Princeton Seminary, Volume I, Faith and Learning: 1812-1868, by David B. Calhoun. (First in a two-volume series on the evangelical era of the seminary published by The Banner of Truth Trust; 430 pages.)

Reviewed by Chris Lensch

If evangelicalism is the story of 19th century America, the history of Princeton Seminary is the story of the vision and leadership behind the warm evangelicalism of the American church. The school’s glorious rise from 1812 to its tragic fall in 1929 is also a microcosm of the church’s shifting position on the national scene.

In his two volume work on the Princeton tradition, David Calhoun has captured more than the genius of the Seminary’s thinkers. Like earlier students who sat at the feet of the Alexanders and the Hodges and under the hearing of Miller and Warfield, the author also has imbibed the piety of their spirit.

Especially does the first volume portray the godly balance of “faith and learning,” a pattern that Alexander and Miller established at Princeton Seminary. These were men who first had ministered in established churches or on the revival circuit. They had witnessed God’s Spirit at work and knew the minister’s need of daily grace and divine intervention.

The 1800s did not bring all smooth sailing for the students and professors of Princeton’s ivy halls. There were theological and church controversies in the new land that shaped the Princeton tradition. There were political issues and ultimately civil war. At every turn, however, the school’s identity was defined by the Bible’s application to contemporary challenge; the conscience of Princeton and its graduates spoke to the nation.

Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning plays the most brilliant tones that the American church has ever produced. Rich in personal anecdote, the book’s message is a long hymn of praise to the God Who molded Princeton Seminary for His glory.

David Calhoun has mined a treasure. In the lives of the early professors at Princeton Seminary he has brought to light a long-hidden wealth of wisdom and biblical piety. His account is enough to inspire excellence in coming generations of pastors and teachers who may search for a model for ministry. The original Princeton Seminary has set that unsurpassable model.