

Chapter Two

"By Ways Not Known, 1924-1930"

Sixty years ago the name of Princeton Theological Seminary was more highly revered in quiet corners of the Scottish Highlands than ever were the names of Oxford or Cambridge, and in many a croft volumes could be found written by some of the Christian teachers who had adorned that Seminary since its establishment in 1812. Through such books, and through well-known preachers who had visited Princeton or studied there, the Seminary had long been regarded as a centre of pure orthodoxy and piety. As late as the year 1912, when theological colleges in general were in full retreat from historic Christianity, the President of Princeton Seminary, F. L. Patton, could declare, "the theological position of Princeton Seminary is exactly the same today that it was a hundred years ago . . . She simply taught the old Calvinistic Theology without modification."

John Murray's first impressions of the Seminary are not known. Like many others who have passed from the crowded thoroughfares of New York into the beauty of rural New Jersey where Princeton is situated, he would probably have been surprised by the charm of the Seminary's location and would have shared the enthusiasm of a student of an earlier day who wrote, "The green fields, trees, birds, &c., are beyond all praise." Although B. B. Warfield had died in 1921, and John deWitt, Professor of Church History, in 1923, the Seminary in the autumn of 1924 was still served by the ablest faculty of Reformed ministers in the world -- Caspar Wistar Hodge (grandson of Charles Hodge), Geerhardus Vos, William Brenton Greene, Jr., O. T. Allis, Robert Dick Wilson, Gresham Machen -- these men, and others, continued the witness of earlier years with undiminished commitment.

Students from overseas were far from uncommon at the Seminary. In the year that John Murray commenced there were ten from China, seven from Korea, besides a number from other parts of the world. One who caught Murray's attention was a student from Ireland who, though a year senior, attended with him an optional course of lectures by Caspar Wistar Hodge on "Imputation," and who had the habit, once the class of about eighty was dismissed, of pressing eagerly to the front to elicit more information from the professor! His name was Jim Grier.

Though John Murray was slow to make friends, ties were gradually formed with a number of his contemporaries which were to endure throughout life. David Freeman recalls a first conversation with John Murray after they had heard a lecture on Hymnody by Louis F. Benson. Murray's quiet and not uncritical comments, as they walked back towards his room at the bottom of the staircase in Brown Hall, opened up new vistas to Freeman on the subject of Christian worship. Another classmate remembers calling at John's room in the endeavour to raise money for missionary work in Korea: "He asked me what was being given on the average, and when I told him, he delved into his trunk and brought out some money, then handed me a sum in excess of the amount I had named. His comment was, 'Perhaps some of the students may not be able to give as much as they would like to give.'"

Everett F. Harrison, the contemporary who supplied the above anecdote, also describes the surprise which he and others experienced when the dour and solemn Scot was asked to speak after dinner one evening in one of the clubs to which students belonged, on this particular occasion, the Benham. After the meal there was a brief time of relaxation during which John Murray was called on to speak. "He rose to the occasion by telling a story of an American tourist who was visiting

Scotland. As his guide showed him one beauty spot after another, he acknowledged that they were worth seeing but always insisted that there were spots just as beautiful back in U.S.A. Finally, however, they came to a lovely loch that really entranced him and he blurted out, 'I wish we had that little lake back in the States.' His guide said, 'I am sure you can arrange it. You Americans can do almost anything, you know.' Said the tourist, 'But how could I do it?' 'It's really quite simple,' said the guide. 'You get a tube to connect with this loch and lay the tube under the Atlantic. Then when you get home, if you can suck as hard as you can blow, you will soon have our beautiful loch over there.' I have never forgotten the story or the uproar that followed (among the students) when John brought it to a conclusion."

But John Murray's usual thoughts of Scotland in those early months at Princeton were far from light-hearted. A missionary friend in far-off Africa who had formerly shared fully in the hospitality and rich fellowship of John Murray's home, once exclaimed to him in a letter, "Ah, Badbea! The mouth of my soul waters." No one knew that feeling more deeply than John, and a few carefully folded letters from his father, which have survived the passage of time, give glimpses of how the family circle also felt his absence. On four sides of paper well filled with items of news, Alexander Murray begins and ends a letter as follows:

Badbea,
Bonar Bridge.
3 Feb/ 1925.

My Dear Son,

We have just received your letter this evening; it took 14 days to reach here; you wrote on 17th January. We are always so glad to see that your health is keeping so well although sorry to know that your eye is weak at times. Of course, it is too much strain owing to the work. I trust you will not overdo the eye although the work is necessary.

Willis is ploughing in these days. We are very far behind with the work this year as we had a very wet winter, the wettest anyone here remembers, and scarcely any frost . . .

Mr Gray, Lairg, is very poorly since two months ago. I was saying to him that I hoped the Lord would spare him on earth until a minister would be set over these poor parishes, but I may be taken away myself and him left. Indeed if I will be left behind him he will be missed as he is a man of ballast and sense along with grace. I am missing poor Johie very much. I did not expect one day that she would leave home, poor lassie, but times have changed. I trust the ever Blessed One will give health and strength to her and bless her with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus!

Many thanks for being so mindful in writing home; I trust it will be for the Lord's glory you being there.

Your loving father,
Alexr. Murray.

The first year at Princeton ended early in May 1925, and new experiences followed as John took the train west to Detroit. Writing from there to a correspondent in Australia, on May 19th, he

commented, "My session's work at Princeton I enjoyed very much. It is a great matter to have an institution with such scholarship still faithful to the truth and faith once and for all delivered to the saints."

The visit to Detroit and the further journey into Canada which followed require some explanation, not least because they had an important bearing on decisions which were to change the course of his life. For over a century Canada had become the new home for many emigrant Scots, of whom not a few had been reared under the sound of the gospel. It was to such people in Ontario that Robert McCheyne's friend, William Chalmers Burns, had gone to minister in the 1840's. At the end of the 19th Century, Scots in Canada who sympathized with the stand taken at home by the Free Presbyterian Church had begun to organize congregations and mission charges under the same name. Around 1925 several thousand Scots were still emigrating to Canada each year and in the Free Presbyterian Synod of that year reported the anticipation that "the Church would greatly increase, especially in the West." The principal hindrance, it was considered, was the lack of ministers to pastor the congregations which were being brought together, and one argument for John Murray's course at Princeton was that, in his vacations, he might supply some of the stations in Canada and the States.

Detroit was probably John Murray's first experience of one of these congregations of exiled Highlanders, and he prized their friendship no less than they did his preaching. The high wages paid by the car industry in Detroit had drawn Scots from Canada, including a good number who had crossed from the Island of Lewis as recently as 1922. A Free Presbyterian deputy reported: "This city is growing enormously every year, and is already bigger in numbers than the city of Glasgow, and covers a much bigger area. The Ford Motor Works alone employ over 100,000 in Detroit itself."

From Detroit, Murray journeyed to Winnipeg, the gateway to the great wheat prairies of the West, and the Canadian rail-centre midway between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Of this visit it was subsequently reported in the Free Presbyterian Magazine, "The congregation highly appreciated his services and the numbers increased while he was there." Perhaps it was in part due to this encouragement that the Winnipeg congregation were able to open their own building the following year.

It may well have been in the summer of 1925 that John Murray was also able to pay the first of innumerable subsequent visits to Chesley, Ontario, where the Free Presbyterian congregation, along with a neighbouring congregation at Lochalsh, enjoyed the ministry of the Rev. William Matheson. When John Murray preached at Mr. Matheson's funeral some thirty years later, he was to describe him as the best friend he had on earth outside his own family.

From 1925 until the student years at Princeton were over, the pattern of vacation visits to these stations was repeated both summer and winter. When the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Theology were finally conferred in May, 1927, his eagerness to return home after three years gave way to the call of Detroit for further supply, and so it was not until the end of June, 1927, that he recrossed the Atlantic.

At this date no one doubted that John Murray was destined to enter soon upon a pastorate, for he stood out as a preacher. At Princeton, Mr. Grier remembers he earned the unusual distinction of receiving a visit in his room from J. Ross Stevenson, the President of the Seminary, following a

sermon he had preached for Homiletics. On such occasions comment was expected from the listening professor and students, but Ross Stevenson's action on this occasion was not known to have a precedent. This may have been the sermon from which we quoted at the beginning of these pages.

Dr. Allan MacRae, who first met John Murray when they were students together at Princeton, has supplied the following memory:

The class of 1927 was said to be the most outstanding class that had attended the seminary since the class of 1906, which had included such men as Dr. J. Gresham Machen and Dr. Oswald T. Allis, both of whom had become professors at the seminary. Once when I was chatting with Dr. Machen, he spoke about a test he had just given in New Testament Textual Criticism and remarked that the paper he had received from a young Scot named John Murray was one of the finest test papers he had ever received. This whetted my interest. Soon John and I were taking occasional walks together in the countryside around Princeton. I was greatly impressed with his intellectual ability, but even more with his great devotion to Christ and his strong determination to stand by his convictions on every point, and equally pleased to find that this attitude was combined with a remarkable charity and love for other Christians, even when they differed with him on rather important points.

Only one shadow diminished the joy of John Murray's home-going in 1927, and it was to darken into perhaps the severest trial in his life. The steps before him were licensing and ordination. It was reported in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* at this time "that the following students -- Messrs. John Murray, D. Urquhart, and Robert Sinclair -- were now finished with their theological course, and that after passing their final theological examinations they would, on making application to their respective Presbyteries, be taken on trial for license." In subsequent issues of the magazine there is reference made to the ordination of Messrs. Urquhart and Sinclair but henceforth John Murray's name virtually disappears from the recorded history of the denomination.

No outline of his life can be satisfactory without a comment on what happened at this juncture. The explanation is that a controversy had begun before his return, a controversy in which he was not indeed a leading participant, and yet he was sufficiently close to the minister who incurred the censure and discipline of the Church to be compelled to make his own view known on the issue in dispute. His view concurred, in the main, with that of the man who was ultimately disciplined; and accordingly, profoundly grievous though it was, he had to accept that he would be similarly debarred from holding any office in the Church of his childhood. The path to ordination, opened to him in 1923, was firmly closed.

On this matter John Murray, to our knowledge, never attempted to vindicate himself. In later years he looked back upon this painful episode, and though his judgment never changed, his attitude was, "In many things we all stumble." He would not countenance the thought of hurting his many dear friends -- not to speak of his own family -- remaining within the Free Presbyterian Church. Nor, more fundamentally, did he want by any utterance to aggravate sad divisions between true Churches of Christ.

The controversy in question had begun in the summer of 1926. It was occasioned by an action of

William Matheson of Chesley, to whom reference has already been made. As the appointed deputy of the Free Presbyterian Church, Mr. Matheson had gone to Winnipeg to open the new church building. But at the same time, as subsequently reported in the supreme court of his Church, "he admitted to the Lord's Table and Baptism at Winnipeg parties debarred by findings of this Synod." The Synod had earlier given a ruling in connection with Sabbath observance that Church privileges were not to be given those "who travel by trains or cars run in systematic disregard of the sacred day." Mr. Matheson did not himself use public transport on Sundays; but he considered that where persons could not get to Church without the use of such transport, there were no grounds for enforcing discipline and the suspension of privileges. It could not be assumed that the motive in such persons was disregard for the Sabbath, for the motive might well be concern to be present at the public means of grace. Did not the argument of "necessity and mercy" hold in such cases? The Synod, thus questioned on their earlier ruling, held that no exceptions were allowable and that Mr. Matheson and his Kirk Session, if they persisted in their opinion, would not be considered a Kirk Session of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

John Murray's judgment on the subject in dispute had not been decided during the growth of his friendship with William Matheson in Canada. It had preceded that friendship and was occasioned by an experience which he was never likely to forget. Shortly after he had finished his Arts Course, in the early summer of 1923, he had been on his way to preach at an evening service in "a large modern city" -- probably it was Glasgow. As he walked to his engagement that Sunday and saw the forgetfulness of God evidenced by the common disregard for the Lord's Day, his spirit, like Paul's in Athens, "was stirred within him." His train of thought from this point is best told in the words of William Matheson, with whom he later shared his experience.

He thought that men built their businesses and modern society built its cities without loyal thought, if any, of what fidelity to Christ required. Then he deemed that the Church often encouraged them in the art of moulding the supposed requirements of God's laws to the exigencies arising from their own plans by laxity in discipline. Nowhere did he see this more clearly displayed than in the question of Sabbath-keeping.

After considerable threshing of the question, for it had been with him for years, he was, on this occasion, just on the verge of sealing certain conclusions by a solemn secret vow. He had determined, as he thought, that when he attained to the responsibility of presiding over a kirk-session, he should insist that all who used street-cars (that is, trams or buses) for church-going on Sabbath should be excluded from the Lord's Table. As he was in the act of formulating his vow, there came vividly to his mind the arresting thought as of the Lord saying to him, "And when your day on earth is done, you'll give in your account to Me." This came as a great surprise, but did not shake him. He was quite confident of the rightness of his position, for he was conscious of being on the side of strictness rather than of laxness. So in his heart he answered, "True, Lord." Then followed the question, as if that future day of accounting had already come, "Did you on such an occasion refuse to allow such a party to obey My command, 'Do this in remembrance of Me,' when that party desired the privilege at your hands?" The answer was returned, "True, Lord." The question followed, "Did not that party bear many clear evidences of loving Me, and of being sincere in the desire to remember My death?" The answer was returned, "True, Lord." The further question came, "Why then did you refuse to

that party the privilege of obeying My command?" The firm answer was returned, "Because that party was a Sabbath-breaker." The question followed, "On what ground did you hold that party to be a Sabbath-breaker?" To this the answer was given, "That party used the street-cars for church-going on Sabbath." This brought the solemn demand, "What authority had you from Me that the use of a street-car on Sabbath for church-going is a breach of the Fourth Commandment?"

This last question, says Matheson, "had a staggering effect and could not be evaded." It determined him "to search the Scriptures thoroughly on the question, as he was unwilling to believe that he could not find ample authority for his position there. The answer, however, was that until such time as that authority could be found, the vow which had already been practically formulated would remain untaken, and that such a rule of discipline would not be enforced by him."¹

When he returned home in July, 1927, the dispute was still at the stage of private correspondence between Mr. Matheson and one of the committees of the Free Presbyterian Church; and the outcome, as it would affect John Murray, was not at first apparent. Warm was the welcome he received in the Highland congregations. It is still remembered today how when he preached for a considerable number of weeks in the Free Presbyterian congregations in Dingwall and Beaulieu, the services "attracted young people and were veritable Gospel feasts to older Christians." From the latter class, as our hearer recalls, "special mention might be made of three elderly ladies, choice Christians, who could fit well into Bunyan's Prudence, Piety and Charity. They loved 'Johnnie Murray,' as they affectionately called him, and his preaching was to them as 'wine on the lees well refined.'" But it was soon clear what view on Sunday transport would prevail when the matter came before the Synod. And even before that happened, when it became known in Church courts that John Murray's opinion coincided largely with Mr. Matheson's, it was ruled that invitations to preach should no longer be given to him.

The sad controversy between Matheson and the Free Presbyterian Synod continued through the years 1928-1930, and the reader who wishes may judge it for himself in the relevant issues of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and in Matheson's book *May Sabbath-Keeping Prevent Church-Going?* It concluded in 1930 with the disowning by the Synod of the members and adherents of the Free Presbyterian Church in Ontario. Long before that date, however, it was clear to John Murray -- notwithstanding the pleas and reasonings of friends -- that as he could only uphold the discipline required by the Synod at the price of disobedience to his conscience, his hopes of usefulness in the Free Presbyterian Church could not now be realized. The way in which he had believed he was being led had suddenly, to all appearances it seemed, become a cul-de-sac. So any pleasure which he had in returning to farm work at Badbea in 1927 was tempered by the fact that after eight years of study for the ministry, the goal was not even in sight! It is not hard to imagine what kind of a blow this was to his parents, and especially to his father, now well into his seventies, who had long been burdened by the need for more ministers in the North.

Apart from the farm-work at home, there was only one avenue open to him. During his last year at Princeton he had won a Gelston-Winthrop Fellowship which would support him, if he wished, in further studies. That was not his intention, for the pastoral office was what he most desired. But

¹ Quoted in *May Sabbath-Keeping Prevent Church-Going?* William Matheson, 1936, 9-11. Matheson simply ascribes this experience to a 'young man' who was 'a prospective theological student,' but it was common knowledge that the person referred to was John Murray.

when that way was closed he decided to use the Fellowship award in theological studies at New College, Edinburgh. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1928, he took up lodgings in the home of relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Rattray, who lived at 14 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, with their two daughters and son. Mrs. Rattray was a first cousin of John's, and during his time in Edinburgh she played the part of both a sister and a mother. Perhaps it was in the latter role that she asked him one day why he did not join the Free Church of Scotland instead of so faithfully maintaining his membership with the Free Presbyterians. After all, the Free Church, greatly reduced in numbers, had been purged of its liberal and Arminian elements in 1900 when the majority had joined with the United Presbyterians. He could not, John replied, accept what he considered to be the lax manner in which the privilege of baptism was too often given in the Free Church, nor was it right to him for a Church to allow Freemasons within its membership. There the matter rested. He was glad to accompany the Rattrays to their Free Church congregation when services did not coincide with those in his own, but he could not see the Free Church ministry as a way out of his problem.

In the meantime, uncongenial though New College was in certain respects (it was no longer a Free Church College and no longer upholding the faith of the men who built it), he applied himself to historical theology. His written work included a thesis on "Luther -- his doctrine of the Atonement and his Relation to John Gerson." Janet Rattray, now Mrs. MacPherson, in her first year in the University, remembers John as a quiet and studious companion with whom she burned "midnight-oil" over their respective books. In addition to theology, he was also studying the Berlitz German course. In particular, Mrs. MacPherson remembers the evening when he shared with her the decision he was taking which would so change the course of his life. Some days before, a communication, post-marked Princeton, had arrived addressed to him. To his surprise it contained an invitation from Caspar Wistar Hodge to be his assistant in Systematic Theology commencing in the Fall of 1929. Without doubt there was an immediate strong appeal in the proposal, yet the decision was not easy. His heart was in Scotland, his parents were aged (his mother died in 1933), and he had no inclination to join the denomination to which Princeton Seminary belonged -- the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Besides, his objective was the pastorate, not a theological institution. And yet no other opportunities for usefulness were open to him. So the same night upon which he revealed the matter to his fellow-student, in the early summer of 1929, he slipped out of the house a little after midnight to despatch a cheap-rate cable to Hodge from the General Post Office in Princes Street. It was an unusual hour to be about the streets, and he thought it necessary to tell Janet, "If your mother should hear me going out, you can explain I have gone to send a cable to America. But don't tell her what it is!" It was, in fact, an acceptance of the call to Princeton, but with the proviso that he could only promise one year's service.

One practical difficulty which almost prevented his going is remembered by Allan MacRae:

John told me that when he was invited to teach in Princeton he immediately went to the American consulate in Edinburgh to ask for an immigrant visa, and was informed that the quota had already been filled for ten years to come. If he would leave his name they would put him on the list so that he could migrate to America eight years later. Although this seemed to make teaching in America impossible, he delayed a few days in sending a letter declining the offered position. In the meantime he visited a friend in Edinburgh and mentioned his disappointment to him. The friend suggested that they make inquiry at the office of the American consul in Glasgow. When John told this official of his desire to go to America he said: "Yes, I can give you a visa immediately. By American law Scotland is limited to

a certain number of immigrants each year. Edinburgh's quota may be full, but we still have vacancies, even for the present year."

Although only five years had passed, the Princeton to which John Murray returned in 1929 was a different place from the institution of 1924. In 1924 the rising tide of liberalism in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. had been plainly evidenced by the close-on 1,300 ministers who subscribed to the Auburn Affirmation -- a document which served to deny or undermine several cardinal truths of the Christian Faith. Such thinking had no place at Princeton; but in the President J. Ross Stevenson and in Professor C. R. Erdman, there was an attitude of tolerance and an unwillingness to recognize the gravity of the denominational "down grade" which was to prove fatal. Although these two men only constituted a very small minority in the Faculty, their presence and their latitudinarian policy gave the General Assembly some excuse to set up a committee to investigate and report on the Seminary. Stevenson represented the Seminary as being in danger of becoming a right-wing institution for "Bible School-premillennial secession fundamentalism." Gresham Machen, the most eloquent spokesman for the majority, refuted the charge and showed that the real reason the Faculty was receiving opposition from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was that in the drift from historic Christianity zeal for the purity of the faith was now to be counted as an offense. The Faculty wanted to stand for nothing other than that for which Princeton had always stood, "the full truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God and for the vigorous defense and propagation of the Reformed or Calvinistic system of doctrine, which is the system of doctrine that the Bible teaches." If Princeton were destroyed, Machen forecast, it would "mark the end of an epoch in the history of the modern Church."²

As the Board of Directors of the Seminary supported the Faculty and not Stevenson, the Investigating Committee saw no way of bringing the Seminary into line short of a general restructuring in which the Directors would be merged with the Board of Trustees and their numbers augmented by men of a different stamp. Notwithstanding a strong resistance led by Machen, this proposed reorganization was finally put into effect at the General Assembly of 1929 and two signers of the Auburn Affirmation were appointed to serve on the new Board!

This, then, was the situation which confronted John Murray on his return to New Jersey in his thirty-first year. His acceptance of the post of Instructor in Systematic Theology had preceded the General Assembly's decision, and he would not go back on his promise. He found some of the best of the old-guard remaining sore at heart at Princeton, including Caspar Wistar Hodge (died 1937) and Geerhardus Vos. William Brenton Greene, Jr., had died in 1928; while Machen, Robert Dick Wilson, and O. T. Allis had reached their crucial decision and inaugurated Westminster Theological Seminary in the July of 1929. "There are many Christians in many lands," said Machen during the five minutes allowed him in the fateful General Assembly of 1929, "who will feel that if the old Princeton goes, a light will have gone out of their lives." John Murray knew something of that feeling as he took up work in the old surroundings. Though he had taken no part in the battle to preserve the old Princeton, he believed with all his heart in that Faith for which the old Seminary had stood -- "the majesty and sovereignty of Almighty God, the total inability of fallen man to save himself, and that the whole of salvation is to be ascribed to the power and grace of God."

Westminster Seminary, which began its classes in a building on Pine St., Philadelphia, met with some difficulty in finding all its staff. At length Allan A. MacRae, already quoted in these pages,

² Quoted in *J. Gresham Machen, A Biographical Memoir*, Ned B. Stonehouse, 1955, 431. I am indebted to Dr. Stonehouse for some other quotations which follow.

joined Drs. Wilson and Allis in the Old Testament field. Two former Princeton students -- Paul Woolley, who graduated in 1923, and Cornelius Van Til, who was instructor in Apologetics at Princeton in the session 1928-29 -- were appointed to the departments of Church History and Apologetics respectively, and a third former student, Ned B. Stonehouse, joined Machen in teaching New Testament. The department of Systematic Theology proved the most difficult to fill. On this point Stonehouse writes in his volume *J. Gresham Machen*, "It is an illuminating commentary on the theological competence of the ministry that Machen and his associates did not know where to turn within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to find a man for this chair of genuine scholarly attainments and of undoubted understanding of and commitment to the Reformed Faith."³ At length the problem was deferred as Dr. R. B. Kuiper promised to fill the gap by teaching Theology for one year. The solution which the Westminster Faculty finally proposed is best stated in the following historic letter of Machen's:

Dear Mr. Murray:

It is quite needless to say that our Faculty, when it met last Friday, voted unanimously and most heartily to nominate you to the Board of Trustees as for the position of Instructor in Systematic Theology for next year. The three absent members of the Faculty, who were communicated with by telegram, concurred heartily in the action.

It seems impracticable to call a meeting of the Board of Trustees -- indeed there might be difficulty in securing a quorum -- but Dr. Frank H. Stevenson, the President of the Board, is consulting every individual member by letter. There can be no doubt but that the Board will concur in the Faculty's action. If, in accordance with what you told me the other day, you desire to have some official communication as the basis of your consultation of your presbytery in Scotland, you can wait until you hear from Dr. Stevenson. The Faculty hesitated about communicating to you officially an action which should be reported first to the Board of Trustees, since such procedure might constitute a bad precedent. But of course all such questions of procedure are in the present case of little importance. The really important thing is that we have a very urgent need of you in a work which I know that you as well as we believe to be the Lord's work. I cannot bear to think of even the possibility of our failing to have you next year.

Because of the irregularity of the present situation -- when no formal meeting of the Board is possible -- and above all because of our doubt whether you would be willing at the present moment to form a definitely permanent connection with our institution, we put our action in the form indicated above. But for myself -- and I think I speak also for every one of the others -- I may say that it is my strong conviction as well as my earnest hope that you will find Westminster Seminary to offer you the best possible field of service and that an engagement which just for the moment is only for one year may only be the preliminary step to something of a [technically] more permanent kind. However, you must not let any decision about that matter trouble you for the moment. We have asked for your services in a great emergency, and we could not do without you without very serious loss and peril to the institution that we serve.

3 *Op. cit.*, 450.

Paul Woolley was unable to find you when he was in Princeton on Monday evening, since the painters were in possession of your room and no one of whom inquiry could have been made was at hand.

Cordially yours,

J. Gresham Machen

In the weeks which followed Murray came to recognize the call to Westminster as a call which he could not refuse, and in September he left Princeton for Philadelphia. It was characteristic of his unfailing courtesy that before doing so he paid a visit to the home of J. Ross Stevenson. The President was out but wrote a few days later:

It was most gracious of you to call at our house to say Goodbye, and I am exceedingly sorry that I was not at home at the time. We appreciate the faithful service you have rendered to your Alma Mater and deeply regret that you could not see your way clear to continue with us. Our best wishes follow you.

The best comment to conclude this period of John Murray's life is from the pen of his father, who, in a letter of August, 1930, wrote to his son:

We are always so glad to see your letters, one always every week but one since you went there which keeps our mind always easy.

I am very glad for the news of your last letters, how the Lord is leading you and how he has opened a door for you in his good providence. No doubt but it is the Lord that has done it and in all that came round these last years. The Lord was working in his wise providence to bring about his own purposes.

Of course, the Church had an end in view in sending you to America, perhaps that may not be the end the Lord had in view at all. One thing was keeping my mind easy since a few years back and that was the Lord's Word, believing that he would fulfil it but where I did not know. The Lord has a Church and a very small remnant here and there over all the world as well as in Scotland. Of course, in a way, I would wish you to be in Scotland so that we might see you but the Lord is wise, he is wisdom itself, and I ought to say, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And now, if it is his blessed will to cast your lot there, may he be pleased in his Sovereign Grace to give you grace to seek his own Glory and the salvation of poor lost sinners in this world, and may he be pleased to give and keep strength of body and mind to you for your duty which is not light -- no wonder should you be concerned about it . . .

Hugh Ross' wife died. She was just after putting the supper on the table and fell down at the end of the table and passed away. We are getting many a loud warning and are very hard and deaf to it . . . I am the only one now living of the family and sure I need not expect to be left very long now in this world! May the ever blessed

One have mercy on me, what an account I have to give for all the years and
privileges I have got in this world . . . May the Blessed One be in you and about you!

Your loving father,
Alexr. Murray.

"Chapter 2" from Iain Murray, *John Murray: of Badbea, and Westminster Seminary*, Philadelphia
(Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975).