While working in the administrative offices of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I heard rumors over the years that J. Gresham Machen, prior to his unexpected death on January 1, 1937, was writing a book about the Presbyterian controversy of the 1920s and 1930s over modernism, in which he had played a central role. However, no direct evidence of such a work (whether a manuscript or notes) is to be found among the extensive papers that he left behind.\(^1\) Those papers include notes for, and drafts of, unfinished and unpublished works, as well as published works. If Machen had indeed been writing a book on the Presbyterian conflict, his unfinished manuscript (and any notes for it) would have been saved among his papers—unless it was deliberately removed.

There is strong evidence, hitherto unpublished, that Machen was indeed writing such a book. Most significantly, there are (at least) three contemporary references to his work still extant. First, his close associate, Edwin H. Rian, wrote to Cincinnati pastor Everett C. DeVelde on August 26, 1936, that Machen “is very busy writing the book on the Presbyterian conflict.” Second, student Arthur W. Kuschke, Jr., recorded in his diary that he heard Machen tell a group of students on October 1, 1936, about writing a book “on the church split.” Third, DeVelde, after spending time with Machen in September, read a memorial to him in church on January 3, 1937, in which he declared that Machen had been writing a book to be entitled *The Conflict* and that it would be published “shortly.”

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\(^1\) The Machen Papers are housed in the Westminster Theological Seminary (WTS) Archives. While the research for this article was being done, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) Archives were being transferred from Westminster Seminary to their new home in the administrative office building of the OPC in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, and their organization has been ongoing. Thus, the OPC Archives, at the time of writing, were not as neatly organized into various collections of papers as the citations below might suggest. I would like especially to thank archivist Grace Mullen for her assistance with both the WTS Archives and the OPC Archives. Reference will also be made to the Edwin H. Rian Manuscript Collection (hereafter cited as the Rian Collection) and recordings of Rian housed in the Special Collections of the Luce Library at Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS). The Special Collections staff, especially Ken Henke, was most accommodating to me while the Luce Library was closed for major renovations. I would also like to thank Chad Bond, Ron DeVelde, Don Duff, Dick Gerber, John Muether, Danny Olinger, and Althea Scott for providing useful material and information for this study.
However, no book by Machen entitled *The Conflict* or pertaining to what Rian called “the Presbyterian conflict” was ever published. But in 1940 *The Presbyterian Conflict* was published, written by none other than Edwin H. Rian. Rian made no mention of Machen’s work in that book. The question is unavoidable: did Rian take Machen’s unfinished work into his possession and rework it as the book published three years later under his own name? In this article, we will consider the historical and literary evidence both for the existence and scope of Machen’s work and for Rian’s publication of an expanded version of it as his own book.

### I. The Evidence from Rian, Kuschke, and DeVelde

Everett C. DeVelde, Sr. (1906–1991), as a student, followed Machen from Princeton Theological Seminary to Westminster Theological Seminary when the latter school was founded, under Machen’s leadership, in 1929. DeVelde was elected to the Board of Trustees of Westminster Seminary on May 12, 1936. Along with Machen on June 11, 1936, he was a constituting member of the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), which was renamed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in 1939. DeVelde was in Cincinnati, Ohio, during the summer of 1936, working to establish a church for the PCA and to promote the new denomination more widely. That work involved considerable correspondence with Rian, who was serving as the first general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the PCA.

DeVelde invited Machen to come to Cincinnati and speak on Sunday, September 13, and Machen accepted the invitation. DeVelde then wrote to Rian on August 11, “We are planning a big time when Dr. Machen comes Sept. 13.” On August 18, Rian wrote back to DeVelde, informing him that “the Committee has erected the Presbytery of Ohio, which is to include the States of Indiana and Ohio, with you as the Convener.” As convener, DeVelde could set the date and place for the organizational meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio, and it occurred to him that if it were set for September 14 in Cincinnati, perhaps Machen would be willing to stay over in Cincinnati and be present for the occasion. He informed Rian of his thinking in a letter of August 24, adding, “you can see at once how big a thing it would be to combine the events of his speaking here the 13th and the organizing of Presbytery. Will you speak to Dr. Machen about it at once, and write me your impressions and the possibilities from his point of view?” Rian replied on August 26: “I would suggest that you write directly to Dr. Machen, and in the meantime I shall ask him to consider the proposition so that he will

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3 This letter and the subsequent correspondence noted in this paragraph involving Rian are preserved in the Home Missions Papers in the OPC Archives. The correspondence with Machen is in the Machen Papers. DeVelde’s original invitation and a copy of Machen’s letter of acceptance are missing from the Machen Papers.
be prepared for your letter.” DeVelde made his proposal to Machen in a letter of August 30, and Machen agreed in a letter of September 2 to stay over a day to be present for the organization of the Presbytery of Ohio.

In his letter of August 26, Rian warned DeVelde (quite unnecessarily, as it turned out) not to be optimistic about Machen being willing to stay an additional day in Cincinnati: “He is very busy writing the book on the Presbyterian conflict, so I doubt if he will want to remain over for a meeting of the presbytery.” This incidental reference to what appears to be Machen’s chief writing project during the summer of 1936 provides powerful evidence—from Rian himself, no less—that Machen was writing a book on the Presbyterian conflict at that time.

Rian’s reference to “the” book is rather puzzling. If Rian had no reason to think that DeVelde knew anything about this writing project, he would have been expected to write that Machen was busy writing “a book” or perhaps “a book on the Presbyterian conflict.” But “the book” specifies a book previously identified. Rian, who expressed himself carefully, was calling DeVelde’s attention to that book. Thus, Rian’s statement seems to imply that DeVelde knew, and that Rian knew that he knew, that Machen had been planning to write such a book. DeVelde, as we shall see, was highly interested in Machen’s books and placed an enormous value upon them. Accordingly, on March 5, 1936, DeVelde wrote to Machen, expressing appreciation for his latest book, The Christian Faith in the Modern World, and thanking him for his autographed copy of it. Machen replied on March 6, “I am encouraged by what you say about my little book.” It is not hard to imagine that, at some point during the following months, DeVelde asked Machen what he was planning to write next, and Machen told him about his plan to write a book on the Presbyterian conflict. DeVelde might then have mentioned this to Rian, perhaps asking if he knew how Machen was coming along on that project. Another possibility, explored in section 4, is that in a previous (lost) letter Rian told DeVelde what Machen was working on. Either explanation, although conjectural, would explain Rian’s puzzling reference to “the” book on the Presbyterian conflict. In any case, Rian’s manner of expression suggests that both he and DeVelde knew that Machen had plans to write such a book in 1936, and Rian was informing DeVelde in his letter of August 26 that Machen was at that time busy writing it.

There is every reason to think that Rian’s statement about Machen’s writing project was correct. Rian was Machen’s closest associate in 1936. He was working with Machen in connection with both ecclesiastical and academic affairs, and was in a good position to know what was occupying Machen’s time during the summer of 1936. In addition to his position as general secretary of the
Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, of which Machen was a member, Rian was a minister with Machen in the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the PCA and a member with Machen of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. He served Westminster Seminary (for which Machen was chairman of the faculty) as its field secretary and as a member of the school’s Board of Trustees. He made the arrangements for the weekly radio broadcast “The Westminster Hour,” for which Machen was the speaker. Someone working so closely with Machen on so many matters could hardly have been mistaken about what he was “very busy” doing in August and September.

Surprisingly, though, there is no definite evidence that any of Machen’s other colleagues, especially his fellow faculty members at Westminster Seminary, knew about the book being written. Nothing about this is mentioned either by Ned B. Stonehouse or Paul Woolley, who were probably Machen’s closest colleagues on the faculty in 1936, in their books about him.\(^7\) When Rian’s book was published in 1940, no one came forward to say that Machen had been writing something very similar. Someone with knowledge of Machen’s work and suspicious of what Rian had been up to might have been reluctant to bring controversy, let alone scandal, into the leadership of the fragile OPC and Westminster Seminary in 1940, but any such reticence should have dissipated after Rian repudiated Machen and the OPC in 1947. However, since Machen did mention his intended book to a large group of students, as we will soon see, one would think that that information would also have reached at least some faculty members, either from these students or from Machen himself. But if so, they probably concluded after his death that the project had died with him, and eventually forgot about it.

Rian’s relationship with Machen was not simply professional, but also personal. Machen did not have an office in the building temporarily housing Westminster Seminary in 1936. His study was in his apartment on the twenty-second floor of Chancellor Hall (see section 4). He did his writing there, and Rian was sometimes Machen’s guest in his home. Rian later recalled, “I would visit Machen in his own apartment, in the hotel, alone, and we had talks.” He went on to say that Machen had intestinal trouble and often had to rush off to the bathroom.\(^8\) This would imply that Machen was not a big entertainer at his apartment during that period. Stonehouse also notes that in the latter part of 1936 Machen did not seem well.\(^9\) Thus, it may well be that during the months when Machen was pre-


\(^8\) In 1990, Rian gave several hours of oral histories as he was interviewed by PTS archivist William O. Harris. These are tapes #0331-0334 in the Special Collections at PTS. This quotation is from tape #0333, side 1. Although he was ninety years old when interviewed, Rian was remarkably lucid and his memory was quite good.

\(^9\) Stonehouse writes that Machen was a little overweight, and “seemed to his associates to look somewhat drawn when they saw him first in the fall.” He also seemed “deadly tired” as the year drew to a close. “And no doubt all of his anxieties . . . gave him many sleepless nights” (Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 506). Perhaps Machen had irritable bowel syndrome, aggravated by stress.
sumably working on his history of the Presbyterian conflict, Rian was the only one who spent much time with him in his apartment.10 When Stonehouse remarks how “drawn” Machen looked “to his associates . . . when they saw him first in the fall” (i.e., after the summer break),11 the implication is that his Westminster colleagues saw him very little if at all during the summer months, when he would have done most of his writing on the Presbyterian conflict.12 But while Rian was there talking with Machen in his apartment, he would have learned, if he did not already know, what Machen’s big summer writing project was, and he may well have seen the very manuscript and notes on Machen’s desk. But however he learned what Machen was writing, Rian shared it in passing with DeVelde in his letter of August 26.

Machen may not have said anything about his new writing project to his fellow professors, at least during the summer recess, but he made it known to a significant portion of Westminster’s student body when classes resumed! On October 1, the first day of class in the 1936/37 academic year, he spoke informally to the students who were eating in the dining room, telling them how he had spent his summer vacation. A brief account of his remarks is provided in the diary of Arthur W. Kuschke, Jr., who was a newly enrolled student (and who later became the librarian of the seminary, after serving as Rian’s assistant from 1940 to 1944).13 As we shall see in section 2, Machen, who was a mountain-climbing enthusiast,14 had spent most of July in the Canadian Rockies. Naturally, then, his remarks to the students focused on his mountain-climbing adventures. But he also mentioned a book that he was working on. Here is Kuschke’s account of Machen’s remarks:

10 Woolley notes that Machen’s Saturday evening “Checker Club” for students at his apartment, for which he was renowned at Princeton, continued after his move to Philadelphia in 1929, though “less frequently as Machen was so often away on the weekends preaching” (Significance of J. Gresham Machen, 15). The “club” would not have met during the summer of 1936, when the students were dispersed, and, given his schedule and his health problems, there were probably very few gatherings during the remainder of 1936. In his diary (pp. 166-67), Kuschke describes a “checker-party” for students in Machen’s apartment on October 10, but no other one is mentioned after that (WTS Archives). Machen entertained students elsewhere, as when he treated seventeen students to a Thanksgiving dinner at the Drake Hotel (where he commonly ate meals [Woolley, Significance of J. Gresham Machen, 18]) on November 26. See Robert E. Nicholas to Dorothy A. Nicholas, November 26, 1936 (from the estate of Dorothy N. Gilley).

11 Stonehouse, J. Gresham Machen, 506.

12 Yet Allan A. MacRae reports that Woolley’s work for Westminster Seminary and the PCA “kept him in Philadelphia most of the summer,” and that Stonehouse was busy working for the PCA and the Presbyterian Guardian during the summer. See MacRae’s faculty report in the Westminster Alumni Annals 7 (January 1937): 3-4.

13 This untitled diary was given to the Westminster library, along with other materials, by Charlotte Kuschke, subsequent to her husband’s death on July 1, 2010. It records events in his life from November 7, 1935, to April 26, 1937, with comments on ecclesiastical, academic, and political developments of the day. In August 2011, Grace Mullen noticed the account of Machen’s remarks and drew it to my attention.

Dr. Machen spoke at the opening meal of the dining room, of his mountain climbing (he climbed 5 peaks each over 11,000 ft. this summer in the Canadian Rockies), and of a book he will write on the church split.15

This diary entry confirms that Machen, by his own account, was writing, or at least intended to write, a book on the Presbyterian conflict during the final months of his life. The only question is whether Machen actually implied, as indicated by the words “will write” in Kuschke’s account, that the writing of his book had not yet begun by October 1. Perhaps the writing that Rian said was taking place in August and September was merely preparatory work, such as putting together an outline or taking notes. However, Rian words, “is very busy writing,” imply more than merely preparing to write. Rian’s point was that Machen was trying to get as much written as he could during the summer, with as little interruption as possible. Thus, Rian’s statement contradicts Kuschke’s statement at this point. Since Rian was Machen’s right-hand man, who knew what Machen was doing on a daily basis, his statement carries much more weight than the impression recorded by Kuschke. Kuschke did not take notes while Machen was speaking; what he wrote in his diary was not necessarily a completely accurate summary of what Machen said.

Furthermore, the immediate context of Machen’s remark about his writing project provides definite indications that Kuschke misconstrued the time factor. If Machen was talking about his summer activities, as he evidently was, any writing project that he mentioned would have been one that he had been working on during the summer. And if he decided to expand the scope of his remarks to include his plans for the future, why did he mention only one of the books that he intended to work on in the coming months (see section 2)? Kuschke combines the two topics, mountain climbing and writing, in one sentence, which suggests that they were related. But the only connection between those two seemingly unrelated activities could have been that they both took place during the summer recess, and perhaps more specifically that during his vacation in Canada he decided to write this book and began to make plans for it. Machen’s comment on writing a book was probably brief (making it easy to misinterpret), tacked on to his entertaining account of mountain climbing. This would explain why his comment on his writing project evidently made little impression on the students, for there is no evidence that any of them (including Kuschke) remembered it when Rian’s book came out in 1940.16 Finally, if Machen spoke generally of climbing mountains “this summer,” as Kuschke puts it— not specifically in July only—then Kuschke may not have realized that Machen had returned at the beginning of August to devote himself to writing for two months.

15 Kuschke diary, 162 (entry for October 1, 1936).
16 For example, one of the students at Westminster that year was John P. Galbraith. He may well have been among the students who heard Machen’s remarks, yet his review of Rian’s book does not mention that Machen, prior to his death, had been writing, or at least had intended to write, a book much like the one that Rian brought out. See “History Speaks,” Presbyterian Guardian 7 (May 25, 1940): 150. One would think that anyone who remembered Machen’s remarks would have wondered about a possible connection between Machen’s unfinished book and a book appearing not long thereafter on the very same subject written by his closest associate.
In view of all these considerations, it seems most likely that Machen told the students on October 1 that, while he was vacationing in the Canadian Rockies, he decided to write a book when he returned home on “the church split” that had occurred in June. This writing began in August, but Kuschke assumed it had not yet begun. Another possibility is that Machen expressed an intention to “publish” a book on the Presbyterian conflict, and that Kuschke understood “publish” to mean “write.” In any case, the suggestion that Machen had not yet begun to write by October 1 is a discordant element in Kuschke’s account of Machen’s remarks, and is contradicted by Rian’s more reliable statement on August 26 that Machen was already writing this book. Nonetheless, Kuschke’s diary provides additional evidence that Machen was working on a book on the Presbyterian conflict in the latter months of his life. But we cannot determine from his diary how far Machen’s intended writing progressed before he died.

But Everett DeVelde thought he knew how far Machen’s writing had progressed. Only two days after Machen’s death, at the morning worship service of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, on January 3, 1937, Pastor DeVelde read a memorial to Dr. Machen. It included this paragraph:

His influence will live on long in the lives of others, especially in the young men he taught. His writings will continue to be of immeasurable value as long as this age lasts and the Gospel is preached. Even yet there is a book which shall come from the press shortly, to which he gave much of his time and strength last summer, entitled “The Conflict”. We shall yearn for its appearance, and pray that a great blessing may come from its message which lives after him.17

This statement by DeVelde contains more information than is present in Rian’s letter of August 26 to him. While Rian spoke of the subject matter of Machen’s book, DeVelde reported that Machen had settled on a specific title. And while DeVelde’s knowledge that Machen had been working on this book during the previous summer could have come solely from Rian’s letter, the idea that the book would soon be published cannot be attributed to that letter. DeVelde’s confidence that Machen had chosen a specific title and that the book would be coming out “shortly”—presumably in the spring of 1937—must have come from another source. That source might have been DeVelde’s imagination, stimulated by Rian’s letter, but there is a better explanation: that DeVelde obtained additional information in conversation with Machen himself in September.

Machen spent a fair amount of time with DeVelde in Cincinnati, Ohio, on September 13 and 14, 1936. On Sunday, September 13, Machen spoke to a combined Presbyterian-Lutheran congregation on two occasions. He preached on “Jesus Only” at the morning service of Calvary Lutheran Church, meeting at the Y.W.C.A. located at Ninth and Walnut Streets. He also preached on “Obedience to Man or Obedience to God” at the evening service of what was then called the Presbyterian Church of America, Cincinnati Congregation, meeting at Walnut Hills Baptist Church (on Kemper Lane, near McMillan St.). After the morning

service, DeVelde and others met, in his words, “quietly and informally in Christian fellowship in a room at the Cincinnati Club for dinner” at 1:30 p.m., with Machen as their guest. On the following day, Machen attended the constituting meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio, convened by DeVelde at First Christian Reformed Church on Mulberry Street. A devotional service was held for about twenty people at 10:45 a.m., at which Machen spoke on “Evangelism—False and True” (or, according to some sources, “True Evangelism”). After lunch, the Presbytery was officially convened by DeVelde at 2:15 p.m., and the organizational business was conducted. After the roll of the Presbytery was constituted, Machen was welcomed as a corresponding member. The time of adjournment is not noted in the minutes, but Machen apparently left in time to catch the 4:30 p.m. Cincinnati Limited back to Philadelphia.18

During their two days together—most likely during their informal afternoon repast at the Cincinnati Club, or during the break for lunch on Monday—DeVelde undoubtedly asked Machen about the book he was writing. DeVelde had of course learned about this writing project from Rian’s letter of August 26 (and, as we have inferred from that letter, probably also on an earlier occasion), indicating, as we have seen, that Machen was “very busy writing the book on the Presbyterian conflict.” This remark made quite an impression on DeVelde, for he echoed it in two letters subsequently written to Machen, commenting on August 30, “You are very busy, I know,” and again on September 2, “I know that you are very busy.”19 We may be sure that DeVelde was eager to learn more about Machen’s work on this book, for his memorial to Machen, written not long after Machen’s visit, indicates the extremely high regard that he had for Machen’s writings in general and his “yearning” for this book in particular. DeVelde knew Machen well and would not have been reticent to ask him about his work. DeVelde was Machen’s student at Princeton and Westminster, a fellow minister in the Presbyterian Church of America, and a member of the Westminster Board of Trustees, to which Machen reported as chairman of the faculty. Their correspondence during 1936 (preserved in the Machen Papers) reveals an effort by DeVelde to cultivate his relationship with Machen. Machen, in turn, saw DeVelde as a promising minister in the PCA and did what he could to encourage the young man.

18 See DeVelde, letter to church members, September 4, 1936 (DeVelde Papers); Machen to DeVelde, September 2, 1936 (Machen Papers); Machen to DeVelde, n.d. (prior to September 13, 1936) (DeVelde Papers); ad in the Cincinnati Enquirer, September 12, 1936 (saying the presbytery meeting would begin at 11:30 a.m.); Elizabeth Irwin Harrison Buckner, “History of the Formation of the Trinity Presbyterian Church of America, Cincinnati, Ohio” (read on June 28, 1937, at the church’s first anniversary banquet), 4 (DeVelde Papers). In reconstructing the events of September 14, preference is given to the Minutes of the First Meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio—Held in Cincinnati, Sept 14, 1936, taken by C. A. Ahlfeldt (John J. Mitchell [and Thomas H. Mitchell] Papers, OPC Archives). DeVelde, “Memorial,” mistakenly speaks of Machen visiting Cincinnati on Sunday, September 27, but he is referring to Machen’s visit of September 13, since the titles of his sermons, as given by DeVelde, are the titles of his sermons preached on September 13 and 14.

19 DeVelde to Machen, August 30, 1936; DeVelde to Machen, September 2, 1936 (Machen Papers).
If Rian had given DeVelde an exaggerated notion of how far along Machen was in the writing process, then Machen would no doubt have informed DeVelde that it would be quite some time before the book would be ready for publication. Yet only three and one-half months later, DeVelde was publicly announcing the title that Machen had chosen for the book and that it would soon be published. Evidently Machen had told DeVelde that he did indeed have a working title, and that he was well along in the writing process. DeVelde’s statement on January 3, 1937, that the book would be coming off the press “shortly,” probably reflected something that Machen had told him. DeVelde was excited about this book, and so he probably asked when it would be coming out, and Machen—who, as we shall see below, was then corresponding with his publisher about having “manuscripts” (plural) ready for their spring 1937 list—apparently replied that he was hoping to finish it later in the year. From this we can conclude that the writing of Machen’s book was probably well advanced by mid-September. DeVelde evidently assumed, at the beginning of January, that Machen had in the meantime finished or nearly finished writing the book, so that it would be ready for publication, perhaps with some posthumous editing, in a few months.

The information given in DeVelde’s memorial to Machen reflects the probable state of Machen’s progress in writing by mid-September. That is, he had a tentative title (though DeVelde may not have remembered it exactly right) and was hoping to finish his work by the end of the year for publication in early 1937. But, as is so often the case with writers, his expectations were overly optimistic. It became clear to him by the beginning of November, when he began preparing the second segment of his radio messages for publication (see section 2), that he would not be able to complete his work on the Presbyterian conflict that year. But DeVelde never learned about that change in plans. Since DeVelde’s information in January 1937 reflects Machen’s likely thinking in September 1936, and goes beyond what Rian had written to him in August, we may reasonably conclude that DeVelde asked Machen how his writing was coming along when they were together in Cincinnati.

But DeVelde eventually learned that there would be no publication of *The Conflict* by J. Gresham Machen. His membership on Westminster’s Board of Trustees brought him into personal contact with Rian, who was elected president of the Board at its meeting on January 26, 1937.20 DeVelde was at that meeting,21 and it is reasonable to think that, considering how excited he was to see Machen’s new book in print, he spoke with Rian about it on that (or perhaps another) occasion. Rian apparently “explained” to DeVelde that Machen, with so many other demands on his time, hadn’t really been able to get much written—perhaps only an outline or some rough notes. Whatever Rian said to him, DeVelde realized

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20 They were also both elected to the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension by the Third General Assembly of the PCA on June 4, 1937 (when Rian was no longer general secretary), and served together on it for the next three years.

21 See the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary, January 26, 1937 (WTS Archives).
that no historical book by Machen would be forthcoming. DeVelde evidently did not suspect any misrepresentation or intended wrongdoing on the part of Rian, at least as of that Board meeting—judging by the effusive letter he wrote to Rian on January 29, congratulating him on his election. DeVelde had no difficulty inviting Rian to Cincinnati to speak at his church on April 11.

At some point, Rian intimated to DeVelde that he had taken on the task of writing the account on which Machen had been unable to get much done. We may be sure of this because DeVelde knew about Rian’s book before it was published—and gave no evidence (at least at that time) of being suspicious about the circumstances of its origin. DeVelde invited Rian to preach at the dedication of his church’s new building in 1940, knowing that Rian’s book was coming out later in the year. The Centennial Edition of the Cincinnati Times-Star for April 25, 1940, contained a full-page advertisement for “The Orthodox Presbyterian Denomination,” presumably arranged by DeVelde. At the bottom of the page are the pictures of various Westminster luminaries, alive and deceased, including Rian. Under his picture is this caption: “Present President of the Board of Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary, author of the forthcoming book, ‘The Presbyterian Conflict.’ Will preach in Cincinnati at the dedication of the new Trinity Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Victory Parkway, west of Woodburn Avenue, Walnut Hills.” So DeVelde knew about Rian’s forthcoming book, and if he had any misgivings about a possible link between Machen’s writing in 1936 and Rian’s publication in 1940, he kept them to himself. The book was published on or about June 1, 1940.

During his later years (he died in 1991), DeVelde became a good friend of Charles G. Dennison, who was the historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church from 1981 until his death in 1999, and Dennison pumped him for information about the early years of the PCA/OPC. As a result of this contact, Dennison learned about the memorial to Machen that DeVelde had read to his congregation on January 3, 1937. When he read that memorial, Dennison realized not only that Machen had written a manuscript on the Presbyterian conflict, but also that Rian had probably taken it and used it in writing his book on the same subject. He did not have proof of this, however, and so all he put in writing, in a brief footnote in a 1993 journal article, was that “there is some evidence that the backbone of Rian’s book came from Machen himself.” In support of this

22 DeVelde to Rian, January 29, 1937 (Home Missions Papers). One can only wonder whether Rian’s reply of February 1, 1937 (in the Home Missions Papers), “There are many things that I would like to tell you but cannot do so in a letter,” includes his explanation of what happened to Machen’s book on the Presbyterian conflict.

23 See the Cincinnati Enquirer, April 10, 1937 (preserved in the DeVelde Papers).

24 The book was reviewed as “about to appear” in the May 25, 1940, issue of the Presbyterian Guardian (“History Speaks,” a review by John P. Galbraith, p. 150). The book was prominently advertised on the back cover of the June 10, 1940, issue as “Just Off the Press” (p. 176). Rian was then on the magazine’s four-man editorial council.

25 This information has been received from Danny E. Olinger, who was the associate pastor at Grace OPC in Sewickley, Pa., from 1996 to 1998, while Dennison was pastor of that church (1976–1999), and who has shared Dennison’s deep interest in OPC history.
cryptic assertion, he referenced, but did not quote, DeVelde’s memorial to Machen.\textsuperscript{26} He did not mention Rian’s letter to DeVelde of August 26, 1936, however, because he was unaware of its existence at that time. Dennison was even more cryptic when he wrote the preface to the 1992 reprinting of Rian’s book: “The figure of J. Gresham Machen, the man so revered and relied upon by Mr. Rian in those days, stands behind the work.”\textsuperscript{27} Dennison was in an awkward position, for he could hardly accuse the author of literary theft or plagiarism while warmly recommending his book. However, he spoke more ominously in an unpublished draft that was at one point intended to introduce this new edition: “With this introduction, I do not intend to delve into the complex and controversial issues surrounding Edwin H. Rian and his career. Such an approach would detract from the overall excellence of this powerful and persuasive book.”\textsuperscript{28} In private conversation, however, Dennison was much more emphatic that Rian had secretly used Machen’s manuscript, but he recognized the need for further investigation.\textsuperscript{29} In 1998 or 1999, Dennison learned of Rian’s letter to DeVelde from Chad Bond, who sent him a photocopy of it.\textsuperscript{30} This undoubtedly strengthened his view of what Rian had done, but he was too ill to pursue this matter further before he died on April 29, 1999.

It would seem, from the foregoing account, that Dennison’s view of the origin of Rian’s book came from DeVelde’s memorial to Machen. However, from discussions of this matter with Dennison, Danny Olinger drew the conclusion that this document only confirmed what Dennison had already suspected on the basis of conversations with one or more men who knew Machen in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{31} The most obvious source would have been DeVelde, who, as we have seen, was quite certain that a book on the Presbyterian conflict by Machen was going to be published in 1937, yet who was evidently (though surprisingly easily) disabused of this notion by Rian. So it may well be that DeVelde was not entirely convinced by Rian, or had growing doubts as time went on, but thought it prudent to stay quiet—until he discussed the matter with Dennison in his retirement years. Paul Woolley may also have been a source of information on this matter, for he must have had some idea about what Machen was writing. During the academic year, Woolley frequently ate


\textsuperscript{27} Edwin H. Rian, \textit{The Presbyterian Conflict} (Horsham, Pa.: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1992), 1. The subtle implication of this statement, for those in the know, was first drawn to my attention by Grace Mullen.

\textsuperscript{28} Untitled and undated draft in Dennison’s handwriting (Charles G. Dennison Papers, OCP Archives).

\textsuperscript{29} Information received orally from Olinger.

\textsuperscript{30} Chad Bond, e-mails to the present writer, May 20 and 27, 2011. This photocopy of Rian’s letter, folded into thirds for mailing, is in the Dennison Papers.

\textsuperscript{31} Information received orally from Olinger.
lunch alone with Machen, and so one would assume that he did so in October 1936, at which time Machen’s activities during the summer would presumably have been a subject of conversation. Yet if he knew that Machen was writing a book on the Presbyterian conflict, he must have assumed (or, like DeVelde, been informed by Rian) that the work had not gotten very far, for in March 1937 he described *The Christian View of Man*, about to be published, as “the last work of Dr. J. Gresham Machen.” However, Dennison cultivated a close relationship with Woolley over the years, and Woolley expressed himself to Dennison quite vehemently with regard to Rian. Woolley’s distrust of Rian was firmly set by 1944, when he refused to participate in the Christian University Association (see section 3) simply because Rian was involved in it. Thus, his strongly negative view of Rian originated before Rian’s controversial activity in the Association (or his part in the contemporaneous Clark controversy) or his repudiation of the OPC in 1947. As we have noted, Woolley made no public accusations regarding this matter, but he may have felt that to do so would have been needlessly embarrassing to the OPC and Westminster Seminary. It would appear, then, that there may well have been one or more men who knew something about Machen’s writing and suspected a connection with Rian’s book, but kept quiet about it for one reason or another.

After all, the book was highly flattering to Machen and spoke well of both the PCA/OPC and Westminster Seminary.

There is good reason to believe, then, especially by comparing Rian’s letter to DeVelde of August 26, 1936, with Kuschke’s diary entry for October 1, 1936, and DeVelde’s memorial to Machen of January 3, 1937, that during the summer of 1936, especially in August and September, and probably on into the autumn, Machen was writing a history of the Presbyterian conflict. He probably intended in mid-September, when he evidently spoke about this with DeVelde, to finish the book in time for publication in 1937, optimistically aiming for Macmillan’s spring list.

If this is so, then there must have been a pile of papers pertaining to this project—both notes (perhaps in one or more notebooks) and an unfinished manuscript (probably loose sheets)—on Machen’s desk, or somewhere in his files, when he died suddenly after a brief illness far from home. Since Machen’s other papers were carefully preserved, these particular papers must have been deliberately


34 Information received orally from Olinger. On the other hand, Woolley agreed to read Rian’s manuscript prior to publication (Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict*, preface), and did not speak up about a manuscript on the same subject by Machen.

35 Besides DeVelde and Woolley, the person most likely to have known that Machen was writing a book during the summer of 1936 was Stonehouse. See n. 12 above. But Stonehouse died in 1962, before Dennison could question him. It is also possible that one of the students who heard Machen speak about his writing project on October 1, 1936, or one of the surviving professors who presumably heard about it from one of those students or from Machen himself (Van Til?), said something about it to Dennison.

36 Machen took notes in notebooks and produced a handwritten manuscript of loose sheets (preserved in the Machen Papers) when working on *The Virgin Birth of Christ* a few years earlier.
removed. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Rian, who knew about this writing project, removed Machen’s work on the Presbyterian conflict from his personal papers without telling anyone and completed it under his own name.

II. Machen the Writer in 1936

Machen was busy with ecclesiastical affairs during much of 1936, as he led his fellow conservatives out of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (PCUSA) through the Presbyterian Constitutional Covenant Union (formed in 1935) into the PCA. However, there was something of a lull after the First (constituting) General Assembly of the PCA was concluded on June 14, 1936. Machen was able to take a three-week vacation in July at Lake Louise, Alberta, during which he climbed the nearby mountains.37 He may have begun working on his historical account of the Presbyterian conflict during the three weeks prior to his vacation, and he may have done some work on it during his vacation. In any case, it would seem that he began writing in earnest at the beginning of August, upon returning from his vacation. He apparently intended to get as much done as possible during the two months before Westminster opened its academic year on September 29 (with opening exercises on September 30).

It is often thought that Machen was too busy to do much writing. D. G. Hart, for example, states that “Machen had little time for writing” after 1925, because “he directed most of his energies to Presbyterian affairs.”38 It is true that after publishing four books between 1923 and 1925 (New Testament Greek for Beginners, Christianity and Liberalism, The Origin of Paul’s Religion, and What Is Faith?), Machen’s literary output declined as he increasingly turned his attention to fighting the advance of modernism and indifferentism in the PCUSA and at Princeton Seminary, and then to establishing Westminster Seminary in 1929 and the PCA in 1936. Nonetheless, three of his books did come out in the 1930s (The Virgin Birth of Christ, The Christian Faith in the Modern World, and The Christian View of Man), and he wrote extensively for the Presbyterian, Christianity Today, the Presbyterian Guardian, and other periodicals.39 The importance that Machen placed on his writing is indicated by the fact that during the critical Second General Assembly of the PCA, Machen listened to his secretary read a summary of a book proposal over the phone and made some changes in it “just before he went into the afternoon session” on November 13.40

37 See Allan A. MacRae’s faculty report in the Westminster Alumni Annals 7 (January 1937): 3.
40 “Secretary to Dr. Machen” to Ellen F. Shippen (of the Macmillan Company), November 13, 1936 (Machen Papers).
Busy though he was, Machen set aside time in the morning for writing, even when Westminster Seminary was in session. Paul Woolley, who taught church history at Westminster from its inception and also served as registrar and secretary of the school, relates: “Usually Machen remained in his apartment to write until it was time for the mid-morning chapel service.” And “on mornings when his pen was flowing freely he might miss chapel and arrive twenty minutes later for his first class,” which was scheduled to begin at 11:00 a.m. He “devoted the early morning hours to writing,” Woolley explains, because he “felt the only time he could write was in the morning when he was fresh.” In this way, for example, he completed The Virgin Birth of Christ in 1930. We would assume that Machen was “fresh” enough to write beyond the morning hours during the summer months, when he had no teaching responsibilities and the other demands on his time were much reduced.

Thus, Machen had large blocks of time for at least two months during the summer of 1936, as well as the early morning hours thereafter, to devote to writing. But what was he working on during all that time? Between the First General Assembly of the PCA in June and the Second General Assembly in November, he wrote his regular editorial pages for the Presbyterian Guardian, but that usually amounted to only one or two pages, twice a month. That hardly put a dent in his summer. He and Ned Stonehouse replaced H. McAllister Griffiths as editors of the Presbyterian Guardian, beginning with the September 12 issue, but it is likely that the junior partner did most of the work while Machen provided general guidance and wrote his editorials. Beginning in October, Machen spent time writing his third season of weekly half-hour radio messages, this time on the topic of salvation (a subject actually begun at the end of the second season), starting with the doctrine of the atonement. Since these were relatively simple messages for the general public, their preparation would not have required a great deal of time. They were evidently not written much in advance of delivery.

41 Woolley, Significance of J. Gresham Machen, 28. Machen lived less than half a mile away, an easy walking distance for him (see pp. 15, 26; Stonehouse, J. Gresham Machen, 506).

42 Woolley, Significance of J. Gresham Machen, 17. Machen also opened his mail in the morning, but did not deal with it until the afternoon at the nearby office of a stenographer (see section 4). He also had afternoon elective classes two days a week (ibid., 18, 28).

43 See Dennison and Mullen, “A Bibliography of the Writings of J. Gresham Machen,” 478 (listing Machen’s publications in 1936 in chronological order). This bibliography also lists during this time the sermon he delivered at the Second General Assembly.

44 Presbyterian Guardian 3 (October 10, 1936): 10. These messages were broadcast on Sunday afternoons from 4:00 to 4:30 on station WIP in Philadelphia. See Edwin H. Rian, “The Westminster Seminary Radio Broadcast,” Christianity Today 5 (March 1935): 232. Outlines of “the Westminster Seminary Hour” in the OPC Archives indicate that Machen spoke for twenty-two minutes; eight minutes were devoted to singing, giving information about Westminster Seminary, and appealing for funds. Machen delivered the messages from October 11 through December 27; R. B. Kuiper, who succeeded Machen as chairman of the Westminster faculty, continued the broadcasts (as requested by Machen in a telegram to Rian from his hospital bed on December 30) from January 3 to April 18, 1937, with Cornelius Van Til substituting for him on April 4.

45 This may be inferred from the fact that Machen had not yet written a message for January 3, 1937, when he left for a speaking engagement in North Dakota on December 27.
burden of the radio broadcasts (the arrangements for which were made by Rian) still left him time in October to work on a book, since that responsibility did not prevent him in November and December from preparing *The Christian View of Man* for publication. That book originated as the second season of his weekly radio broadcasts, which had been completed in April. Those messages were put into book form and submitted for publication in late December 1936.  

Correspondence between Machen and Ellen F. Shippen, his contact at the Macmillan Company, indicates that he did not get down to work on *The Christian View of Man* until November. On November 2, Shippen wrote to Machen, asking him if he planned “to let us have a book to consider” for Macmillan’s spring list. Machen replied the next day that he hoped to have a book ready that would probably be called “The Christian View of Man.” But he expressed concern about being able to meet Macmillan’s deadline, noting that “the preparation of the manuscript would take some time.” The words “would take” imply that he had not yet begun to prepare this book manuscript from his radio talks. Shippen replied on November 10 by offering a contract for the book “sight unseen,” adding that Macmillan could get it on their spring list if they received his manuscript by January 1. Machen wrote back the next day, agreeing to her terms and promising to have the rough title page, the table of contents, and two or three sample pages for her within two weeks (after the Second General Assembly of the PCA, November 12-14). On November 24, Machen wrote to Shippen that the length of his book was “absolutely fixed by the radio talks that were actually given.” In other words, he was not going to rewrite his material. On November 30, Machen submitted his title page, table of contents, and a few sample pages. On December 5, he wrote to Shippen, “I have some hope of sending the manuscript to you within two weeks.” He simply took the typescripts of his radio addresses, editing them slightly (e.g., changing the occasional references to radio addresses), added a proposed title page, a short preface, and a table of contents, and presumably had that retyped for submission to Macmillan. The work was completed and sent to his publisher before he left on a trip to North Dakota on December 27.

Now if Machen did not begin to work on *The Christian View of Man* until November, what was he writing prior to that, especially in August and September? Correspondence with his publisher provides some tantalizing clues, in addition to the evidence provided by Rian’s letter to DeVelde on August 26. On April 30, 1936, Machen expressed pleasure that Macmillan, as indicated by a letter from Shippen on April 29, was interested in “the possibility of a second book” of his radio addresses, similar to the volume they had just published (*The Christian Faith in the Modern World*). The addresses for this book had all been delivered, but they still had to be put “into shape for publication.” He went on to explain in

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47 The correspondence between Machen and Shippen discussed in the following paragraphs is in the Machen Papers.
48 See the typescript of the book in the Machen Papers, incorporating the typescripts of his radio addresses.
some detail that this second book, for which he had chosen the title “The Christian View of Man,” was intended to be followed by a third volume of radio addresses; the three together would “form a sort of popular compendium of the Reformed Faith.”

Shippen asked Machen in a letter of May 15 if he would have “the manuscript” ready by October 1; she looked forward to seeing “this manuscript of yours.” Machen replied the next day, expressing gladness that she wanted to see “the manuscript” of his radio talks, and expressing confidence that he would have “the manuscript” ready by the desired date.

Shippen wrote again to Machen on July 23: “In getting together our books for the forthcoming list, we have been wondering whether you are working on a manuscript during the summer. If so, we hope very much that you will give Macmillan Company an opportunity to consider it.” She did not refer specifically to the book of radio addresses about which they had been corresponding in the spring, and which would require little additional work; she appears to have been obliquely inquiring whether he was working on another book during the summer. Upon returning from his vacation in the Canadian Rockies at the end of July, Machen replied on August 4, “I may have something a little more definite to say in a week or so. Meanwhile I am greatly encouraged by your interest in possibilities in this connection.” The vagueness and uncertainty of Machen’s reply is striking, considering how clearly and definitely he had written on April 30 about putting the second part of his series of radio addresses into book form as part of a three-volume series. One gets the impression that he had begun to work on another book, but did not know how fast his work would progress. Shippen (having returned from her own vacation on August 31) replied to Machen on September 1, “We shall be much interested in any plans you may have for future manuscripts and we hope that you will certainly consult us about them.” There was no further correspondence (or at least none remains in the Machen Papers) until Shippen’s letter of November 2, discussed above.

In her letter of July 23, Shippen asked Machen about “a manuscript” (singular), assuming that he would be working on only one book. But Machen replied with a reference to “possibilities” (plural). (This contrasts to the “possibility” of which Machen had spoken on April 30 and the “manuscript” to which both Shippen and Machen had referred in May.) Shippen caught the nuance and responded with an expression of interest in his “manuscripts” (plural); she wanted to be consulted about “them” (plural). We know that Machen was intending to prepare a second book of radio addresses for publication, but was there the possibility of another manuscript being ready for publication in the coming year? As we have seen, he would not begin working on his second book of radio addresses until November, so what was he working on in August? What other manuscript was Machen hinting at? He had definite plans for what would become The Christian View of Man, the text of which was already essentially written, so he would not

49 Stonehouse (J. Gresham Machen, 505) either exaggerates the number of volumes or reports Machen’s subsequent thinking: “Machen’s hope was that he might be enabled to publish at least four such books which might serve as a popular treatment of Christian Doctrine.”
have had to wait another “week or so” before he could say something “a little more definite” about that. Evidently he was working hard on another book, and thought he would be better able to say later in the month whether he expected to have it finished later in the year. There is an obvious candidate for this mysterious writing project. As Rian wrote to DeVelde on August 26, Machen was “very busy writing the book on the Presbyterian conflict.”

There is one other possibility to consider. On October 11, 1936, Machen began his third season of half-hour weekly radio broadcasts. However, this set of radio messages could not have been one of the “possibilities” for publication that Machen had in view on August 4, since the previous season of radio messages was still not prepared for publication. Furthermore, Machen would not have been making plans to publish a third set of radio messages until they were written and delivered, thus pushing the date of their anticipated publication well into 1937 or more likely 1938. Thus, Machen was not alluding to a third book of radio messages when he wrote to his publisher in August 1936.50

Machen was evidently not able to let Shippen know “in a week or so” (after August 4) what he was hoping to have ready later in the year for publication. Since her letter of September 1 refers to his letter of August 4, but to no other letter, it is probable that Machen did not follow up on that letter as he said he might. It would appear, then, that as Machen worked on his history of the Presbyterian conflict during August, he realized that it was taking more time to write than he had anticipated. We have inferred from DeVelde’s memorial to Machen that when the two men spoke on September 13-14, Machen was still entertaining the hope of finishing the book in time for publication in the spring of 1937 and already had a title for it, reportedly “The Conflict.” However, by early November, Machen realized that he would not be able to finish it in time for Macmillan’s spring list. So he wrote to Shippen on November 3 that he would be able to supply her with “a book of mine”—that is, only one book—which he would probably call “The Christian View of Man.” He set aside whatever work he was still doing on his history of the Presbyterian conflict and turned his attention to the other work he had in view back in August, the publication of his second set of radio broadcasts.

III. A Closer Look at Edwin H. Rian

There is definite evidence that in the summer of 1936 Machen was writing a book on the Presbyterian conflict. The apparent disappearance of his notes and unfinished manuscript from his personal papers after his death and the

50 Machen delivered twelve radio addresses from October 11 to December 27; apparently, no others were prepared before he died. The first eleven messages were published in alternating issues of the Presbyterian Guardian from January 10 to November 10, 1940. The final message appeared in the issue of January 10, 1945. It had not been filed with the others, but was discovered by Stonehouse with some other papers in December 1944. See Stonehouse to Arthur W. Machen, December 20, 1944 (Stonehouse Papers, WTS Archives). Five of the twelve messages were included in a collection of twenty of Machen’s sermons entitled God Transcendent (ed. Ned B. Stonehouse; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949).
appearance of a book on the same subject (and even with the same, or nearly the same, title) three years later, authored by his close associate, Edwin H. Rian, one of the very few who knew about Machen’s work, provide strong circumstantial evidence that Rian took Machen’s work, revised and completed it, and had it published under his own name. But was Rian the sort of person who would do such a thing? What would have motivated him?

Edwin Harold Rian was born in 1900 to Norwegian immigrants in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After graduating from Moody Bible Institute in 1921 (with a diploma after two years of study) and from the University of Minnesota in 1924 (with an A.B., having majored in Greek and history), he earned a Th.B. at Princeton Theological Seminary and an A.M. at Princeton University, both in 1927. A Gelston-Winthrop Fellowship in church history from Princeton Seminary took him to the University of Berlin (1927–1928) and the University of Marburg (1928) for further studies. Subsequently, Rian served the church and the academy, mostly as an administrator and fund-raiser. He received four honorary doctorates between 1946 and 1961.

Rian was ordained as a minister by the Presbytery of New Brunswick of the PCUSA (Machen’s presbytery) in 1927. After returning from Germany in 1928, he served as an assistant pastor at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield, New Jersey, until 1930 (during which time he married Marian Schall, with whom he had three daughters). He was a strong supporter of Machen in the ecclesiastical struggles of the 1930s, and, like Machen, was suspended from the ministry of the PCUSA in 1936. He was a constituting member of the First General Assembly of the PCA on June 11, 1936, and was received as a minister by the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the PCA on June 30. The First General Assembly elected him on June 12 to its Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, which decided that day to name him to the half-time position of general secretary. On June 22, he accepted that position and resigned from the Committee. He resigned as general secretary a year later, and was reelected to the Committee, upon which he remained, as chairman, until 1947. He also served on the Editorial Council of the *Presbyterian Guardian* from October 1937 to October 1944, and on

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51. The Norwegian name Rian is pronounced to rhyme with the English word neon, but the pronunciation was anglicized in America to sound like the Irish name Ryan. See Rian, tape #0331, side 1.

52. The following survey of Rian’s life and career is based on his entry (for which he refused to provide information or corrections) in *A Ministerial and Congregational Register of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1936–2001* (comp. James T. Dennison, Jr.; Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2001), 126, corrected and augmented by other sources, including the minutes of the general assemblies of the PCA/OPC, the minutes of the WTS Board of Trustees, various reports in the *Presbyterian Guardian*, *Christianity Today*, and the *Independent Board Bulletin*, and unpublished autobiographical materials in the Rian Collection.

53. In all of the published sources, Rian’s matriculation at Moody Bible Institute is mentioned only in *Presbyterian Guardian* 15 (June 25, 1946): 180. The administrative staff at Moody Bible Institute has provided the author with the information given in the text. In his unpublished autobiographical materials, Rian discusses his time at Moody Bible Institute at considerable length.
the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions from its inception in 1933 until leaving it with the PCA contingent in 1937.

When Rian left the pastoral ministry in 1930, he became the field secretary (promoter and fund-raiser) for Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia,\(^{54}\) from which position he took a leave of absence in 1944, and from which he resigned at the Board meeting of September 19, 1945. From 1932 until he resigned in 1947, he was a member of the Board of Trustees of Westminster Seminary, serving as president from 1937 to 1946. In 1944, he took the position of general secretary of the ill-fated Christian University Association of America, which he held until he was removed by the Association’s Board of Trustees on September 11, 1946.

On April 25, 1947, Rian renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the OPC. On June 11, 1947, he was greeted with open arms and reordained by the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the PCUSA, in whose fellowship he remained until his death in 1995. After leaving the OPC, Rian became vice-president of Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas (1948–1950), and of Beaver College in Jenkintown and Glenside, Pennsylvania (1950–1954), and president of Jamestown College in Jamestown, North Dakota (1954–1960), of Biblical Theological Seminary in New York City (1960–1963), and of an organization that he formed called the Institute for Educational Planning (1964–1966). He came out of a brief retirement to raise money for Princeton Theological Seminary, as an assistant to the president (1967–1979).\(^{55}\) During this period, he wrote *A Free World* (1947) and *Christianity and American Education* (1949), and edited *Christianity and World Revolution* (1963).\(^{56}\)

Rian’s theological odyssey may be described as follows. A teenage interest in religion took him to Moody Bible Institute (over the objections of his parents), where he gained a knowledge of the Bible and a fundamentalist outlook. However, he developed severe doubts about the Christian faith at the University of Minnesota, and so he went to Princeton Theological Seminary to see if the best

\(^{54}\) Rian relates that he was asked to become a fund-raiser for Westminster Seminary after he persuaded two members of his church in Westfield to donate one thousand dollars each to the school (Rian, “The Edwin H. Rian Saga,” 30 [Rian Collection]; Rian, tape #0331, side 2 [PTS]). At Rian’s request, the position was reduced to half time, roughly for the year in which he held the half-time position of general secretary of the PCA’s Committee on Home Missions and Christian Extension (Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary, October 20, 1936).

\(^{55}\) Rian once remarked, not entirely facetiously, that his twelve years of working for Princeton Theological Seminary were spent “atonning for my sins.” See “Doctrinal Conflicts in the 20’s and 30’s in the Presbyterian Church USA and the Princeton Seminary: Discussion Following the Lecture,” a CD made from the tape of a question-and-answer session following a lecture given by Rian at Princeton on October 19, 1979 (PTS).

defenders of historic Christianity could make a convincing case to him. Machen and others won him over, and his year of exposure to German liberalism failed to shake his Princetonian learning. (He later related with some relish how he had on one occasion confounded and angered Hans Lietzmann with an argument learned from Machen.) However, when he returned to “the church” (as he later called the PCUSA) in 1947, he espoused more moderate views. He abandoned the doctrine of inerrancy in favor of a looser notion of biblical authority. He rejected classic Reformed theology in favor of an open-ended mix of conservative and liberal ideas. He dismissed Machen and his followers (especially the Westminster Seminary faculty) as self-righteous, intolerant, presumptuous, divisive, and simply wrong about many things. He saw what he called “the folly of my ways” and became “much broader theologically.”

He tried, after returning to the PCUSA, to avoid both “extreme right-wingers” and “extreme left-wingers,” since it was safer and probably closer to the truth to be in the middle.

Because Rian renounced and deserted the Machen movement, after being a leader in it for over a decade, those sympathetic to it may be inclined to infer that this man was an unprincipled opportunist and perhaps even a hypocrite or worse. Such a man, one might think, would have had no scruples about stealing Machen’s unpublished manuscript and reworking it for publication as his own. However, such an analysis would be superficial and unfair. Basically, Rian saw himself as a proponent of traditional American Presbyterianism, with its theological looseness and American cultural values, and wanted the PCA/OPC to be the heir of that tradition. But during the 1940s, as he saw his views and dreams increasingly repudiated in the OPC, and as his own views broadened, he came to the conclusion that the OPC was an extremist and sectarian group with which he never should have gotten involved.

As an idealistic young man, Rian had high hopes for Machen and his movement, and threw himself into the cause, as he understood it, of rallying the troops and restoring the fortunes of traditional American Presbyterianism. Like some others (though probably not Machen), he initially expected the PCA to develop rapidly into a large ecclesiastical body—perhaps even eclipsing “the old church”—and a major cultural force. Serving as the general secretary of the PCA’s Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension in 1936, he envisioned himself overseeing the transfer of large numbers of congregations and portions of congregations from the PCUSA (and other bodies) to the PCA. Immediately upon taking up this position, he issued this statement: “The Church is small now but the indications are that in a few years it will be a large body, composed of members from many denominations that hold to the Reformed

57 See “The Edwin H. Rian Saga” (an unpublished 88-page autobiographical work), notes for a planned book about himself to be entitled The Odyssey of a Revolutionary, and other materials in the Rian Collection. The final remarks on Machen and his followers are taken from “Doctrinal Conflicts in the 20’s and 30’s in the Presbyterian Church USA and the Princeton Seminary,” a CD made from the tape of a lecture given by Rian at Princeton on October 19, 1979 (PTS).

58 Tape 0333, side 1.
Faith but which are now dominated by Modernism.” Rian wrote to DeVelde on August 14, 1936, barely two summer months after the establishment of the PCA, that “we now have 75 ministers, 4 presbyteries, and five more to be erected on Monday,” as well as “groups or congregations meeting in twenty states.” “These facts,” he concluded, “show you how quickly our Cause is growing.” Indeed, he exulted, “the powers that be in the old church are very much alarmed at our rapid growth.” In a letter to DeVelde of September 11, 1936, Rian referred to “the great strides the church has made in only three months.” After the number of ministers rose above one hundred, Rian wrote, “The Presbyterian Church of America is growing very rapidly. . . . It seems almost like apostolic days.” However, the “rapid growth” and the “great strides” in those “apostolic days” soon dwindled to a trickle. After Machen’s untimely death, the PCA/OPC and Westminster Seminary struggled through the remaining years of the Great Depression and World War II, with only a small constituency on the fringe of American Presbyterianism. There was minor irritation, but no alarm, in the mainline church and its educational institutions.

The reason for this lack of success, Rian thought, was that the OPC was abandoning its rich heritage of American Presbyterianism, had little interest in other churches or the general needs of society, and was following a narrow and rigid theological path to irrelevance; it needed to expand its vision and be more inclusive in order to have a significant impact for the cause of Christ. Following the publication of *The Presbyterian Conflict*, he tried to put the OPC back on the right course. He was the driving force behind the establishment of a Committee of Nine by the Eighth General Assembly of the OPC (1941), which was charged with the task of recommending to the next assembly how “the message and methods of our church may be better implemented to meet the needs of this generation,” and how the OPC might “have an increasing area of influence and make a greater impact on life today.” Charles Dennison comments that Rian, who was the chairman of the committee, “dreamed about the OPC as a large Presbyterian body with the cultural clout of the PCUSA.” He wanted the OPC “to reclaim a portion of its lost American Presbyterian heritage.” The Committee recommended to the Ninth General Assembly (1942) that it be continued and that other committees be erected to “discuss the formation of a federation of Presbyterian and Reformed churches” with the appropriate committees of

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60 These letters from Rian to DeVelde are in the Home Missions Papers.
61 [Edwin H. Rian,] “The Presbyterian Church of America” (a statement aimed at PCUSA ministers in late 1936 or early 1937), 8, 9 (Home Missions Papers).
those churches, and to “study the matter of cooperation with evangelical churches.” But the minority report of Cornelius Van Til and Murray Forst Thompson argued that this “super committee” had been given excessive “centralized authority,” which would “disrupt and impede the work of our church.” It also objected that cooperation with non-Reformed churches would undermine the distinctive testimony of the OPC. The Assembly was persuaded to dissolve the Committee of Nine, and it rejected most of that committee’s recommendations.63 Rian’s plans for the OPC had been dashed by Professor Van Til of Westminster Seminary and his allies.

Frustrated by what he perceived to be the myopic vision of the OPC and its leadership at Westminster Seminary, Rian next spearheaded efforts to bring together the conservative Presbyterian and Reformed elements in the United States—not only in the OPC, but also in the PCUSA, the Christian Reformed Church, and other churches—in order to establish an American Christian university along broadly Calvinistic lines.64 The Christian University Association of America was established on June 28, 1944, with Rian on the executive committee given the task of finding a suitable campus.65 Rian took a one-year leave of absence from his position as field secretary at Westminster Seminary and resigned from the Editorial Council (and Board of Trustees) of the Presbyterian Guardian on October 1, in order to take up his new duties as general secretary of the Association, with “the entire promotional effort necessary to the launching of the proposed Christian University” now resting on his shoulders.66 The 34-acre Widener estate in Elkins Park, just outside Philadelphia, was purchased (with great difficulty) to house the university, and a photo spread in the Presbyterian Guardian showed off its grandeur. On December 1, 1944, Rian set up his office on the premises.67 But his efforts were doomed from the start. Apart from the impracticality of the whole enterprise, the Association’s Board of Trustees was controlled by men (including a number of Westminster faculty members) who wanted a strictly Reformed institution, contrary to Rian’s plan for a much more inclusive one.68

This division was exacerbated by the Clark controversy of the mid-forties, which was brought to a head by the ordination of philosopher Gordon H. Clark as a minister on August 9, 1944, by the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the OPC, over the opposition of Westminster faculty members guided by the views of Cornelius

63 Minutes of the Ninth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1942), 27-34.
Van Til. On the surface, this controversy was a rather technical debate on the relationship between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man, but in reality it was part of a struggle for control of the OPC between the more narrowly Reformed Westminster faculty and the more broadly evangelical American Presbyterian faction in the church. The agenda of the latter party was drawn up in what was called “A Program for Action in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.” It listed four “general objectives” and four “specific objectives,” the first of which was ordaining Clark, and the last of which included bringing Westminster Seminary under ecclesiastical control. The fact that Rian supported Clark and the “Program for Action” put him further at odds with the Westminster faculty, even though he did not play a significant role in the theological or ecclesiastical debates.

After a power struggle, which included attempts of questionable propriety by Rian to use the Christian University Association membership to pressure and hopefully reshape the Board, he was fired by an eighteen to five vote of the Board on September 11, 1946. After that, he tried and failed to get the majority of the Board to resign in order “to allow the original purposes of the organization to succeed.” For various reasons, the university never came close to opening its doors. The property was sold in 1952 to Faith Theological Seminary.

The failure of the PCA/OPC to capture the imagination of the traditional elements in the PCUSA, the refusal of the OPC to aspire to resurrect its American heritage, and the failure of Presbyterian and Reformed conservatives to realize his dream for an American Christian university, left Rian thoroughly disillusioned—and without a job.

A threatened presbyterial investigation of alleged administrative irregularities during his time as general secretary of the Christian University Association expedited Rian’s departure. He wrote a letter renouncing the jurisdiction of the OPC’s Presbytery of Philadelphia on April 25, 1947, the same day that (and

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69 See Edward Heerema, “The Controversy in the O. P. C.,” Calvin Forum 12 (April 1947): 196-98. For good summaries of the Clark controversy, see Michael A. Hakkenberg, “The Battle over the Ordination of Gordon H. Clark, 1943–1948,” in Pressing toward the Mark, 329-50; Hart and Muether, Fighting the Good Fight, 106-15; Muether, Cornelius Van Til, 100-113. Although reference has often been made to the “Clark case,” no charges were in fact brought against Gordon Clark; rather, the propriety of the action taken by the Presbytery of Philadelphia was challenged because of Clark’s views.

70 A copy of the “Program for Action” may be found in the DeVlede Papers. The text was published by Floyd E. Hamilton, “The Other Side of the OPC Controversy,” Calvin Forum 12 (May 1947): 220. It may also be found in Hakkenberg, “Battle over the Ordination of Gordon H. Clark,” 349-50.

71 For a summary of events, see Dennison, “Tragedy, Hope and Ambivalence: Part Two,” 39 (History for a Pilgrim People, 128).


73 George J. Willis had been given the position of field secretary for Westminster Seminary as of August 1, 1946 (Presbyterian Guardian 15 [July 25, 1946]: 219).

74 See Dennison, “Tragedy, Hope and Ambivalence: Part Two,” 40 (History for a Pilgrim People, 129).

75 This is never mentioned in Rian’s lengthy oral and written explanations of why he left the OPC.
presumably after) Leslie W. Sloat informed him (by telephone) in general terms that he (Sloat) and another member of the Presbytery (John P. Clelland) “in accordance with the provision of the Word of God (Matt. 18:15-17) and the Book of Discipline (III, 5) . . . desired to consult with him regarding what they considered certain irregularities in his conduct as General Secretary of the Christian University Association which they regarded as impinging upon his office as a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.”76 In other words, if he could not explain these irregularities, especially the apparent misuse of Association funds (explained later in this section), they were going to bring charges against him in the Presbytery—charges that would probably lead to his suspension from office.77 His abrupt departure may look like an admission of guilt, but, as observed at the time by Robert S. Marsden, general secretary of both the Committee on Foreign Missions and the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, “his withdrawal may simply have indicated that he was fed up with things in general.”78 Some members of the Presbytery were prepared to defend Rian’s activities, apparently considering the charges to be politically motivated.79 But Rian was not interested in defending himself; he had already been thinking seriously about leaving the OPC, and this was the last straw. Nonetheless, it was not an easy decision. He later described it as a “personal wrench,” and it gave him nightmares.80

How do we assess the character of Edwin H. Rian? It would be a mistake to infer merely from his defection from the OPC and return to the PCUSA that he was a duplicitous man who would easily have been capable of stealing Machen’s manuscript and dressing it up as his own. There is no reason to think that his following of Machen was insincere. Rather, he understood Machen as the champion of traditional American Presbyterianism, and wanted to keep the movement moving forward in that direction after Machen’s death. His publication of _The Presbyterian Conflict_ in 1940 was an effort to interpret the Machen movement—and keep it going—along those lines. As he wrote in his concluding chapter, “constructive steps” needed to be taken to bring the church “back to its place of power and usefulness in the life of America.”81 Rian organized the Committee of Nine in 1941 to steer the OPC in that direction. He worked with the same vision from 1943 to 1946 to establish an American Christian university. But at every turn he was thwarted by the Westminster faculty and its narrowly Reformed ideology (as he saw it). The faculty especially turned against him

77 For a summary of events, see Dennison, “Tragedy, Hope and Ambivalence: Part Two,” 39-40 (History for a Pilgrim People, 128-29).
78 Marsden, “General Mission Letter No. 5.”
79 See Robert S. Marsden to Clarence W. Duff, July 21, 1947 (Dennison Papers). Marsden was baffled by their support of Rian’s activities.
80 “Discussion,” following Rian’s October 19, 1979, lecture.
81 Rian, _The Presbyterian Conflict_, 281.
when he supported Gordon Clark. All of his efforts to promote through or with the OPC a more broadly based American Presbyterianism, not to mention a coalition of conservative Protestants in general, finally came to naught during the latter months of 1946. He realized that he would have to look elsewhere—not only to find employment, but also to promote his ideals. Indeed, once he returned to the PCUSA, he was able to do both, with modest distinction. Thus, he was driven out of the OPC just as much as he left it on his own accord. One might criticize his desire to be in an ecclesiastical body that would have a major cultural impact and critique his inclusive ecclesiology and his broadening theology, but those things did not make him a thief.

On the other hand, the record does bring to light certain character flaws in Rian that are consistent with his apparent misuse of Machen’s work on the Presbyterian conflict. He could be untruthful and inordinately self-promoting. He could adopt inappropriate means that served what he believed to be good ends. Here are ten documented instances of such behavior:

1. When Rian reported to the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension in May 1937 that they were facing a serious financial situation, he offered “to serve temporarily without compensation as General Secretary of the Committee, beginning June 1, 1937,” gaining an expression of gratitude from the Committee.82 This expression of gratitude was repeated at the Committee’s meeting on June 1.83 Yet Rian’s magnanimous gesture was of questionable sincerity, for he must have communicated a desire (or at least a willingness) to step down as general secretary over the next couple of days, because the Committee named Charles J. Woodbridge to the position (with pay) on June 4.84 Rian was then reelected to the Committee on June 5, and elected chairman on June 10.85

2. A more striking incident occurred in the autumn of 1945, when the budget committee of the Christian University Association Board, of which Rian was one of only two members, voted him an 11 percent salary increase from $4,500 to $5,000 per year, despite the dire financial straits of the Association. The salary of the acting librarian (whom Marsden described as “a man contemporaneous with Mr. Rian in age and experience”86) was set at only $2,000 annually, the mortgage

82 Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension Held May 18, 1937 (Home Missions files, OPC Administrative Offices).
83 Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension Held June 1, 1937 (Home Missions files).
84 Minutes of the Fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Church of America, 1938), 20. In Rian’s defense, it may be that he was willing to work without compensation if no one else could be found to take the part-time position. In any case, he was happy to turn it over to Woodbridge (who also took the part-time position of general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions).
85 Minutes of the Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Church of America, 1937), 28; Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension Held June 10, 1937 (Home Missions files).
86 He was Lawrence B. Gilmore, who had two masters degrees and a doctorate, was knowledgeable in both ancient and modern languages, and had twenty years of ministerial experience (News of the Christian University Association 1.1 [October 1945]: 1).
payments were not being met, and important budgeted items were going unfunded. Yet Rian spoke in favor of his raise and voted for it. Marsden, a member of the Board, considered this “a most extraordinary performance” by Rian.87

3. Professor Stonehouse (claiming the agreement of the entire Westminster Seminary faculty) justifiably complained in 1945 that Rian, as president of the Board of Trustees, “frequently acted as if he were President of the Institution; he intimated to us that he thought he should be president.” Rian did whatever he could to promote his own agenda, not necessarily what was appropriate to his position as field representative of the Seminary. He had been hired to raise funds for the school, yet “for a considerable period he . . . has been actively criticizing the Faculty, and has done irreparable harm to the Seminary.”88 Even when speaking to the school’s biggest donors, apparently, Rian was badmouthing the Faculty.89

4. Similarly, when Rian was general secretary of the Christian University Association, the Board put him in a subordinate position to promote the organization, desiring to take advantage of his “superb gifts as a promoter,” but with restrictions intended to keep him from misrepresenting the character of the intended university. However, Rian “felt that the University idea was his idea, and that he should be free to run the project without restrictions.” Accordingly, he “spent time and Association funds in seeking to get people nominated to the Board” who would be more supportive of his agenda to broaden the theological character of the proposed university.90

5. When Rian resigned from the Editorial Council and the Board of Trustees of the Presbyterian Guardian, he gave as his reason that he was “unable to carry any additional burdens at this time” because “the tremendous weight” of his new responsibilities as general secretary of the Christian University Association left him no time to do anything else.91 However, it was noted after he left the OPC that this was only the “ostensible” reason for his leaving. The real reason was “his disagreement with the views of the majority of its editorial staff.” Similarly, the real reason why he “ceased his activities” as Westminster Seminary’s field secretary at that time (officially taking a leave of absence) was that “he was out of harmony with the position of the faculty.”92

6. Rian’s reasons for leaving the OPC were also not honestly stated. When he hastily renounced the jurisdiction of the OPC and declared himself independent on April 25, 1947, to prevent charges from being brought against him in the Presbytery of Philadelphia, he let it be known to several members of the

87 Robert S. Marsden, “To the Missionaries of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church on the Foreign Field,” February 6/7, 1947 (Dennison Papers and Duff Papers). A copy of this letter was sent more widely “To Whom It May Concern” on April 19, 1947, including Rian. At the end of this letter, as mailed out on April 19, John P. Clelland personally attested to its accuracy. A copy is in the John P. Galbraith Papers, OPC Archives.
88 Stonehouse to Robert H. Graham, April 30, 1946 (OPC Archives and Stonehouse Papers).
89 Stonehouse to Robert H. Graham, May 9, 1946 (OPC Archives and Stonehouse Papers).
90 Marsden, “To the Missionaries of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church on the Foreign Field.”
91 Presbyterian Guardian 13 (October 10, 1944): 285. While managing editor Thomas R. Birch wrote this news item, he reported what “Mr. Rian feels,” thus presumably reporting what Rian had told him.
92 Presbyterian Guardian 16 (June 23, 1947): 190.
presbytery that “the condition of his health and that of his family impelled him to withdraw.” However, those supposedly insurmountable health problems did not prevent him from joining the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the PCUSA a few weeks later. On June 11, Rian read a lengthy explanatory statement to that presbytery, in which he asserted that he had left the OPC and returned to the PCUSA after months of study convinced him that Machen and his followers should have remained in the PCUSA because one should not leave a church if it has sound doctrinal standards and properly administered sacraments, “even though the practice of the church may not be up to its profession.” For this high-minded reason, he had repudiated the separatist movement and was returning penitently to the PCUSA. Rian no doubt had been rethinking where he really belonged in recent months, but if his new understanding of ecclesiology had been the controlling reason when he bolted, he would have said so at the time. It was no doubt an important factor in his thinking, but it served as a rationalization that glossed over the real reasons why he left the OPC. He left because he had lost his battle over the direction of the OPC and Westminster Seminary, and had lost his positions and had no employment prospects within those circles; his departure was precipitated by the prospect of facing charges of ethical misconduct in the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

7. Rian’s character flaws were clearly manifested while he was general secretary of the Christian University Association. He had a dream for establishing a great, broadly Calvinistic university that could have a powerful impact for good in this country, and he saw a group of narrow-minded Reformed obstructionists standing in the way. They controlled the Board of Trustees of the Association. So Rian schemed to use the Association membership to reconstitute the Board. His goal of changing the makeup of the Board was not in itself necessarily improper, but he was willing to use underhanded methods to achieve that goal. Originally the Board, consisting mostly of Reformed academics (from seven denominations, but principally from the OPC and the Christian Reformed Church), was set up

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93 [Minutes of the] Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, May 12, 1947 (Presbytery of Philadelphia Papers, OPC Archives). This line of explanation was never followed by Rian when he wrote about leaving the OPC.


95 In his notes for the intended Odyssey of a Revolutionary, Rian later listed seven “forces influencing my decision” to leave the OPC and return to the PCUSA: “1. Division within the movement — McIntire—Buswell. Jealousies. 2. Rigid intellectual straightjacket. Van Til’s polemic. 3. Fighting Christians, not world, flesh and the devil. 4. Parents and relatives urged me to leave. 5. Friends in Phila. presbytery [of the PCUSA]. 6. Lack of leadership [in the OPC]. Death of Machen. 7. Study of Calvin’s Institutes IV Book.” In a question-and-answer session after his 1979 lecture at Princeton, he admitted that having no job weighed heavily upon him (“Discussion,” following Rian’s October 19, 1979, lecture). He could avoid mentioning the fact that he was fleeing from probable discipline by the OPC’s Presbytery of Philadelphia because that was not widely known.
to run the Association, determine the policies of the intended university, and hire executive personnel. Anyone could join the Association, which was essentially a donor base, by expressing agreement with its doctrinal standards and goals and contributing at least $5.00 annually. The constitution authorized the Association to meet only once a year, when called together by the Board. The Association had authority to elect Board members from a list of nominees put forward by the Board, but only the Board was empowered to remove any of its members. The Association was authorized to make recommendations to the Board, but that was all.\(^{96}\) When the majority of the Board members resisted Rian’s efforts to broaden its membership and assemble a faculty of similar theological diversity, Rian stirred up an activist element in the Association membership to pressure the Board in ways that were contrary to the Association’s constitution. Rian—hired to be the executive officer of the Board—even threatened to use the Association membership to dismiss the entire Board if it did not accede to his demand to replace certain Board members.\(^ {97}\) This was nothing less than an attempt to overturn the constitution and take over the Association.

The maneuvering of Rian and his Association supporters began at the annual meeting on June 27, 1946. Sixty members—mostly Rian supporters—out of a total membership of over eight hundred were there. (No quorum was set for the Association meetings, since they were intended to be basically informational.) During a meeting characterized by considerable dissension, the members made various recommendations to the Board, including the rehiring of Rian as general secretary at the expiration of his term, and then (circumventing the constitution) voted to adjourn until October 17, at which time they would see if their recommendations had been implemented by the Board at its September 11 meeting.\(^ {98}\) About 125 of the 850 Association members gathered for more contentious discussion on October 17. Rian, who had been relieved of his duties at the September 11 Board meeting,\(^ {99}\) argued that the Board had much less power, relative to the Association, than the Board thought, and that the Board was being doctrinally too rigid in making Board nominations, resulting in the loss of financial support. He urged the majority of the Board to resign, so that its original purposes (as he understood them) could succeed. That did not happen, and the Association adjourned to meet again on December 12.\(^ {100}\) But on December 12, only about seventy members were present. Rian’s few supporters on the Board had resigned in the meantime, and the Association voted for a final adjournment.\(^ {101}\)

\(^{96}\) See the Constitution of the Christian University Association of America, articles 3.1, 2, 4; 4.1, 3.

\(^{97}\) See Marsden, “To the Missionaries of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church on the Foreign Field.”


\(^{101}\) \textit{Presbyterian Guardian} 16 (January 10, 1947): 11-12.
8. Leslie Sloat was at that time the office manager of the Christian University Association, with the responsibility of keeping an accurate role of members. He discovered that in many cases people were being enrolled without paying their dues. Essentially, the funds donated by some in excess of $5.00 were being used to pay for memberships of others who paid nothing. This was Rian’s clever scheme by which to get people who would be supportive of him into the Association at no cost to them, so that he could control the Association and use it as leverage to influence and hopefully control the Board. Sloat made a careful list of 182 names and addresses of members who had apparently not contributed one penny. Marsden’s information at the time was that there were 240 such people, including “many persons . . . close to Dr. Rian.”

9. A good example of how Rian could take full credit for work to which he had only contributed was his assertion, “I was called upon to go to North Dakota and to bring Dr. Machen’s body to Philadelphia and Baltimore at the request of the Machen family.” On another occasion he related, “So [after hearing on the train that Machen had died] I went on to North Dakota and I brought his body back to Philadelphia.” However, as we shall see below, Arthur Machen (Gresham’s brother) and his wife traveled to North Dakota as well as Rian, and actually arrived there first. And when they left for North Dakota, Machen was still alive and there were hopes that he would recover from his illness. So the Machen family did not send Rian to North Dakota on their behalf, and did not ask him to retrieve Machen’s body. The three of them apparently did travel back to Philadelphia together, accompanying the body, but Arthur Machen, as executor of his brother’s will, was responsible for the care and disposition of his body. Arthur Machen brought his brother’s body back to Philadelphia for a memorial service and then to Baltimore for burial. Rian was probably helpful in some fashion, but that was all. Rian went on to claim that the Machen family “requested that I preside at the memorial service.” He repeated: “And his brother and sister [sic] asked me to preside at his funeral. And I conducted the funeral—memorial

102 See ibid.; Sloat to DeVelde, May 2, 1947 (DeVelde Papers). The constitution stated: “All who agree with the doctrinal standards and approve the design of the Association as expressed in the Constitution may, upon application to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, and upon the payment of not less than five dollars per year to the Treasurer of the Board, be approved as members of the Association” (art. 4.1). People could become nonvoting auxiliary members by paying two dollars per year (art. 4.2).

103 Sloat, “Those for whom there are signed Membership Cards, but who are not listed in the Receipt Book,” n.d. (Leslie W. Sloat Papers, OPC Archives).

104 Marsden, “General Mission Letter No. 5.”


106 Rian, tape #0333, side 1.

107 The Philadelphia Inquirer reported on January 3, 1937, “Dr. [sic] Rian and Dr. Machen’s brother, Arthur Machen, of Baltimore, both of whom arrived too late to see Dr. Machen alive, will accompany the body to Philadelphia.”

108 A report in the Philadelphia Bulletin for January 2, 1937, which looks like it originated with Arthur Machen, states that he “prepared to have the body sent to this city.”

service—for him.”110 Actually, Rian only read the Old Testament Scripture, and R. B. Kuiper did everything else in leading the service.111 Finally, Rian added, “I helped to bury him and all that.”112 That “help” was minor indeed; the brief burial service was led entirely by Stonehouse (see section 4). Rian can perhaps be forgiven for a faulty memory with regard to some of these details, but his failure even to mention that Arthur Machen went out to North Dakota and that Kuiper also conducted Machen’s funeral, manifests his tendency to take sole credit for things when others were also involved—and were even the principal participants.113

10. Rian asserted later in life that when the Presbyterian Church of America was renamed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1939, the new name came from him. “I gave the name” to the church, he claimed in a 1979 lecture.114 In fact, however, Everett Develde was the driving force encouraging the church to adopt that name. He recommended the name in a two-page letter to ministers and elders dated January 28, 1939.115 At the Fifth General Assembly of the PCA (1939), the name was officially proposed in an overture from the Presbytery of Ohio (DeVelde’s presbytery). DeVelde was the chief advocate for that name at the assembly, and the commissioners chose it over other proposed names on the sixth ballot.116 Rian may have voted for it, and perhaps even argued for it, but his assertion that he “gave” it to the church is quite an exaggeration. Again we find Rian taking sole credit for something in which others were more involved than he was.

From these incidents, we get a picture of Rian that is not entirely flattering. Although he was more genuinely concerned with promoting the kingdom of God than has often been acknowledged by those he left in 1947, he nonetheless could be inordinately self-promoting and self-aggrandizing. He was willing to exaggerate the role he played in events, not only at the expense of others, but even to the exclusion of others. He was also not above underhanded scheming in the pursuit of his agenda. Thus, it would not have been out of character for him to surreptitiously take Machen’s unfinished work from his study, edit and expand it, and have it published as entirely his own. Having studied history and

110 Rian, tape #3, side 1.
111 The order for the service is reproduced in full in Presbyterian Guardian 3 (January 23, 1937): 157-59. Perhaps Rian should get some extra credit because his wife played the organ during the service!
112 Rian, tape #3, side 1.
113 Several times on his oral history tapes, Rian also claims responsibility for Machen going out to North Dakota. He may have encouraged Machen to accept the invitation to speak, but Machen decided to go, and was determined to do so (whether he was ill or not), regardless of what Rian or anyone else thought. His family implored him not to go.
114 See Rian, “Doctrinal Conflicts in the 20’s and 30’s.” In the printed (and shortened) form of this lecture, “Theological Conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s” (1984), which Rian gave annually for several years, he wrote more modestly, “We then chose the name, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church” (p. 221). Later he said, “I was the one that suggested that they use the word ‘Orthodox’ for the church.” Tape #0033, side 2. This claim is made several times in his oral history tapes.
115 This letter is in the DeVelde Papers. Another copy is in the Mitchell Papers.
116 See T.R.B. [Thomas R. Birch], “The Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America,” Presbyterian Guardian 6 (March 1939): 56-57. The draft of DeVelde’s speech on behalf of the name is preserved in the DeVelde Papers.
especially ecclesiastical history, having been an observer of, or a participant in, many of the events covered in the book, and having been Machen’s right-hand man toward the end of his life, he no doubt felt uniquely qualified to write the account of the Presbyterian conflict, especially with Machen’s manuscript having come into his possession. The only problem was that he wanted to take all the credit for writing the history.

Rian’s motivation would have been to enhance his stature in the OPC and the conservative camp more generally, and to interpret the Machen movement in such a way as to influence its future course. Rian was once asked directly, “How did you happen to write *The Presbyterian Conflict*? Did someone ask you to do that?” His answer was: “No, I felt that I . . . was closer to Machen than anybody. And, in fact he told me he wanted to dedicate one of his books to me, but he said, ‘I was afraid that I’d make some of the other faculty members at Westminster Seminary jealous.’” How much credence to give to that anecdote is difficult to judge, but his being closer to Machen than anyone else (a valid assessment) is not sufficient to explain why he wrote this book. He wrote as someone who was knowledgeable about many of the events he related, but this book is by no means an insider’s account of what was happening behind the scenes. Most of the material is drawn from published sources. Very little, if anything, is related that only Rian knew about. This is not at all an intimate portrait of Machen. So it is hard to see how Rian’s closeness to Machen was a determining factor. Of course, he was also “closer” to Machen’s notes and manuscript on the Presbyterian conflict than anyone else, and perhaps that is what Rian had in the back of his mind. On another occasion, Rian indicated what he personally had to gain from writing the book, commenting that it “made me famous—or infamous,” and that it “made my name.” That is why he took all the credit—to make his name.

Rian probably rationalized to himself that he was only building upon Machen’s work—using it as a source. He no doubt edited, and perhaps heavily edited in places, what Machen had already written, which was presumably an incomplete rough draft. He added material of his own—for example, narrating some events that took place after Machen’s death. Perhaps he convinced himself that the book, in its final form, was enough of his own to justify not making any mention of the fact that it was based on Machen’s work. If others had known about Machen’s manuscript and had said something about it when Rian let it be known what he was writing (see section 4), he was probably planning to say that he had taken (or rather, had been given) possession of it for the purpose of editing and completing it for publication. But since he knew of no one else who knew about Machen’s work (except DeVelde, to whom he had given an apparently convincing account of it), Rian felt free to rework Machen’s manuscript as his own and publish it without acknowledging his enormous debt to him.

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117 Tape 0333, side 1. He also claimed that Machen’s family was “in close touch with me all the time” and told him, “You were Machen’s favorite” (ibid).

118 Tape 0331, side 2.
IV. The Disappearance of Machen’s Work

As already noted, Machen did his writing in his apartment, not at Westminster Seminary. The seminary was then housed at 1528 Pine Street in Philadelphia, in a remodeled row house made available by Oswald T. Allis, professor of Old Testament at Westminster (until 1935). The dining room was converted into a library. A couple of tiny offices, for administrative purposes, were “carved out of odd hall spaces.”\(^{119}\) The neighboring property at 1526 Pine Street was rented for limited dormitory space. Thus, there was no room for faculty offices. So Machen’s study, where he did his writing, was in his apartment on the twenty-second floor of Chancellor Hall, located at 212 13th Street. In addition to his private quarters, his apartment consisted of two large, main rooms, with many windows overlooking the city.\(^{120}\) As described by a visiting student, the front room contained a “beautiful collection of books,” including “dozens of terrifically rare volumes,” such as a copy of “Erasmus’ Bible” (i.e., his Greek New Testament) and a brilliantly illuminated book from the fifteenth century. The other main room was full of New Testament books—and contained his mountain-climbing collection. In general, books “were all about.”\(^{121}\) His desk and files were in one of those rooms, presumably the second one, which contained his books of greater practical value. So entry to his apartment provided easy access to his papers. The current file of Machen’s correspondence, however, was kept at the office of public stenographer Grace L. Darragh, in the Otis Building at the corner of Sansom and 16th Streets. There Machen dictated his letters.\(^{122}\)

Whatever notes and/or manuscript Machen had written on the Presbyterian conflict would have been at his study in his apartment when he died on January 1, 1937, in Bismarck, North Dakota, where he had accepted an invitation to speak. Upon his death, Machen’s estate, including the papers in his apartment, came into the legal custody of the executor of his will, who was his brother, Arthur W. Machen, a Baltimore attorney. Arthur Machen was a strong supporter of his brother Gresham and the conservative cause. Both Arthur Machen (accompanied by his wife) and Edwin Rian traveled to Bismarck by train after they received telegrams from Machen on December 30 informing them that he had been hospitalized, but they arrived at St. Alexius Hospital after he died there around 7:30 p.m. on January 1.\(^{123}\) Arthur Machen arrived only a few minutes after his brother died,\(^{124}\) and Rian learned of his death from a porter while still on the train to Bismarck.\(^{125}\) They left together by train on January 2 with Machen’s body,\(^{126}\) and returned to Philadelphia in time for a funeral service at the Spruce

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120 Ibid., 15, 26.
121 Kuschke diary, 166-67 (entry for October 10, 1936).
123 See the insert in the *Presbyterian Guardian* for December 26, 1936.
125 Rian, tape #0333, side 1.
Street Baptist Church at 10:30 a.m. on January 5. The service was conducted by Professor R. B. Kuiper of Westminster Seminary, assisted by Edwin Rian. This was followed later in the day by a burial in the family plot, after a brief burial service led by Professor Stonehouse, in Greenmount Cemetery in Baltimore.\(^{127}\)

Soon after that, we must assume, Arthur Machen returned to Philadelphia to attend to his brother’s estate. Machen had bequeathed all of his books and personal effects (including his papers) to his brother Arthur, “with the suggestion that he present to the library of Westminster Theological Seminary such of said books as in his judgment may be suitable for that institution” (and other books to Professor Stonehouse for his studies).\(^{128}\) Arthur Machen gladly donated his brother’s theology books to Westminster Seminary, but there was no room for them at the Pine Street property.\(^{129}\) They were kept somewhere (in Machen’s apartment?) until the spring, when they could be transported to the library building on Westminster’s new campus in Laverock, just outside the Philadelphia city limits. Machen’s personal papers were brought by Arthur Machen to Baltimore (that is, to his home in Ruxton, Baltimore County), presumably in 1937 when Machen’s apartment was cleaned out. There they stayed until (evidently) the summer of 1944, when they were put in the custody of Ned Stonehouse, who used them to write (at the Westminster faculty’s behest) *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir*.\(^{130}\) Machen’s papers remained at Stonehouse’s home in Glenside, Pennsylvania, until 1963, when they were transferred to locked storage in the newly built Montgomery Library at Westminster Seminary, where they have remained to this day.\(^{131}\) Thus, Machen’s papers have been carefully preserved since they entered Arthur Machen’s custody in 1937.

If all of Machen’s papers were taken by Arthur Machen to Baltimore, when would Rian have had an opportunity to remove the notes and/or manuscript of “The Conflict” without anyone else knowing what he had done? Rian was Machen’s closest associate at the end of 1936.\(^{132}\) He was deeply involved at a


\(^{128}\) A copy of Machen’s last will and testament (dated June 28, 1935) is among the Papers of the Trustees for Westminster Theological Seminary (WTS Archives).


\(^{130}\) Machen’s papers were definitely put in Stonehouse’s personal custody; a transfer in the summer of 1944 is implied by his desire “to sail full steam ahead this coming summer” (Stonehouse to Arthur W. Machen [March 15, 1944]). Stonehouse traveled to Baltimore in late March 1944 to make the necessary arrangements for his work. See A. Machen to Stonehouse, March 17, 1944; Stonehouse to A. Machen, March 21, 1944; A. Machen to Stonehouse, March 23, 1944; see also Stonehouse to Paul Woolley, October 16, 1943; Stonehouse to Parke Richards, June 6, 1945 (Stonehouse Papers).

\(^{131}\) See the correspondence between Arthur W. Machen, Jr. (his father having died in 1950), and Arthur W. Kuschke, Jr., the Westminster librarian (in the Westminster library’s office files): Kuschke to A. Machen, Jr., January 21, 1963; A. Machen, Jr., to Kuschke, January 22, 1963; Kuschke to A. Machen, Jr., January 24, 1963; A. Machen, Jr., to Kuschke, January 28, 1963. No one was granted access to the Machen Papers without the approval of both Kuschke and Arthur Machen, Jr., until 1969, when the latter relinquished his role in the process of gaining access (A. Machen, Jr., to Kuschke, January 25, 1969).

\(^{132}\) Even after repudiating Machen, Rian had to admit, “I suppose I was closer to Dr. Machen than any other man” (Rian, “Theological Conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s,” 219).
practical level with the ongoing work of the PCA and Westminster Seminary. He knew that there would be ecclesiastical and academic matters sitting on Machen’s desk that needed attention. It may be that Rian had a key to his apartment, or could obtain it from someone else who did, and after Machen’s funeral entered his apartment to look through his papers for matters needing attention. There was probably no need for subterfuge, however. Most likely, while Rian and Arthur Machen rode back together from Bismarck, or perhaps after they returned to Philadelphia, the two men discussed the situation and Rian obtained permission to go through Machen’s papers and see if there was anything that needed his attention. In any case, there is evidence that Rian was closely involved with the organizing and disposition of Machen’s personal property. Considering his closeness to Machen, the family’s trust in him, his presence on the scene, and his eagerness to help, it is probable that Rian helped to gather Machen’s papers together to be transported to Baltimore. The thought of removing Machen’s work on “The Conflict” may have occurred to him before going into his apartment, or it may have occurred to him only after he came upon it while going through Machen’s papers. In either case, he apparently removed everything pertaining to it (both notes and manuscript), and did so without telling Arthur Machen or anyone else.

Rian’s first impulse may simply have been to look at Machen’s work to see if it could be edited for publication. However, the fact that he never returned the material or told anyone about it suggests that a less honorable motive was soon at work, if not from the beginning. As he looked over what Machen had written, he recognized that the work was not yet finished, and the thought occurred to him that he could finish it—putting his own slant on it and taking credit for the whole thing. Of course, he probably had no way of knowing if Machen had told anyone else about his work on this book, and so he kept the work under wraps for three years. While he was working on the manuscript, he was also waiting to see if anyone would say anything about it. If someone, such as a Westminster faculty member, had indicated any knowledge of Machen’s work, Rian was probably prepared to say that he had taken possession of the manuscript (with Arthur Machen’s implicit permission) and was editing it for publication (under Machen’s name, of course). But once he was confident that no one else knew what Machen had been writing (except for DeVelde, whom, he thought, he had convinced otherwise), he was ready to come out with his expanded version of the work under his own name.

133 Rian’s involvement with Machen’s estate (and the family’s confidence in his judgment in matters pertaining to it) is indicated by Arthur Machen’s recollection, given in reply to Rian’s inquiry about various items of Gresham’s office furniture, that they “were certainly given to either you or the Seminary, and whatever disposition you and the Seminary choose to make of them is all right with me” (A. Machen to Rian, December 21, 1944 [Stonehouse Papers]). It is doubtful that Rian’s involvement with the estate would have extended only to office furniture.

134 Another possibility is that after finishing his work on the manuscript in the fall and turning his attention to other matters, Machen gave it to Rian to read over (perhaps at Rian’s request). Thus, it may have been in Rian’s possession when Machen died.
We can only speculate on how Rian became convinced that it was safe to proceed in this fashion. When Machen told Rian what he was working on, perhaps he indicated that no one else knew about it, or perhaps Machen asked him not to tell others about it just yet. Perhaps Rian wondered out loud to various Westminster faculty members whether Machen had left any books unfinished. We do know that at least as early as 1938 Rian felt that the coast was sufficiently clear for him to proceed with his plan. As he did, he let it be known to various people who had been in close contact with Machen (as we are about to see) that he was writing a series of articles on the history of the Presbyterian controversy. If any of these people had been aware of what Machen was writing, they would presumably have responded that Machen had begun writing something along those very lines before his death. But Rian’s intimations apparently did not elicit from anyone any knowledge of Machen’s writing project. Therefore, Rian continued confidently with his work—not on a series of articles, but on an expansion of Machen’s book.

One man to whom Rian confided in 1938 was Thomas R. Birch, who was the managing editor of the *Presbyterian Guardian* (and would continue to be until 1945). In that capacity, he had worked with Machen while the latter was its coeditor (with Stonehouse) in the latter months of 1936. A letter from Birch to Leslie W. Sloat, who was on the four-man editorial council of the *Guardian*, reveals that in a letter of February 13, 1939 (apparently lost), Sloat had made a suggestion that Birch liked. Most likely, he had suggested that with the tenth anniversary of the establishment of Westminster Seminary approaching, it would be appropriate to run a series of historical articles in the magazine, recounting the events leading up to its founding. When Rian then called Birch on another matter, Birch read Sloat’s letter to him, to get his take on the proposal. Rian “immediately pounced on the idea and suggested that we print his book chapter by chapter, and that the first five chapters were already written.” Birch comments, “I had completely forgotten that he was writing more or less a history of the controversy, with a view to publishing it later in book form.” Since Birch had “completely forgotten” what Rian had told him that he was writing, we must assume that some time had passed. Probably Rian had told him this at least several months earlier, during 1938.

Rian also brought Westminster faculty members, who were more likely than anyone else to have known what Machen had been writing in 1936, into the picture. In his preface, Rian thanks Professor Paul Woolley (along with Birch) for reading his manuscript. He also thanks Professors John Murray and Cornelius

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135 Birch to Sloat, February 15, 1939 (Sloat Papers). Birch confessed “very confidentially” that he had “grave doubt” as to Rian’s ability to treat this matter appropriately, but he admitted, “I have not seen the articles, and they may be excellent.” (Of course, with Machen’s “help,” Rian would be able to do a fine job.) The editorial council met on February 20, and it was decided not to pursue this idea. The *Guardian*, with only twenty pages per issue, did not begin to have room to serialize a book. Instead, the May issue contained a brief summary of the developments of the previous ten years (“Westminster’s Ten Years,” an editorial by T. R. Birch, pp. 90-91).

136 Birch to Sloat, February 15, 1939.
Van Til for making suggestions with respect to chapters 1 and 15. Woolley was asked to read the manuscript because of his historical knowledge. Murray and Van Til offered theological insights. It is reasonable to assume that Rian informed Woolley, Murray, Van Til, and perhaps other Westminster faculty members what he was writing early in the process, as we know he informed Birch. Rian had probably already gathered from conversations with them that they had no knowledge of anything that Machen may have been writing. But if not, their failure to indicate any such knowledge at this stage emboldened Rian to proceed with the confidence that no one would suspect what he was doing.

It seems probable that when Rian made off with Machen’s notes and manuscript, he would have looked for any correspondence since the summer that might refer to the work. He may have had weeks or even months to complete this task. In this connection, he probably went to Grace Darragh’s office to get Machen’s current file of correspondence, and checked through it before putting it with Machen’s other papers. He probably also looked through his own files for any references to Machen’s work. But finding little or nothing, he concluded that Machen had not written much, if anything, to anyone about this work. But whatever he did find, on this scenario, he removed from Machen’s papers. Some missing correspondence suggests that this in fact happened, for Machen was in the habit of keeping carbon copies of his letters.

First of all, there is no correspondence among Machen’s papers between Rian and Machen after May 1, 1936—that is, during the time when Machen was working on his historical book. Among his papers are eleven letters from Machen to Rian (and one telegram from Rian to Machen) dated between January 1 and May 1, 1936, but nothing for the eight months after that. One can only wonder whether Machen mentioned anything to Rian in correspondence after May 1 about the book he was writing. This would seem to be unlikely, since they usually communicated in person or by phone; nonetheless, this gap in Machen’s correspondence looks suspicious—especially since correspondence between them is known to have continued.

More suspicious is the disappearance of correspondence prior to August 11 between DeVelde and Machen, or between DeVelde and Rian, about Machen’s visit to Cincinnati on September 13, 1936. DeVelde (or his heirs) apparently did not keep much of his correspondence, but Machen kept the letters he received and copies of the letters he sent, and Rian did the same during his year as general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions (1936–1937). We know from DeVelde’s letter to Rian of August 11 that DeVelde had previously invited Machen to speak in Cincinnati, and that Machen had accepted the invitation,

137 Rian, The Presbyterian Conflict, 8.

138 The original copy of a letter from Machen to Rian, dated June 17, 1936, may be found in the “O.P.C. Publicity 1936” folder in the Dennison Papers. Machen would have kept a carbon copy.

139 Machen’s correspondence has been preserved in the Machen Papers. Rian’s correspondence has been preserved in the Home Missions Papers. According to Stonehouse, Machen “kept carbon copies of most of his letters from about 1923 on.” Stonehouse to Parke Richards, June 6, 1945 (Stonehouse Papers). “Most” is an understatement.
yet surprisingly neither letter has been preserved among Machen’s papers. And since DeVlede corresponded first with Rian about asking Machen to extend his visit to a second day, one must wonder whether he first sounded out Rian about inviting Machen to come to Cincinnati in the first place. It is possible that he did so, and that Rian replied, much as he did on August 26 with regard to Machen extending his visit, that Machen was busy writing a book on the Presbyterian conflict and might not be able to come out to Cincinnati. This would explain Rian’s curious reference to “the” book on the Presbyterian conflict in his letter of August 26, which implies his awareness that DeVlede already knew about Machen’s writing project. Machen, too, may have mentioned how busy he was, yet expressed a willingness to speak in Cincinnati. It may be, then, that Rian went through Machen’s papers and his own papers and removed this incriminating correspondence (but overlooked his brief mention of Machen’s writing in his letter of August 26 to DeVlede).

Even more suspicious is the disappearance of correspondence between Rian and DeVlede after Machen’s visit to Cincinnati. DeVlede, as a home missionary in Cincinnati, was constantly writing to Rian, the general secretary for Home Missions and Church Extension, about what was going on in Cincinnati and nearby communities. Preserved are nine letters from DeVlede to Rian, or from Rian to DeVlede, written between August 11 and September 11. Then there is a gap until October 5, when the extant correspondence resumes in earnest, with six more letters (plus two that have been lost) being written between then and November 2. It is hard to imagine that DeVlede would not have written a glowing report to Rian after Machen’s visit to Cincinnati on September 13 and 14. Since, as we have shown, DeVlede was very excited about Machen’s writings and very likely spoke with him on that occasion about the book he was writing, DeVlede probably would have mentioned that conversation in his letter to Rian. Rian may then have responded not only to DeVlede’s letter in general, but also to what DeVlede said about Machen’s writing project in particular. We do know that Rian wrote to DeVlede on September 30, presumably in reply to a previous letter from DeVlede, for Rian’s letter is mentioned in DeVlede’s letter to Rian dated October 5. Most likely, though, DeVlede reported to Rian on Machen’s visit immediately after it took place, and Rian responded, prior to the later exchange of letters. So there are probably four (or more) missing letters. Since so many letters were preserved both before and after this missing sequence, it looks very much like someone deliberately removed them from the files.

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140 This correspondence is discussed in detail at the beginning of section 1 above.
141 Rian would also have had to consider the originals of these letters, which would have been in DeVlede’s possession. But, as we argued in section 1, there is good reason to think that Rian explained to DeVlede that Machen had really not accomplished much, for all of his intentions, and that he (Rian) would write the book that Machen had intended to write.
142 The extant correspondence is in the Home Missions Papers. In addition to Rian’s missing letter to DeVlede of September 30, Rian’s letter of October 9 (mentioned in DeVlede’s letter of October 14) and his letter of October 28, requesting a photo of DeVlede (mentioned in DeVlede’s letter of October 31), are also missing.
If Machen had written to anyone else about his plans for “The Conflict,” it would have been Ellen F. Shippen at the Macmillan Company. They corresponded often in 1936 about his forthcoming manuscript(s) for publication. But the correspondence between them, as preserved in the Machen Papers, has a mysterious gap in it. As recounted in section 2 above, Shippen’s inquiry of July 23 was answered by Machen (upon his return from vacation) on August 4. He stated then that he might have “something a little more definite to say” about what he was writing in “a week or so.” But if he wrote anything more definite to her later that month, the letter is missing. Most likely, he did not write to her again in August, since her letter of September 1 (written after returning from her vacation) shows no knowledge of what Machen was writing and acknowledges receipt only of his letter of August 4. However, it is quite suspicious that we find in Machen’s papers no reply to Shippen’s inquiry of September 1. He almost certainly would have given her the courtesy of a reply, since he replied promptly to all her inquiries before and after this one. We suspect, therefore, that he replied in early September, telling her a little about what he was working on and expressing the hope to have it finished later in the year, as well as mentioning that he planned to have the second part of his radio series ready as well. The next inquiry from Shippen in the Machen Papers was not written until November 2. But it seems unlikely that, as Macmillan’s deadlines approached, she would have waited for two months before writing again. If she did write again in October, asking Machen how he was coming along, he would have answered that his hope to have his history book ready by the end of the year would probably not be realized. So on November 2 she asked if he had “any definite plans” to provide her with at least “a book” (singular) for publication in the spring. This letter does not reply explicitly to any previous letter from Machen, but seems to indicate an awareness that two books would not be forthcoming in the near future. Machen replied on November 3 that he would prepare the second part of his series of radio broadcasts for publication. This implies that he put his previous writing project—which had occupied him at least since early August—on hold and set to work on what became The Christian View of Man. If Machen wrote anything to Shippen in September or October and mentioned what he was working on, Rian removed the copies of those letters from Machen’s papers after his death.

This reconstruction of possibly missing correspondence between Machen and Shippen is of course somewhat speculative, but it correlates with the hints present in the extant correspondence: Machen’s uncertainty in August regarding his publishing plans, the references to “possibilities” and “manuscripts,” and Machen’s beginning of a new writing project in November (discussed in section 2 above). This evidence tends to confirm the explicit statements made by Rian and DeVelde that Machen was working hard on “The Conflict” in August and September, if not earlier, and probably into October.

143 The lack of a reference to a previous letter from Machen does not mean that there was not one, since Shippen’s letter of November 10, clearly responding to Machen’s letter of November 2, does not refer to it.
Taken together, all of these mysterious gaps in the extant correspondence of Machen, Rian, and DeVelde suggest that Rian removed from Machen’s papers and the files in his own office a number of letters that referred to what Machen was writing in the summer of 1936. Rian was eager to cover his tracks, but failed to destroy his copy of his letter of August 26 to DeVelde.

The historical evidence indicates that J. Gresham Machen was writing a book on the Presbyterian conflict in 1936 before his death. There is strong circumstantial evidence that Edwin Rian misappropriated that manuscript and used it as the basis for *The Presbyterian Conflict*. In Part II, we will examine the literary evidence and see that it confirms this analysis and provides further details of the book’s origin.

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144 Rian evidently left in his personal papers very little correspondence or other material generated by his professional or authorial activities. Any notes for, or drafts of, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (or his other books) have apparently been destroyed. The Rian Collection, consisting of items that he and his family left to Princeton Seminary, consists of only one small box of written material and some audiotapes, all of which is strong on subjective interpretation and weak on objective documentation. The author’s wider inquiries as to the possible preservation of additional materials have not uncovered anything.