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THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND THE DIVISION OF THE BRETHREN CHURCH

RONALD T. CLUTTER

Grace Theological Seminary came into existence after years of turmoil at Ashland College and Theological Seminary which resulted in the dismissal from that institution of its dean, Alva J. McClain, and of Professor Herman A. Hoyt. As some Brethren Church congregations and leaders rallied in support of these men, a new seminary was established. Opening its doors in 1937 in temporary headquarters at Akron, Ohio, Grace encountered a variety of hurdles but prospered in its first two years.

As Grace Seminary drew students and financial support away from Ashland and as it emphasized some doctrines not a part of the Brethren heritage, conflict developed within the Brethren Church. In 1939, after two years of internal strife, the Brethren Church divided into two conferences—one identified with Grace and the other with Ashland. That year also witnessed the relocation of Grace Seminary to Winona Lake, Indiana, where it has served its constituency for fifty years.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

FROM 1931 until 1937 Ashland Theological Seminary served the Brethren Church as a graduate institution with the purpose of training men and women for Christian service. From the beginning of its existence on the Ashland College campus, the seminary was involved in conflict.¹ The trouble rose to a fever pitch in 1937. On June 1 Alva J. McClain and Herman A. Hoyt were dismissed from their positions in the seminary which McClain had founded and led.

¹See Ronald T. Clutter, "A Background History of Grace Theological Seminary," *Grace Theological Journal* 9:2 (Fall 1988) 205-32.

THE BRETHERN BIBLICAL SEMINARY ASSOCIATION

Grace Theological Seminary was conceived at a prayer meeting in Ashland, Ohio, on June 2, 1937. Gathered at the home of J. C. Beal were men concerned about the dismissal of professors McClain and Hoyt. In the company of the fired teachers at the prayer meeting were Ashland Seminary professor Melvin A. Stuckey, some seminary students and Brethren pastors. Kenneth B. Ashman, one of the students in attendance, shared the background for the gathering.

On the morning after a memorable board meeting in the Spring of 1937, we questioned as many students of Ashland Seminary as possible. With but two exceptions they stated their intentions of attending some theological school, aside from Ashland, the following Fall. "I'll go to Moody." "I'll go back to B.I." "Let's go to Dallas." These expressed intentions were personal, uninfluenced, but determined. They agreed in thought that if, as Brethren students, we were to be deprived of the best theological training in our denomination, we would seek the second best elsewhere.

By evening our attitude was generally known to the college and seminary officary alike. Within a certain group of Brethren there arose the fear that to have these ministerial recruits scattered to numerous schools would be to invite their loss to the Brethren Church. Accordingly, they gathered to discuss the problem at hand. During this gathering, *at the request of the students*, the germ of a new seminary, "the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association," was formed.²

McClain reported that there was agreement in the Beal home that steps needed to be taken "for the perpetuation of the ideals and faith of the seminary which had been founded 7 years before, and also to care for the students who were already saying they could never return to the Ashland campus."³ A time of prayer concluded with pastor Louis S. Bauman writing a personal check and declaring that he wished to make the first donation to the new seminary.⁴

Association Leadership

A document was circulated affording participants the opportunity to express their support for a new theological seminary for the Brethren Church. All present signed the paper except for Stuckey

²Kenneth B. Ashman, "Grace Students," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:9 (4 March 1939) 17.

³Alva J. McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," in *Charis: The History of Grace Theological Seminary, 1931-1951*, ed. John Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1951) 29.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 30.

who wished first to ascertain his status at Ashland Seminary.³ The immediate product of this support was the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association. A. V. Kimmel, pastor of the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia, was chosen to be association president. Pastor Russell D. Barnard of the First Brethren Church of Dayton, Ohio, was selected vice-president. Hoyt initially was named secretary but on the day following his appointment he resigned and was replaced by Raymond E. Gingrich, pastor at the First Brethren Church of Akron, Ohio. Henry V. Wall, a layman from Long Beach, California, was selected to be the treasurer.⁶ An advisory council of thirty men was established "to guide the destinies of the new project until such time as a regular board of trustees should be elected."⁷

On July 28-29 the executive committee of the new association met with some advisory council members in the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia. To be determined were the name, site and faculty for the proposed seminary.⁸ The decision was made to call the school Grace Theological Seminary.⁹ Out of the invitations to house the new Brethren seminary, that of the First Brethren Church of Akron, sometimes known as Ellet Brethren Church, was chosen. McClain was invited to preside over the school while Hoyt and Homer A. Kent, Sr., were selected to serve with him as faculty members. McClain accepted the task of preparing "a prospectus covering the general seminary plans together with an outline of curriculum suitable for public distribution."¹⁰

³Ibid. Stuckey remained at Ashland until 1951. He was appointed dean of the seminary in 1943. See "Stuckey, Melvin Atwood," *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1983) 2:1229 and Arthur Petit, "Ashland College News Letter," *The Brethren Evangelist* 65:35 (4 September 1943) 11.

⁶Other charter members were Charles H. Ashman, Sr., Charles W. Mayes, Homer A. Kent, Sr., Kenneth B. Ashman, Louis A. Bauman, Robert Williams, Arnold Kriegbaum, William H. Schaffer, J. C. Beal, R. Paul Miller, Alva J. McClain, Herman W. Koontz, John M. Aeby and Thomas E. Hammers. Note the significance of some of these men in the Brethren Church. Bauman arguably was the most well-known of the pastors in the denomination, serving the largest of its churches, and functioning as secretary of the Foreign Missionary Society. Beal was business manager of the Brethren Publishing Company and Mayes served as editor of *The Brethren Evangelist*. R. Paul Miller was secretary of the Missionary Board of the Brethren Church giving direction to the home missions ministry. McClain was the best-known theologian of the Brethren Church.

⁷Homer A. Kent, Sr., *Conquering Frontiers* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972) 154.

⁸For a report of major business transacted see "New Seminary Executive Committee Has Meeting," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:32 (14 August 1937) 10.

⁹Hoyt recalled that there was another institution being formed in Philadelphia that summer, Faith Theological Seminary, whose founders had considered using the title "Grace." Interview with Herman A. Hoyt, 17 April 1986.

¹⁰"New Seminary Executive Committee Has Meeting," p. 10.

Association Activity

Financing Grace Theological Seminary was a major obstacle in the path of the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association. Kimmel was authorized to formulate a letter with the purpose of raising funds. Assistance was needed from the Brethren churches, some of which had prepared in advance for the solicitation of finances. The prestigious First Brethren Church of Long Beach, California, with Louis S. Bauman as pastor, on June 22 declared withdrawal of support from Ashland College and Seminary. The church resolved that it "shall give hearty and undivided support to any seminary which shall recognize the spiritual and legal control of the National Conference of the Brethren Church, or the control of some other conferences or organizations approved by The National Conference of the Brethren Churches of the United States; and that if the movement known as the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association shall be approved, then this church places itself squarely behind said Association."¹¹ Following this lead, the Southern California District Conference of Brethren Churches stated that it "most heartily endorses the action of the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association and pledges its support through prayer and moral influence" and requested that its congregations "support the new Seminary prayerfully, morally, and in a financial way as deemed best by its membership."¹²

The publicity for Grace Seminary emphasized Brethren control which some pastors thought had been lost at Ashland. Significant changes had been made at the Ashland College trustee meeting in the spring of 1936. Dennis Martin summarized the issues.

. . . Charles Anspach reminded the Board that Ashland College had been established as a liberal arts college with the training of ministers as only one of its functions. The college was to be held in trust for the Brethren Church by the Board of Trustees and if the Brethren Church wished to change policies it must do so through the Board of Trustees. But the denomination must also be prepared to assume a greater share of the financial burden. Without waiting for a response from the Brethren Church, he proceeded to propose changes in the composition and election of the Board of Trustees. The Board would be increased from thirty-six to forty-two members with all six additional members representing non-Brethren interests (the Ashland community, alumni, and two members-at-large appointed by the Board itself).

But by far the most far-reaching change concerned the selection of the trustees. Until 1927 thirty-three trustees had been nominated by the district conferences and elected by the Board. In that year the Board

¹¹"First Brethren Church of Long Beach, Calif.," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:32 (14 August 1937) 10.

¹²Report of the 27th Annual District and Bible Conference of Southern California," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:35 (11 September 1937) 17.

amended the procedure to permit direct election by the district conferences. Anspach now pointed out that this procedure was contrary to the college charter and proposed a new constitution which would firmly anchor the pre-1927 procedure. The Board would now elect its new membership from district nominations and become self-perpetuating. To many church members who had contributed to the endowment campaigns the realization that the Brethren Church had "lost" all effective control over the college was a rude shock.¹³

In response to the thinking of those so shocked, the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association declared as its purpose the sponsorship of "a theological seminary which shall be both Biblical and Brethren in faith, practice, ownership and control."¹⁴ Stoffer concluded:

It was the original intention of this association to present the plans for the new institution to the 1937 General Conference for approval, but this course of action failed to materialize. Apparently, the association was fearful that their plans would be rejected by Conference, so they organized the Seminary outside the structure of Conference, following the model used in the creation of the Foreign Missionary Board.¹⁵

Patterned after the model of the Foreign Missionary Board, the board of Grace Seminary would not be self-perpetuating but would be composed of those persons elected by "a body of corporation members composed of those who give to its financial support and are in agreement with its purposes."¹⁶

EARLY PROGRESS OF GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The newly created seminary opened on October 4, 1937, with classes beginning on the following day.

As the faculty and students assembled for the first chapel service, by common consent the song chosen to express our recognition of what God hath wrought, also as a united testimony as to the source of all future blessing expected by faith, was:

*"Marvelous Grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,*

¹³Dennis Martin, "Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary (1921-37): Prelude to Schism," *Brethren Life and Thought* 21 (Winter 1976):45-46.

¹⁴The Brethren Biblical Seminary Association, *Why a New Seminary* (n.p., n.d.) 3.

¹⁵Dale R. Stoffer, "The Background and Development of Thought and Practice in the German Baptist Brethren (Dunker) and the Brethren (Progressive) Churches (c. 1650-1979)," Th.D. dissertation, Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980, p. 709n. This work is being published by the Brethren Encyclopedia Incorporated as *History and Background of Brethren Doctrines*.

¹⁶McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 33.

*Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the Blood of the Lamb was spilt.*

* * *

*Marvelous Grace, Infinite Grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin.*¹⁷

Student Enrollment

Eighteen of the twenty Ashland Seminary students remaining after the 1937 commencement withdrew from that institution to follow their instructors, McClain and Hoyt, to Grace. Hoyt wrote:

And out of the 18 came 11 who formed the solid nucleus for the new student body, along with one other graduate who returned for further work. Kenneth Ashman, John Aeby, Harold Etling, Mrs. Ada Etling, Albert Flory, Luther Grubb, Edward Hay, Hill Maconaghy, Arthur Malles, Robert Miller, John Squires, and Russell Williams were pioneers in Grace Seminary. They were joined on registration day by six preseminary students who had formerly attended Ashland College: Wayne Baker, Edward Bowman, Harold Dunning, Mrs. Marguerite Dunning, Arnold Kriegbaum, and Blaine Snyder.¹⁸

Joining these eighteen were twenty-one more men and women pursuing seminary education. Three of these students, Raymond E. Gingrich, Professor Hoyt and Cloyce Pugh entered the graduate program. The names of the rest of the students are Ralph Carmany, Mrs. Margaret Emmons, Mrs. Edith Gingrich, Donald Hare, Earl Miller, Ernest Myers, Estella Myers, Vernon Newton, Henry Rempel, Edna Silkett, Ethel Morrill, Ruth Snyder, Charles Thomas, Ethel Thompson, Robert Williams, Mrs. Lenora Williams, Mrs. Margaret Williams and Herbert Wolfe.¹⁹ Twenty-nine of the students were members of the Brethren Church, eight being pastors. Ten students were either assigned to, or in preparation for, foreign service. Estella Myers, who had gone as a missionary to Africa in 1918, came to Grace Seminary to learn Greek in order to be enabled to translate the New Testament for Africans. Ruth Snyder recalled: "She about wore us all out, including the teacher, because she was so persistent. She had to learn it and learn it she did."²⁰ Kenneth Ashman served as president of the

¹⁷*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 2.

¹⁸Herman A. Hoyt, "The Academic History of Grace Theological Seminary," in *Charis: The History of Grace Theological Seminary, 1931-1951*, ed. John Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1951) 43.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

²⁰Interview with Ruth Snyder, 18 December 1986. For the life of Estella Myers, read Ruth Snyder, *Estella Myers: Pioneer Missionary in Central Africa* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1984).

first student body consisting of men and women from the states of California, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Washington.²¹

Leadership, Purpose and Goals

The faculty consisted of four men. McClain was president and taught theology and apologetics. Hoyt offered instruction in biblical languages and exegesis. Kent served as pastor of the First Brethren Church of Washington, D.C. and visited the seminary to teach Old Testament and archaeology. Pastor Gingrich was a graduate student who also taught courses in church history and missions. Courses in homiletics, practical theology and English Bible were divided among the faculty. Supervising the school was a board of trustees composed of twenty-seven men, more than half of whom had studied at Ashland.²²

The purpose of the seminary was stated: "To know Christ and make Him known as the Only Savior and Lord of Life."²³ Seven goals were listed:

1. A Bible-Centered Curriculum
2. A Competent and Believing Scholarship
3. A Spiritual and Prayer-Charged Environment
4. A Missionary and Evangelistic Spirit
5. A Premillennial Hope and Viewpoint
6. A Spirit-Filled and Separated Life
7. An Expository Preaching and Teaching Ministry²⁴

Financial Affairs and Incorporation

Though finances were to be a continued concern, the seminary opened without any tuition fees. Financial support was expected to come from those interested in the student produced at Grace. The first large financial contribution, a gift of one thousand dollars was tendered by missionary-student Estella Myers.²⁵ Rather than place the emphasis on finances, the seminary leadership emphasized prayer.

... there is one thing without which we cannot exist and accomplish our ministry: that is the Intercession of the Lord's people. Our first need is prayer. We believe that if prayer is made "without ceasing," all the financial needs of Grace Seminary from month to month will be

²¹*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 2.

²²McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 32.

²³*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 4.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 3.

met fully by gifts released by the will of the Holy Spirit. The foundation of this school was laid in prayer, as those who participated will remember, and we feel it must continue in prayer.²⁶

A student quartet was formed which carried the message of Grace extensively throughout the Brethren Church. The group consisted of Kenneth Ashman, Albert Flory, Arnold Kriegbaum and Henry Rempel. A December-January tour of the east covered 1900 miles with services in ten churches and an attendance of 1685. The services consisted of singing and testimonies with no sermons. A "goodly sum of cash and pledges" came to the school through this ministry. An eastern tour was planned for midwestern churches.²⁷ The popularity of the quartet was such that many invitations had to be turned down. Ashman, Flory and Kriegbaum were pastors, also. Rempel was director of music in his church.

Articles of incorporation under the laws of the state of Ohio were filed on April 13, 1938. With this action a new corporation, Grace Theological Seminary, replaced the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association. Most of the officers of the association became officers of the seminary. Membership in the corporation was extended to persons who contributed annually to the support of Grace. A "Covenant of Faith" was written into the charter and included the provision that this covenant could not be changed and must be signed annually by trustees and faculty in order to qualify for their positions.²⁸ The first meeting of the corporation took place on September 1, 1938, in Winona Lake, Indiana. Following this gathering, newly elected trustees convened "for the purpose of effecting their organization."²⁹

Completion of Inaugural Year

Less than two months after incorporation, Grace Theological Seminary held its first commencement activities. The class graduated on June 3 consisted of Kenneth B. Ashman, Robert E. Miller and Russell L. Williams. The services focused upon the graduates and their families.

The Baccalaureate Sermon was preached by Rev. R. Paul Miller, father of Robert Miller; and the Graduation Address was delivered by Rev. Charles H. Ashman,³⁰ father of Kenneth Ashman. At the close of

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷"Grace Quartet," *The Brethren Evangelist* 60:8 (19 February 1938) 19.

²⁸*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 2:1 (1 November 1938) 2.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰This address, "The Minister's Message for Today," was printed in the 25 June 1938 issue of *The Brethren Evangelist*.

the graduation service, the three graduates were ordained to the Christian ministry in an impressive ceremony conducted by the two fathers and Rev. Robert Williams, brother of Russell Williams.³¹

Grace Seminary completed its initial year with all bills paid. Throughout that year various occurrences convinced faculty and students of God's favor upon their school. A primary necessity of a graduate school is a library. The first *Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* contained this report:

A library is being sent from California. Other needed books have been loaned by students, pastors, and faculty members. In this connection we received recently a remarkable answer to prayer. There were certain technical and expensive books which were absolutely essential, especially in the field of biblical languages. Two members of the faculty drove to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to examine the stock of several stores which cater to seminary needs. After spending considerable time, we were able to secure quite a number of the needed books from the second hand department. The bill ran into three figures, but we purchased them by faith, believing that since the books were needed God would provide the money. When we returned to Akron we found waiting two checks, one from New Jersey and the other from Kansas, which came within 63 cents of meeting the bill, and both gifts were designated for the purchase of books. This was an encouragement to our faith.³²

Hill Maconaghy, in commenting on the small size of the room containing the library, said: "When several of us got into the library, the others had to wait until we got out."³³ Hoyt recalled that a table with chairs placed on both sides made the situation such that "it was impossible to get back and forth." He had heard that students crawled along the top of the table to get needed books.³⁴

Having begun their training in the midst of difficult financial times, many Grace Seminary students found themselves in need. A significant number had left jobs in Ashland when they made the move to Grace. Some students were able to find part-time employment, some were dependent upon working wives. McClain wrote:

Among the students there has grown up a very beautiful spirit of fellowship and thoughtfulness on behalf of others. When more than once this year it became known that some student was in real need, the others quietly arranged a little "surprise" gathering in which they

³¹*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 2:1 (1 November 1938) 2.

³²*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:1 (October 1937) 3.

³³Interview with Hill Maconaghy, 22 September 1986.

³⁴Hoyt interview.

shared their own possessions of food and money with the ones in need, thus making it possible for them to continue their studies in the Seminary.³⁵

Maconaghy recalled these occasions when faculty and students participated together in helping needy students and how those benefited were encouraged by these expressions of Christian love. He also spoke of opportunities students took to pool their resources in order to enjoy a special meal together.³⁶

The Second Year

The registration for the first semester of the second year of the seminary was on September 19, 1938, with classes beginning on the following day. Forty-seven students registered but two withdrew due to financial needs. Twenty-one of the students were from the Brethren Church. Twenty students were pastors, nine in the Brethren Church. Eight of the Brethren students were preparing for foreign missionary service.³⁷ Three new faculty members were welcomed to the seminary family on a part-time basis. Tom Hammers, a Cleveland pastor, taught classes in homiletics and practical theology while J. C. Beal and Everett Niswonger offered courses in English Bible. The graduation in the spring of 1939 witnessed some firsts. Hoyt and Pugh were the first graduates to receive the degree of Master of Theology. Mrs. Harold Etling was the first woman to receive a degree, that of Bachelor of Divinity.

PROBLEMS WITHIN THE BRETHREN CHURCH

While the year was a successful one for the seminary it was a difficult one for the Brethren Church. The existence of Grace Seminary brought to the fore issues that had existed in the denominational membership for a number of years but now were brought to a boil. Loyalty to the Brethren Church on the part of the supporters of Grace was questioned by members supporting Ashland. In turn, the Grace faction questioned the theological integrity of some at Ashland and the Grace group, with its dispensational and somewhat Calvinistic theological system, entered into conflict with the traditional Brethren approaches to the significance and application of the Sermon on the Mount, the doctrines of election and eternal security as well as the place of works in the plan of salvation. The dissension had risen to an explosive level. Stoffer wrote:

³⁵*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1:3 (April 1938) 2.

³⁶Maconaghy interview.

³⁷*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 2:1 (1 November 1938).

... by the end of 1938 both groups were organized for the inevitable showdown. Each had developed a powerful apologetic and was using it to its full potential. The Ashland group was the preserver of historic Brethrenism while the Grace group was the defender of the fundamentals of the faith against all tendencies toward liberalism and modernism.³⁸

Though the existence of Grace Seminary did not of itself cause the separation of the two bodies into separate conferences, Stoffer concluded that the founding of the new Brethren school began the process of division.³⁹ That the two factions were identified as Ashland and Grace groups demonstrates the importance of the seminary issue.

Home Missions Unrest

One step which accelerated the polarization was the action by the Missionary Board of the Brethren Church in dismissing R. Paul Miller as field secretary, from which position he had given direction to the home missions work. Miller was removed from office during the board meeting at the National Conference in 1937 but it was requested by the vote of the Conference that he be reinstated. At the 1938 meeting Miller again was dismissed by the board, a decision not overridden by the conference. The board action infuriated the Grace group which assumed that Miller had been dismissed due to his support of Grace Seminary. Stoffer identified part of the problem: "Especially galling to the Board was Miller's placement of Grace-oriented pastors in the mission churches in spite of the fact that two-thirds of the Board represented the Ashland faction."⁴⁰ A new organization, the National Home Mission Council, was created by Brethren identified with Grace. Miller became the director of the council. The Brethren now had two seminaries and two home missions organizations.

Loyalty Issue

The District Conference of the Brethren Churches of Indiana convened on June 13, 1939. A credentials struggle followed which resulted in the following resolution:

Therefore, be it resolved by the District Conference of Indiana Brethren Churches assembled at the Brethren Retreat at Shipshewana, Indiana, this 14th day of June, 1939, that we declare our protest and

³⁸Stoffer, "Background and Development of Thought," p. 716.

³⁹Ibid., p. 717.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 715. Cf. Dennis Martin, "What Has Divided the Brethren Church," *Brethren life and Thought* 21 (Spring 1976) 110-11.

challenge the right of any church to representation in any district conference or at our national conference to be held at Winona Lake, Indiana, Aug. 28 to Sept. 3, 1939, if they have taken any action separating themselves from the established boards or institutions of The Brethren Church, since their vote would be obstructive and divisive.⁴¹

The 1939 General Conference of the Brethren Church meeting in Winona Lake witnessed the events which resulted in the division of the brotherhood into two conferences. With the credential committee dominated by Ashland supporters, the credentials of about one hundred lay and ministerial delegates from the Grace party were rejected.⁴² Stoffer wrote: "In spite of the objections by Grace partisans that this action was a violation of congregational rights, the maneuver realized its goal—the control of the Conference organization."⁴³

A New Conference

With no other recourse, the Grace group gathered to organize the National Brethren Bible Conference. The *Brethren Evangelist*, edited by Charles W. Mayes, one of the Grace party leaders, reported concerning the new body:

This was *not* another General Conference. It was *not* a delegated body. It is *not* to be an organization outside The Brethren Church. It is a Bible conference within The Brethren Church. Next year any Brethren church may send delegates to the General Conference [sic], which, according to some reports, may be held at Shipshewana Lake, Indiana. The National Brethren Bible Conference will be held at Winona Lake, Indiana, the last week in August. We trust that friendly relationships may exist between these two groups within The Brethren Church and that the work may be carried on separately with the two groups until such time as they may agree to work harmoniously.⁴⁴

The greatness of the differences, the importance of the issues to both factions and the steadfastness of the leaders of the two groups would not allow harmony to exist and the National Brethren Bible Conference became the National Fellowship of Brethren Churches in 1940.⁴⁵

⁴¹L. V. King, "Indiana Conference Business Sessions," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:28 (15 July 1939) 11.

⁴²"The Editor's Box," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:35 (9 September 1938) 3. Cf. other editorial comments, protests and statements on pages 4-7.

⁴³Stoffer, "Background and Development of Thought," p. 718.

⁴⁴"The Editor's Box," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:35 (9 September 1938) 4.

⁴⁵For a thorough discussion and evaluation of issues, see Stoffer, "Background and Development of Thought," pp. 720-39.

GRACE SEMINARY RELOCATION

Amid the time of turmoil within the denomination, important decisions about the future were being made at Grace Seminary. The location at the Akron church was meant to be temporary. During the first two years of the ministry of Grace, a permanent location was a primary concern. Several options became available. McClain made reference to a "formal invitation from the First Brethren Church of Long Beach, Calif., offering to house the school in the building originally contemplated when the school was founded in 1930."⁴⁶ Hoyt stated that Des Moines, Iowa, was considered also.⁴⁷ An invitation was extended by W. E. Biederwolf for Grace Seminary to relocate in Winona Lake. Biederwolf, well-known evangelist and president of the Winona Lake School of Theology, a summer school, was familiar with the theological position of Grace and desirous of having the seminary move to his town. McClain commented:

... many of the Brethren pastors and leaders felt that a central location would more easily serve the educational needs of the Brethren who had been meeting at Winona Lake in annual conferences for over half a century. It also appeared that a school of this character was needed in northern Indiana and the surrounding territory, since from its beginning Grace Seminary attracted students from many conservative Christian groups outside the Brethren Church.⁴⁸

Hoyt added that the invitation to Winona Lake included the privilege of sharing the library of the Winona Lake School of Theology.⁴⁹ Hoyt noted the significance of Winona Lake in the birth of Grace.

The organization of Grace Theological Seminary, though prayed into existence in Ashland, Ohio, and first located in Akron, Ohio, was really consummated in Winona Lake, Indiana. It was here in connection with the General Conference of the Brethren Church that the corporation membership was begun, the first Board of Trustees was elected, the name was settled upon, and the first teachers were called.⁵⁰

The move to Winona Lake did not meet with the immediate approval of the whole seminary family. Students who were serving in pastorates would not be able to maintain these ministries and continue

⁴⁶ McClain, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Hoyt interview.

⁴⁸ McClain, p. 33.

⁴⁹ Hoyt, "The Academic History of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 44.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Note the possible discrepancy concerning the naming of the seminary. Kent places the action in Philadelphia (*Conquering Frontiers*, p. 154) while Hoyt affirms that the name was "settled upon" in Winona Lake. The name may have been chosen in Philadelphia and confirmed in official action at Winona Lake.

training at Grace. Gingrich initially had reservations about relocation because there were many fundamental churches in Akron which benefited from the presence of the seminary. However, neither he nor other Akron pastors were adamant in opposition to the move and Gingrich later acknowledged that the move to Winona Lake, in the long run, was a wise move.⁵¹

The Third Year

In the fall of 1939, shortly after the bitter dispute in the General Conference which resulted in the division of The Brethren Church, Grace Seminary opened its doors for a third year. The relocation resulted in a significant drop in enrollment due to the inconvenience of moving. Fifteen members of the student body followed the seminary from Akron to Winona Lake.⁵² The move from a large city to a small town was a great change for students but proved to be a refreshing one for many. Whereas the students in Akron were spread throughout a large metropolitan area, in Winona Lake they were brought within walking distance of one another and the school. Some inconveniences were suffered due to the nature of the Winona Lake situation. A popular and well-known Bible conference and vacation center, the town swelled in size during the summer months. With the advent of fall, homes were boarded and vacated. Many dwellings were not winterized sufficiently. Some students renting these facilities found physical discomfort during the cold winter months.⁵³

Seminary Growth

Twenty-eight students enrolled for the fall of 1939. That number rose to thirty-seven in the fall of 1940. In 1939, Conard Sandy joined the faculty and in 1940, Kent resigned his church to become full-time professor of church history, practical theology and archaeology as well as offer instruction in Old Testament.

A DIVIDED CHURCH

In 1940 the final step in confirmation of the division in the Brethren Church was realized. The National Brethren Bible Conference became the National Fellowship of Brethren Churches. In January, the *Brethren Missionary Herald* made its appearance as the denominational magazine. Two Grace men, Charles W. Mayes, editor, and J. C. Beal, business manager, had been dismissed from their

⁵¹Interview with Raymond E. Gingrich, 8 May 1986.

⁵²Hoyt, "The Academic History of Grace Theological Seminary," p. 45.

⁵³Interview with Ruth Snyder, 18 December 1986.

positions with *The Brethren Evangelist* by the Publication Board during the previous September. The Foreign Missionary Society of the Brethren Church identified itself with the National Fellowship. Stoffer summarized some of the statistical results of division.

In the realignment of churches, the Southern California and Northwest districts went entirely with the Grace Brethren, while Indiana, Illiokota, Midwest and Northern California districts stayed predominantly with the Ashland Brethren. Pennsylvania, Southwest and Ohio districts were nearly evenly divided. The approximately thirty thousand members were nearly equally divided between the two groups while 99 churches went with the Ashland Brethren and 74 with the Grace Brethren.⁵⁴

Stoffer concluded that the division hurt the Ashland group more than the Grace faction. "Those elements that added vitality and zeal to the church— an aggressive home mission program, a successful foreign mission program, nearly all the young ministerial recruits— were inherited by the Grace group."⁵⁵

The prophecy of W. S. Bell concerning the establishment of Grace Seminary proved true: "Two seminaries in a small denomination like ours, whose instructors and students are at variance with each other—MEANS TWO CHURCHES."⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

Grace Theological Seminary was founded in order to present an alternative within the Brethren Church for seminary education. Convinced of the need for such an institution, significant Brethren leaders led the new institution into growth, development and success in accomplishing the purpose of providing the type of theological education they considered necessary. However, the very existence of Grace Seminary brought to the fore a variety of differences among the Brethren.

Theological issues in which the Grace faction was associated with the Calvinistic training received by McClain included unconditional election and eternal security of believers. The Brethren had not held traditionally to these emphases. The dispensationalism popularized among the Brethren by Louis S. Bauman and McClain tended to ignore the application of the Sermon on the Mount to the church, whereas the Brethren in the previous generations had emphasized

⁵⁴Stoffer, p. 720.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 740.

⁵⁶W. S. Bell, *Who Are the Disturbers of Peace in the Brethren Church?* (Ashland, OH: The Brethren Loyalty Association, n.d.).

obedience to the instruction of Jesus. The stress upon the grace of God by the appropriately named Grace group was thought by the Ashland side to diminish historic Brethrenism which taught the necessity of obedience to the commands of the Lord. At times the term "antinomian" was applied to the Grace side, to which that group responded by identifying the Ashland body as legalistic. Ironically, with regard to social customs, the Grace people viewed Ashlanders as weak in setting standards whereas the Grace group was pictured as expressing fundamentalist and legalistic attitudes.

The tragedy of schism in the church fifty years ago hurt both factions. Division within the denomination brought devastation to churches and bitterness to people who wished to be known by their love for one another. Today both Ashland Theological Seminary and Grace Theological Seminary continue to serve their constituencies, preparing men and women for Christian service in the cause of the one Lord of a divided church.