

Theology at Princeton Seminary

The first century of theology at Princeton Seminary (est. 1812), often referred to as the “Old Princeton Theology,” was dominated by two towering Reformed theologians: Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921). Hodge’s commentary on Romans and especially his Systematic Theology, 3 vols. were highly influential in America and abroad and are still in print. Warfield’s Collected Writings run to more than 10 vols. and are still considered by many as one of the outstanding exemplars of biblical, historical, and apologetic scholarship in its conservative Reformed mode.



Figure 1: Theology from Raphael's Stanza della Segnatura (1611)

During its second century, theology at Princeton was enriched by the presence of distinguished scholars from Europe, United Kingdom, South America, and Asia, as well as from the United States. Among the influential members of the Theology Department during this time were John Mackay (1889-1983), Emil Brunner (1889-1966, Visiting Professor 1937-8), Joseph Hromadka (1889-1969), Paul Lehmann (1906-1994), Edward Dowey (1918-2003), and George Hendry (1904-1993).

With several of the world's leading Barth scholars now members of the Department of Theology, and a virtually complete collection of works by and about Karl Barth in the Princeton Barth Center, Princeton Seminary has become a magnet for advanced study of Barth's theology, and a number of dissertations have been written here on his work in recent years. However, neither the research interests of the theology faculty nor the immense resources of the Seminary's libraries are limited to Barth studies, as attested by dissertations recently completed on figures as diverse as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Friedrich Schleiermacher, J. Macleod Campbell, and Juergen Moltmann.

Theological study and research at Princeton is both rigorous in scholarship and rooted in the faith of the church; is attentive to the witness of Scripture and to the development of Christian doctrine; is positioned in the broad Reformed confessional tradition and at the same time strongly committed to ecumenical dialogue; and is engaged with current issues in philosophy, science, and the wider culture while also being resistant to attempts to exhaust the riches of the Christian theological heritage within the framework of a single philosophy or world view.

Programs in theology at the Seminary benefit from the proximity of Princeton University and the many resources of its faculty and libraries. All members of the Theology Department are involved in the teaching of both M.Div. courses and Ph.D. seminars. Admission to the doctoral program is highly selective. Current active members of the Theology area of the Department are: Ellen Charry, George Hunsinger, Stacy Johnson, Bruce McCormack, and Mark Taylor.

Christian Ethics

In 1851, Stephen Colwell, a Presbyterian industrialist and member of the Board of Trustees at Princeton Theological Seminary published a book titled *New Themes for the Protestant Clergy*. The subtitle of the book indicated his concern that theology avoid “creeds without charity,” “theology without humanity,” and “Protestantism without Christianity.” A century later, in 1950, the Stephen Colwell Chair of Applied Christianity was established at Princeton Seminary and first held by Paul Lehmann. While the term “applied Christianity” has rightly fallen out of favor, Princeton Seminary has continued its commitment to teaching students to recognize the connection between Christian theology and responsible Christian action.

The Stephen Colwell Chair in Christian Ethics is now held by Nancy Duff, whose courses include “The Theology and Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer,” “Issues in Medical Ethics,” “The Theology and Ethics of James Cone,” and “Issues in Human Sexuality.” Prof. Duff works from the Reformed tradition with a feminist perspective, showing how Christian belief defines who we are and what we are to do.

John Bowlin holds the Rimmer and Ruth de Vries Chair of Reformed Theology and Public Life. His courses include “Augustine on Ethics and Politics,” “War and Christian Conscience,” and “Ethics and the Problem of Evil.” Prof. Bowlin works to bring theological reflection in a Reformed idiom to bear upon the central concerns of ethical theory and on the public witness of the churches.



Figure 2: Justice from Giotto's Seven Virtues (1306)

Philosophy at Princeton Seminary

The College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) was founded on a Scottish university model, so that philosophy was a required subject for all students. The seminary founded in 1812 was a graduate school, and it was assumed that all students would come with some philosophical background. In 1880, however, a professor of philosophy was added to the Seminary Faculty. Francis Landey Patton, a graduate of the seminary was appointed 'Stuart Professor of the Relations of Philosophy and Science to the Christian Religion'. Patton was subsequently President of Princeton University (1888-1902)—in succession to the philosopher James McCosh—and later still, first President of the Seminary (1902-13). The Chair was entitled 'Stuart Professor of Apologetics and Christian Ethics' until the appointment of Dr Emile Cailliet in 1947.

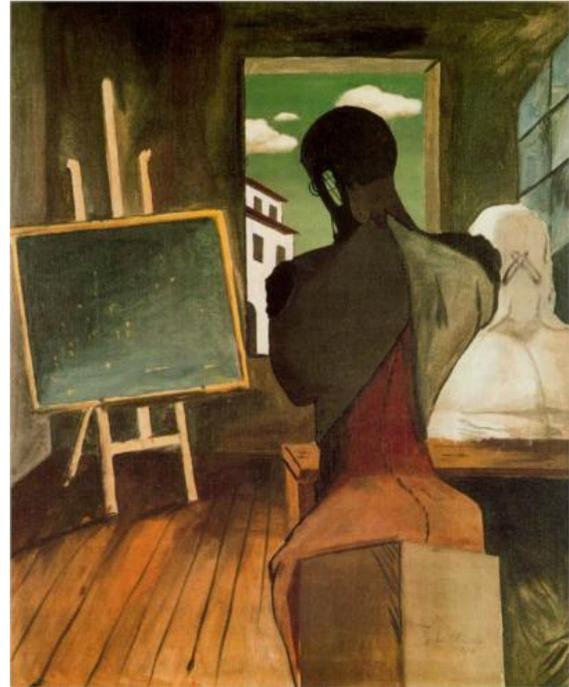


Figure 3: *Philosopher and Poet*, Giorgio de Chirico (1916)

The first layman to hold a full professorship at Princeton Seminary, Cailliet was expressly named 'Stuart Professor of Christian Philosophy', a title retained by his successor, John Hick. Diogenes Allen became Stuart Professor of Philosophy *simpliciter* in 1965. Forty years later and four years after Allen's retirement, Gordon Graham was appointed as 'Henry Luce III Professor of Philosophy and the Arts'.

The role of philosophy in the Seminary has generally been determined by the occupant of the Chair. Patton gave courses in apologetics. Cailliet was a distinguished student of the French philosopher Blaise Pascal, and strove to build intellectual connections between science, the humanities and Christian belief. John Hick was a distinguished contributor to the Philosophy of Religion. Diogenes Allen focused on philosophy as an intellectual preparation for Theology. Gordon Graham's emphasis has been on making aesthetics, political philosophy and philosophical anthropology in the analytical tradition relevant to Christian faith and practice. With his appointment, the original connection with the Scottish philosophical tradition was renewed through the establishment of the Center for the Study of Scottish Philosophy within PTS Special Collections.

Missional and Ecumenical Theology

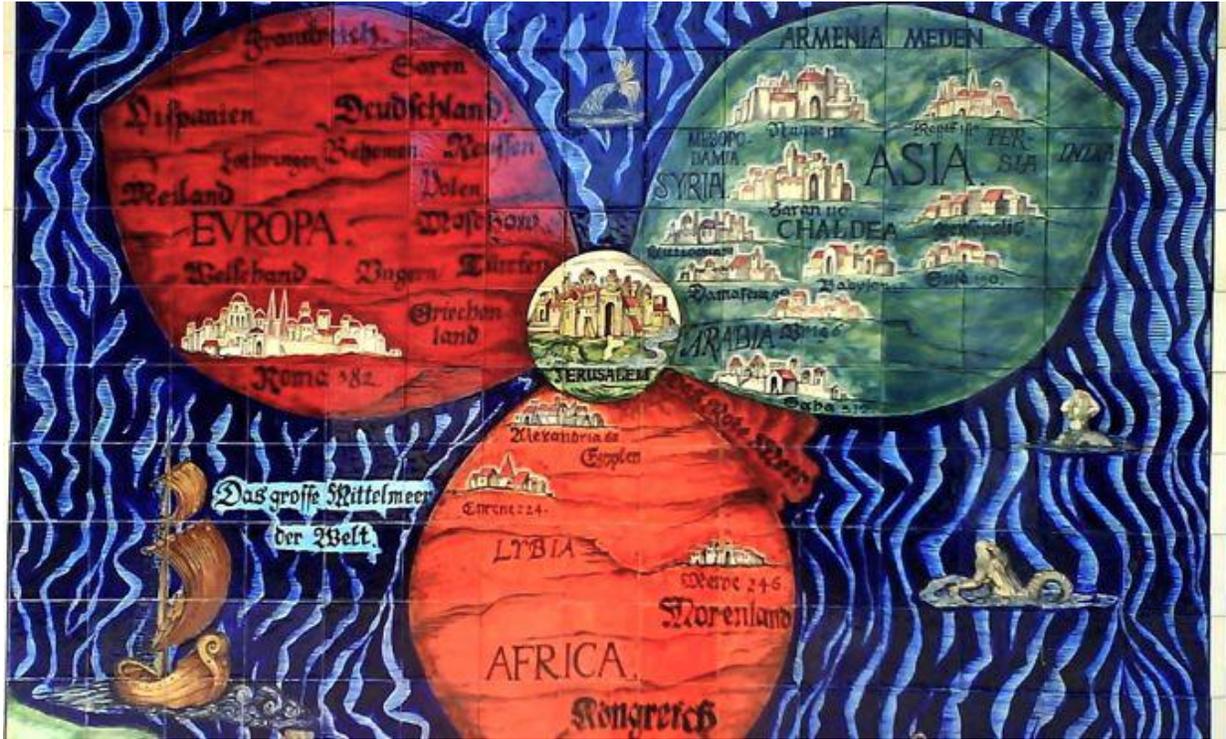


Figure 4: 16th century map of the Christian world

Princeton Seminary was the first theological institution to incorporate the study of mission into its curriculum, a decision made by the Board of Trustees in the 1820's, and in response to the growing importance of the global missionary movement. By the end of the 19th century, professors with missionary experience were regularly appointed to teach mission, emphasizing the preparation of missionaries, scholarly research in the history of religions, and allied ethnological and anthropological investigations. When John Mackay became president in 1936, he appointed himself Professor of Ecumenics, thereby creating the discipline, and went on to write the first major textbook in the emerging study of ecumenical theology. Faculty in mission and ecumenics are located in both the History Department and in the Theology Department, and jointly supervise the doctoral program in Mission/Ecumenics/History of Religions.

Today the systematic study of missional and ecumenical theology focuses on the integrative character of mission. It incorporates the Biblical formation of mission, the historical development of mission, the contemporary challenges of mission, and the theology of God's mission. Its doctrinal focus is upon ecclesiology, exploring the implications of the ecumenical consensus that "the pilgrim church is missionary by its very nature" (Vatican II).