeal without knowledge," that is, the unenlightened fervor of the fanatic. His favorite symbol of dedicated Christian living was the green meadow refreshed by rain showers from above, rather than the fierce flame of embers kindled from beneath. But in every case the ultimate norm of true Christian devotion was, for this Virginian, a passion to do good to men because of a sincere love for people. His life as a Christian was, in theory and practice, a reverberation of the words of that dynamic Spanish saint, Teresa of Avila, who used to say to the young women of her religious order, "The Lord demands works" (*Obras quiere el Senor*). She did not mean works to merit or to secure salvation, but works that follow salvation and insure its reality.

Alexander's experience of spiritual rebirth led him to the decision to become a Christian minister. In the United States in those days, just as in Scotland about the same period, the Presbyterian ministry had become to a large extent a profession like other professions and preaching had become a

SONS OF THE PROPHETS

mere trade. But for the young man from Lexington, to become a "minister of the Word and Sacraments" was life's highest vocation. To this vocation he felt called by God Himself. He accordingly set about preparing himself for this high office.

In days when colleges were few and theological seminaries as such did not exist, Alexander was fortunate in becoming the pupil of a very remarkable man, William Graham. Graham was a fine scholar and an inspiring teacher. Quite early in their relationship, the teacher said to the student something the latter never forgot. "If you mean ever to be a theologian, you must come at it not by reading but by thinking." In the course of the years, the pupil became a very learned man; but he consistently shunned becoming a mere unreflective dogmatist or an erudite encyclopedist. While retaining an intense thirst for knowledge of all kinds, the pursuit of which he tells us "was never a weariness to me," he cultivated the Socratic approach to truth with which his revered teacher inspired him. The student of divinity developed, among other things, an amazing interest in mathematical and physical investigation. In this, as in other respects, the future head of Princeton Seminary resembled his Scottish counterpart and contemporary, Thomas Chalmers, who was adjudged by Thomas Carlyle the most outstanding Scotsman since John Knox. Chalmers became the first principal of New College, Edinburgh. These two men, who were later to enter into correspondence with one another, incarnated each in his own way the ideals of religious living and scholarly achievement, which in the course of time were to be enshrined in the charter of a seminary in New Jersey with the designation, "piety and learning."

II

His formal preparation completed, Archibald Alexander, after a trial sermon on the text "Thy Word is Truth," was licensed and ordained a Christian minister by the Presbytery of Hanover in Virginia. It is worthy of note that this Presbytery had the distinction of being the first ecclesiastical body