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# A BACKGROUND HISTORY OF GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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*Grace Theological Seminary was born in an era of contention in the American church. The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy which divided major Protestant bodies affected also the Brethren Church. Alva J. McClain, a Brethren leader of Fundamentalist bent, envisioned a graduate seminary for his denomination. As a result of pressures for such a school, a seminary was established at Ashland College but was not received enthusiastically. Seven years of tensions, Fundamentalist-Modernist and Fundamentalist-Brethren, resulted in the dismissal of Dean McClain and Herman A. Hoyt and the founding of a new seminary for the Brethren.*

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## INTRODUCTION

THE Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the 1920s and 1930s resulted in division within different American Protestant denominations. One of the smaller bodies to suffer rupture was the Brethren Church, itself the result of a schism dating back to the 1880s. Unable to settle its difficulties, the new denomination divided in 1939.<sup>1</sup> At the center of the conflict was Alva J. McClain with two fruits of his labor—Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio, and Grace Theological Seminary in Akron, Ohio, later to locate in Winona Lake, Indiana.

The existence of the graduate theological seminary for the Brethren Church had its origin in the mind of McClain. He envisioned an institution which would perpetuate and defend the distinctions of the Brethren. His dream became a reality and then developed into a

<sup>1</sup>For an excellent discussion of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy as it affected the Brethren Church, see Dale Stoffer, "The Background and Development of Thought and Practice in the German Baptist Brethren (Dunker) and the Brethren (Progressive) Churches (c. 1650-1979)," (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980) 571-619 and 680-739.

nightmare. Attempting to blend the basic tenets of Brethrenism and Fundamentalism, McClain became embroiled in conflict which resulted in his dismissal from Ashland and efforts to establish a new seminary.

#### MCCLAIN'S EARLY LIFE AND MINISTRY

Born in Aurelia, Iowa, on April 11, 1888, to Walter Scott and Mary Ellen Gnagey McClain, Alva J. McClain was raised in the Brethren Church. Moved to Arizona and Washington as a youth, he attended the University of Washington but did not graduate from that institution. Converted under the ministry of Louis S. Bauman, McClain enrolled at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles where Reuben A. Torrey, a friend of Bauman, served as dean. He continued his education at Xenia Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian institution with an evangelical emphasis. Having satisfied residence requirements for the Th.M. degree, McClain subsequently finished his B.A. work at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Ordained a minister of the Brethren Church, he served as pastor of the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia from 1918 to 1924.

While at Philadelphia, McClain became embroiled in a denominational controversy. In a period of tension for many Protestant bodies, the Brethren Church found itself confronted with theological modernism in its ranks. Before the liberalizing influence had gained a foothold in the denomination, action was taken. The "Message of the Brethren Ministry," to which McClain was a primary contributor, was adopted by the National Ministerial Association in 1921. This document was opposed by some members of the denomination who represented the traditional Brethren aversion to creeds. One of these opponents was John Lewis Gillin, former president of Ashland College, who was serving as a member of the board of this Brethren institution. Through the influence of Gillin and a small number of others sharing his ideas, doctrine was deemphasized and social concerns magnified. Gillin allowed great latitude in doctrine, a matter which concerned many Brethren. The "Message of the Brethren Ministry" affirmed the infallibility of the original manuscripts of the Bible, the pre-existence, deity and virgin birth of Jesus as well as His vicarious atonement through the shedding of blood. Justification was recognized as coming through the faith of the individual, not by works, though works served as an evidence of justification. McClain listed four results of this doctrinal declaration:

First, it provided a rallying point for the evangelical ministers of the church, and was widely endorsed and used by congregations, district conferences, and ministerial examining committees. Second, a number

of liberally inclined ministers left the Brethren Church and entered other denominations. Third, Dr. Gillin stopped attending the General Conference, and the few remaining ministers who had supported the "liberals" suffered a marked decline in influence. Fourth, the churches temporarily at least gained a larger voice in the affairs of Ashland College, and began a definite agitation to place on its faculty more men of unquestioned loyalty to the great truths of the Christian faith.<sup>2</sup>

McClain joined the faculty of Ashland College in 1925.

#### MCCLAIN AT ASHLAND COLLEGE

Ashland College, in Ashland, Ohio, was chartered in 1878 and was reincorporated under the Progressive Brethren, later the Brethren Church, in 1888. The college served, among other purposes, to train men for ministry. A seminary department was begun in 1906. A graduate of the seminary program received an undergraduate degree of A.B. in Divinity. McClain taught for two years in the seminary program. Before he accepted the duties at Ashland, he clearly expressed his thinking about the seminary department in a letter to J. Allen Miller, dean of the Bible department. McClain affirmed that the "seminary" could not prosper until independent of the college program with its own faculty and extracurricular program. He hoped to see such a program begun if only with one teacher. Though recognizing the importance of the college ministry, he emphasized that he wished to have his duties limited to the "seminary," declaring that he would rather teach elsewhere or return to the pastorate than teach in the college.<sup>3</sup> He had written previously to Edwin E. Jacobs, president of Ashland College, expressing the need for a graduate seminary and his desire to teach only in the seminary program because of his conviction that students would not favor sitting at the feet of the same teacher for the seven years of college and seminary education.

Four years of the same mannerisms, the same jokes, the same ideas, the same methods, is quite enough for the average intelligent student. This, to me, at least partially explains why the Ashland student speaks highly of the College but often refers to the Seminary as a "joke." It is not a reflection upon the Seminary professors, but the College takes the best from them, and leaves the residue for the Seminary.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Alva 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) 12.

<sup>3</sup>Alva J. McClain to J. Allen Miller, 8 July 1925, McClain files, Morgan Library, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

<sup>4</sup>Alva J. McClain to Edwin E. Jacobs, 25 May 1925, copy, McClain files.

Not realizing his desires for a seminary, McClain departed from Ashland in 1927. He wrote of his concern about the situation:

In the first place, the restriction of the "seminary" work to a mere major in the college was continued by the administration with no apparent serious interest in placing it on a graduate basis. Second, the best ministerial students were becoming ambitious for advanced theological training and were beginning to look toward other schools for such work on a graduate level. Some were giving up their proposed "Bible majors" to work for the regular Bachelor of Arts degree so as to lay the necessary basis for entrance to the standard theological seminaries. Third, because it had become clear that "liberal" tendencies in life and faith still existed on the campus, the environment there did not seem at the time favorable for the establishment of the kind of theological school needed by the Brethren Church.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE INFLUENCE OF LOUIS S. BAUMAN

Upon leaving Ashland, McClain went to BIOLA where he taught courses in Christian doctrine for two years while continuing to formulate plans for "a theological seminary which would embody certain educational objectives and ideals which he felt were not being fully realized in any existing school at the time."<sup>6</sup> He wished to see a wedding of theological seminary scholarship with the spiritual warmth and practical emphasis of a Bible institute. With this ideal in mind, McClain consulted with Louis S. Bauman, who had helped bring him to salvation and whose church he had attended in Long Beach, California.

#### *Plans for a Seminary*

Bauman had served the denomination long and well as a pastor, evangelist, prophecy conference speaker, and strong advocate of missions. He started the First Brethren Church of Long Beach in 1913 and under his pastoral care the congregation grew to be the largest in the denomination. Bauman shared McClain's concern for quality Christian education and plans were made for the establishment of the seminary McClain desired. In response to a letter from Jacobs in which the Ashland president expressed interest in McClain's return to that school, Bauman wrote:

A number of people here in the church, and out of it, have in mind the beginning of a real seminary here in Long Beach. There are young men who might make great and useful servants of the church, if the Lord

<sup>5</sup>McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 12.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

shall tarry, who have not the means to go far away from home and spend years in preparation. And since the situation exists in the Bible Institute of Los Angeles as it does, they have not the enthusiasm for that institution they once had. We believe that if we can secure Brother McClain here for the organization and developing of a work, that helpers for him can be secured and that the money will be forthcoming. In fact, we have this in mind in the building of our new building. Of course, we have not in mind the running of a school that will give degrees, or anything of that sort. It will be of the nature of a Bible Institute, and perhaps a seminary in embryo. McClain has a tremendous influence and "pull" here in Southern California, and if we can make terms with him, we believe that something worth while can be done. We would not want to do anything, however, that would detract from our interests in the seminary at Ashland.<sup>7</sup>

### *Concern about location*

This news of potential competition was not welcomed at Ashland which was facing evaluation by the Ohio College Association and the North Central Association for accreditation. The Ohio association was concerned about the lack of faculty members who held doctor's degrees. The association also would not recognize theology teachers in the count of college faculty members.<sup>8</sup> McClain had no doctor's degree and, if rehired by Ashland, would be another theology teacher who could not be recognized by the Ohio association. At the same time the need to find more faculty personnel put a financial burden on the school. One positive result of the situation is that Kenneth Monroe and Melvin Stuckey, who had been teaching in the college and the seminary department, were no longer to teach college courses. The separation of college faculty and seminary faculty had come about by state requirement. The pressure to add McClain to the Ashland faculty continued to be applied by Bauman.

In June, 1929, he again mentioned in a letter to Jacobs the possibility of a seminary at the Long Beach church. He stated:

One of the best men in the Bible Institute has expressed a desire to join McClain here in such a work, and we are being promised considerable help from outside the Brethren Church if we will undertake such a work, with McClain at the head of it. McClain is the most popular man that the Bible Institute has had on its Faculty in recent years, and with him at the head of a seminary here, we would not want for students. We might want for funds.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Louis S. Bauman to Edwin E. Jacobs, 23 April 1929, copy, McClain files.

<sup>8</sup>Edwin E. Jacobs to Louis S. Bauman, 30 March 1929, copy, McClain files.

<sup>9</sup>Louis S. Bauman to Edwin E. Jacobs, 27 June 1929, copy, McClain files.

The problem of finances was not viewed as insurmountable for the possibility of outside help existed. Bauman continued:

When Dr. Chafer, from Dallas, Texas, was here, we talked the matter over with him, and we find that the Evangelical College at Dallas [later renamed Dallas Theological Seminary] has a mind to extend its work by placing branches of that school, under efficient teachers, at various points in the United States. Such an institution is greatly needed in Southern California—that is, an institution with the faith and the ideals of the Evangelical College at Dallas. If we could keep McClain here, I am sure that Dr. Chafer would look favorably upon the proposition, and the Long Beach Church would be glad to furnish the building facilities.<sup>10</sup>

Bauman repeated his point of previous correspondence that the work in Long Beach was not meant to be a challenge to the ministry at Ashland but that it was to meet the needs of those who could not or wished not to leave the west. He also emphasized his desire to see McClain at Ashland if such a situation were possible. He added: "I know only too well that if McClain could be persuaded to return to Ashland, and you should see the wisdom of making him Dean of the seminary, it would greatly strengthen the Brotherhood's support of Ashland College."<sup>11</sup>

Jacobs responded to Bauman, presenting both his desire for McClain and his dilemma.

Here is the situation. We need him here and ought to have him here. More than that, no one would object to his being Dean of the Seminary. Brother Miller and I understand that fully. However, here is the situation.

We have about forty people in the seminary. Three full-time teachers, none of whom have full work. Monroe, Miller, and Stuckey, all three do not have a complete load of hours. How we could bring a fourth teacher here in the Seminary, even if we had the money, is more than I could understand. If it were possible to take Prof. Miller into the College, we could do that, but he would not qualify for that. I hope to see you at conference and talk the matter over with you because I feel that the future of the church very largely depends on the leadership in the Seminary here. Dean Miller is getting old. I think we need a younger man. He also feels the same way.

I do not see my way clear now to make a more definite statement. Would it be possible for McClain to edit our Sunday School literature and preach in our local church while we wait further developments? If one of the three Seminary men could be shunted to other work for the

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

church, it would open a way for McClain, but you see this is an exceeding delicate situation.

I note what you say about the Seminary on the coast. Naturally I would rather not see it because I would rather have McClain here and regret that McClain did not stay when he was here. I am inclined to think in time the seminary there would militate against the work here nor could it ever have high scholastic recognition without considerable outlay of money, equipment, etc. I would be much better pleased and I think the church would be better served if a way were provided to bring McClain here and in the Seminary.<sup>12</sup>

In the fall of 1929, Charles H. Ashman, Sr., unofficially communicated to McClain in behalf of the Ashland College Board of Trustees their desire that he come to serve that institution as seminary dean. The trustees were considering a separate seminary faculty and hoping that eventually a seminary building could be constructed. It was the proposal of President Jacobs that McClain come as dean in light of the fact that Miller had agreed to step down from the post. Ashman concluded with a statement of concern.

The more I think about it, the better I become convinced that it would be suicidal right now to attempt any removal of the Seminary from Ashland. I have been in Ashland twice since Conference. I have sounded out the Seminary Students and almost universally the sentiment is for a change of Dean and Program, but at Ashland. I have sounded out the Pennsylvania Conference, one of the largest in the Brotherhood, and almost without exception the overwhelming conviction is that the Seminary must stay at Ashland. I am persuaded that any attempt to remove it would actually split the Brethren Church. My thought and plan is to make the necessary changes and put across the aggressive program, thus building the Seminary up to that point of power at which it can assert itself and make demands. Then, if at a future hour we see that it cannot be developed as it ought without removal, we would be in a position to do something. But, right now, I believe it would be most unwise.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE PROBLEM OF ACCREDITATION

##### *Jacobs' Concern*

Jacobs was caught between the desire of the Board of Trustees for McClain, which desire he himself expressed, and the requirements of the North Central Association regarding Ashland. He was convinced that a seminary as a separate school on the Ashland campus

<sup>12</sup>Edwin E. Jacobs to Louis S. Bauman, 3 July 1929, McClain files.

<sup>13</sup>Charles H. Ashman to Alva J. McClain, 5 November 1929, McClain files.



would require a separate endowment from that of the college in order to comply with North Central Association rulings. He was concerned also that North Central would not accept any graduate degrees offered by the seminary.<sup>14</sup> A week later, Jacobs wrote to W. S. Bell, endowment secretary of Ashland College, that there could not be two schools at Ashland with two separate faculties and two seats of potentially conflicting authority.<sup>15</sup>

The Ashland president also corresponded with Bauman about the importance of Ashland College. He wrote: "The Seminary is no more important that [sic] the Arts college for a church to try to live today apart from a College is as foolish as it is impossible."<sup>16</sup> He then added:

I assume the attitude that both [college and seminary] are important. Mason, Anspach, DeLozier and other [sic] are as important to the future life of the church as the seminary teachers could possibly, [sic] if I may make a comparison. More than this, they are doing as much for the church as the seminary teachers, not in the same way, but as important and they must have equal consideration with the other departments of the school.<sup>17</sup>

He closed by declaring: "I hope I have not spoiled the day for you. I have not yet told you half. Still, may be prayer and faith, and good sense will prevail. At least I hope so."<sup>18</sup> Jacobs was concerned that failure to gain North Central accreditation would result in the loss of a number of the best and most qualified teachers at Ashland. He wrote about plans for a seminary: "If we can keep all we have gained through 50 years of toil and pain and then add to our work, then I should be heartily glad. But if we stand to lose more than we gain, then I should be rigorously opposed."<sup>19</sup> He stated: "In Ohio there can be no school without NC recognition. All others are doomed."<sup>20</sup>

### *McClain's View*

McClain was not concerned primarily with the same issues as Jacobs. Not being in the difficult position of the president, nor sharing his perspective on accreditation, he did not think as Jacobs did. For McClain, college training was no longer sufficient for pastors and a seminary must be built.

<sup>14</sup>Edwin E. Jacobs to W. S. Bell, 4 December 1929, copy, McClain files.

<sup>15</sup>Edwin E. Jacobs to W. S. Bell, 10 December 1929, copy, McClain files.

<sup>16</sup>Edwin E. Jacobs to Louis S. Bauman, 11 January 1930, McClain files.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Edwin E. Jacobs to Alva J. McClain, 1 March 1930, McClain files.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

The best of our young men today are anxious to have an adequate theological education, which means that it must be graduate work for the most part. We are not at present providing for such education, and therefore must go elsewhere to get it. The years will prove this to be a disastrous policy for the Brethren Church. The College authorities should either provide for this advanced institution at the College, or else permit the Seminary to be established elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

He added:

The more I hear of the North Central the more I am convinced that if the Seminary is to remain on the College campus, it should be a separate school. With all the grief you are having with their dictation in College matters, why should we try to run a Seminary under their direction since the best interests of the Seminary do not require such jurisdiction? According to your letters, I do not think you would be sweating to secure the North Central recognition if the continued functioning of the College did not require it. Why should we drag the Seminary through the same trouble when it is unnecessary?<sup>22</sup>

For McClain, North Central approval was unimportant.

The test of an adequate theological seminary is not some standard erected by a set of men who are antagonistic to historical Christianity, but rather this—Does our Seminary adequately prepare our men for the task to which they have given their lives? Namely, for the ministry of the Gospel in the Brethren Church. For this purpose, the approval of the North Central means precisely nothing.<sup>23</sup>

W. S. Bell, formerly McClain's pastor at Sunnyside, Washington, came to Long Beach and discussed the matter of a seminary. According to McClain, talks with Bell resulted in three proposals: (1) that a standard seminary course be established at Ashland with three full-time teachers along with Miller, (2) that the seminary dean have full jurisdiction in seminary matters and (3) that McClain be called as seminary dean.<sup>24</sup> While Jacobs was expressing reservations about a seminary at Ashland, Bell was convinced that the college and seminary could not be maintained separately at the present time without the loss of the college and that "to preserve our educational work, we must pull together until such time as it may seem best and we are able to do otherwise."<sup>25</sup> Bell later wrote expressing hope that Bauman and McClain would meet with the board of trustees of the college on

<sup>21</sup>Alva J. McClain to Edwin E. Jacobs, no date, McClain files.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Alva J. McClain to Kenneth M. Monroe, 23 February 1930, copy, McClain files.

<sup>25</sup>W. S. Bell to Alva J. McClain, 4 March 1930, McClain files.

April 22. By that time the North Central action, which did result in approval for accreditation, would be known.

#### MCCLAIN'S PROPOSAL FOR A SEMINARY

Unable to comply with the April 22 date, Bauman and McClain requested that the trustee meeting be rescheduled. The meeting was held on April 24, 1930. McClain gave a detailed presentation including the need for a seminary, reasons that the seminary should not be located at Ashland and some important conditions should a seminary be established on the Ashland campus.

#### *The Need for the Seminary*

The need for a seminary of the Brethren Church was based on the awareness of the need of graduate education for pastors. McClain raised the question: "If it is worthwhile to ask a young man to spend three years in intensive study in the field of biology to prepare for teaching that subject, is it asking too much to require three years of intensive study in the field of Christian Truth from those who expect to teach it? The preacher is not required to know everything, but at the very least we have a right to expect him to know his Bible. And it takes time and diligent application to attain this goal."<sup>26</sup> He expressed a sense of urgency when he declared the need for a Brethren seminary education program.

If we do not provide it, our best young men will go elsewhere to secure it. Some have already made application to enter other seminaries. No denomination can eventually succeed by a policy of training its ministers in the theological seminaries of other denominations. It may work in individual cases, but as a policy it means disaster.<sup>27</sup>

He supported his point by stating that no presently existent denominational seminary would give "our men training in the distinctive positions of the Brethren Church" and that seminaries which try to have a trans-denominational appeal "are careful to avoid any teaching which would antagonize their distinctive positions. But such an education is negative."<sup>28</sup> McClain averred: "It is not enough that our ministers are not deprived of their distinctive beliefs, but they should be *confirmed* in those beliefs and so *fortified* that they will be able to propagate them in competition with those of an opposite belief. This

<sup>26</sup>Alva J. McClain, "The Need for a Brethren Theological Seminary," presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

can be done only in our own Seminary."<sup>29</sup> He also saw the denominational unity which could be realized through the influence of one seminary rather than the variety of voices of influence if pastors would come from a variety of institutions. His concluding point was worded carefully:

Finally, the Brethren Church as a separate denomination is doomed without an adequately trained ministry which is enthusiastic for our message. Competition is keen, union is in the air, and modernism is dissolving all differences. It will do no good to point to what has been done in the past. The past is gone. The church must face the present situation. And when it comes to a correct diagnosis of the present need, the pastors who are on the firing line know more about it than anyone else.<sup>30</sup>

### *Concern about Location*

Concerning the site for the establishment of a seminary, McClain concluded that though there were advantages to having a seminary on a college campus, there were many disadvantages. A spiritual atmosphere necessary for a seminary was not possible on an Arts college campus where seminary students were a minority. The denominational thrust should be at the foreground of a seminary while such was not the case with an Arts college. Goals of an Arts college were often identified with material success while such was not to be the priority of seminarians. The matter of the distractions of a college campus and the different emphasis on social life, extra-curricular activities and chapel services also argued for two separate campuses. The seminary campus could uphold the Christian ministry as the supreme calling, something difficult in a college emphasizing a variety of professions. McClain was concerned also with possible deviations from seminary doctrines by the college faculty. "The case might be different if the theological professors were acknowledged as authorities within their own field, but strange to say almost every teacher seems to feel perfectly competent to speak dogmatically in matters of theology."<sup>31</sup>

McClain voiced a concern that he had stated in an earlier year when he reminded the trustees that seven years on the same campus were too many, especially when the campus was small. Students would yearn for a new location. Limitations on opportunities for practical application of seminary teaching existed in Ashland. There

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Alva J. McClain, "The Location of the Seminary," presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

were also few opportunities for hearing leading preachers in Ashland. In addition to these concerns, McClain thought that the college "situation is demoralizing to the best interests of ministerial training in the Brethren Church."<sup>32</sup>

### *Conditions for a Seminary at Ashland*

In light of these difficulties, it seemed inappropriate for a seminary to share the Ashland campus. However, such a marriage of college and seminary could take place and certain conditions would assist to bring about a harmonious relationship. His suggestions included: (1) making the seminary department of the college a separate standard seminary, (2) establishing a faculty of at least four professors, (3) investing the seminary dean with complete jurisdiction in seminary affairs similar to the authority of the president in the college, (4) ranking seminary professors with a Th.M. on equal scholastic standing as Doctors in the college, (5) understanding that the arrangement of sharing the campus was "an experiment for the present," (6) planning for financial autonomy for the seminary, (7) publishing an annual seminary catalogue and a seminary bulletin, and (8) establishing a seminary committee on the board of trustees with the seminary dean as an *ex officio* member.<sup>33</sup>

### *The Proposal Accepted*

McClain reported the decision that followed. "After considerable discussion of the proposals as set forth by Professor McClain, although there was some apparent hostility on the part of the college administration and its sympathizers on the board, nevertheless, with no dissenting vote, the proposed plan for the seminary as a graduate school of the college was approved by the trustees."<sup>34</sup> The newly accredited college was not ready to extend welcome arms to the seminary. The college was struggling financially and had just completed an arduous and successful attempt for accreditation. There was fear that the seminary would tax school resources too greatly and possibly affect Ashland accreditation negatively. On the other hand, the existence of a Brethren seminary apart from the Ashland campus would rival it for the limited funds of the Brethren Church.

McClain concluded that "the administration hesitated to consent to the establishment of the seminary elsewhere since it would attract

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Alva J. McClain, "Tentative Seminary Program," presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

<sup>34</sup>McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 33.

the financial support of the churches, most of which were more interested in training students for full-time Christian service than in merely supplementing the secular educational facilities already existing in half a hundred other institutions in the State of Ohio."<sup>35</sup> Though there were reservations in the minds of some Ashlanders about the existence of a seminary, it was concluded that if such a seminary were to exist, it must exist at Ashland.

#### ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OPENS

In the fall of 1930, Ashland Theological Seminary began its ministry with four students and a faculty of four. J. Allen Miller was listed as dean and as a teacher in the New Testament Department. McClain served officially as associate dean and professor in the Department of Theology and Christian Evidences as well as teaching some English Bible courses. Stuckey offered instruction in the Homiletics and Practical Theology Department and Monroe served in the Department of Old Testament and Hebrew. The regular course of study consisted of at least ninety semester hours "of intensive study in strictly Biblical and theological subjects" leading to the Bachelor of Theology degree.<sup>36</sup> There was no tuition fee assessed to the student, and McClain anticipated the possibility of free dormitory accommodations.<sup>37</sup> A special student aid plan was devised in conjunction with Ashland College.

For each year spent in the College preparing for the Seminary work, the student will have set aside to his credit the sum of one hundred dollars. Thus at the end of the four year College course the ministerial student will have accumulated a fund of four hundred dollars, and this money will be paid to the student in six equal payments during his three years in the seminary at Ashland.<sup>38</sup>

The fourfold emphasis of the school was "orthodox belief, spiritual living, thorough scholarship, and practical application."<sup>39</sup>

Emphasis at Ashland still was placed upon the college. Ashland trustee, George T. Ronk, argued for this point.

Since we can only absorb three or four new men a year in the ranks of the ministry, it is apparent that we must consider the interests of one

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>36</sup>Alva J. McClain, "The New Seminary Program," *The Brethren Evangelist* 52:22 (31 May 1930) 6.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 7.

hundred times as many of our young people, not preparing for the ministry. It is utterly futile to prepare highly trained Brethren ministers to preach to our congregations, then make no effort to hold the loyalty of the young people in the congregation who go into secular work by training them also in our college. For every student we make provision in our Theological Seminary, we have one hundred students, also Brethren young people, who must be prepared to meet the great issues of life by proper training in the atmosphere of a Christian college.<sup>40</sup>

The seminary enjoyed growth in its first years. Ten students enrolled in 1931 and eighteen in 1932, all but one being Brethren. The enrollment stabilized with twenty students in 1933, seventeen in 1934, eighteen in 1935 and twenty-four in 1936–37.<sup>41</sup>

#### PROBLEMS DEVELOP BETWEEN SCHOOLS

##### *McClain's Concerns*

Fears that McClain had expressed about locating the seminary in the college environment were realized. He later wrote of the “cool reception on the campus, and occasional open hostility.”<sup>42</sup> In his annual report to the Board of Trustees on April 25, 1933, McClain sought to evoke a concern about the difficult situation without making specific charges.

Since the Church commits its ministerial students to the College for a period of four years (one year longer than the Seminary has them), a very grave responsibility rests upon the College teachers. Upon their own personal attitude will depend largely whether or not the student comes to the Seminary with his life purpose intact or seriously damaged. Does the teacher manifest a genuine enthusiasm for the Christian ministry as a high and divine calling? Does the student find out that this is so? Or is the attitude one of indifference and even tinged with hostility for “theologians?” Or does the teacher leave the whole matter studiously alone? Students, I would remind you, soon reflect the attitudes of their teachers in these manners. And the result may be tragic. One student may enter the Seminary with a listless purpose, while another comes with a violent antagonism toward College education. I think the Board should give some serious consideration to this matter. I have tried to present it as generally as possible.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup>George T. Ronk, “The Ten-Year Forward Program for Ashland College,” *The Brethren Evangelist* 52:22 (31 May 1930) 2.

<sup>41</sup>Herman 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) 41.

<sup>42</sup>Alva J. McClain, “The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary,” 20.

<sup>43</sup>Alva J. McClain, “Annual Report to the Board of Trustees at Ashland,” 25 April 1933, McClain files.

In his concern about the seminary being located at Ashland, McClain had asserted that the chief emphasis of the seminary was spiritual whereas that of the college was intellectual. He stated: "An alumnus of the College receives special notice for scholarship, but not as a rule for the number of men won to Christ."<sup>44</sup> It must be remembered that McClain had attended a Bible institute (BIOLA) and had graduated as valedictorian of his class at a liberal arts college (Occidental). It had been his desire to have a seminary where a Bible institute atmosphere prevailed. That was not the situation at Ashland.

McClain also was concerned about doctrinal deviation. Students were reporting some of the disturbing statements made by college faculty members. Homer A. Kent, Sr., remembered a conversation concerning "questions that were put to him by one young man from his church who was greatly disturbed by some things to which he had listened in the classrooms at Ashland."<sup>45</sup> Herman Hoyt described his experiences as a student at Ashland College:

Upon entering the sophomore year of study, I was almost submerged in what I call unbelief. In the psychology class the professor demanded that the Bible be excluded from the room, whereupon he proceeded to openly deny any supernatural reality to the new birth, saying that every man comes to a place in life where he turns over a new leaf. The professor of zoology sneeringly mocked at the words in Lev. 17:11 which say that the life of the flesh is in the blood. Upon another occasion, he flaunted the words of Christ in John 10:10 where Christ declared that He came to give life and give it more abundantly.<sup>46</sup>

Charges were registered about the teaching of evolution, though there is debate as to whether evolution was espoused by faculty members or simply presented as one theory of science.<sup>47</sup>

### *Call for a Doctrinal Statement*

McClain took steps to help create the atmosphere he thought was necessary. Having been involved previously in the writing of the "Message of the Brethren Ministry" to which subscription was made by the ministerium, McClain proposed to the board "the adoption of an official statement of faith as a standard by which the fitness of

<sup>44</sup>Alva J. McClain, "The Location of the Seminary," presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

<sup>45</sup>Homer A. Kent, Sr., *Conquering Frontiers* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972) 140-41.

<sup>46</sup>Herman A. Hoyt, "A Personal Testimony and an Explanation," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:14 (8 April 1939) 15.

<sup>47</sup>Dennis Martin, "Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary (1921-37) Prelude to Schism," *Brethren Life and Thought* 21 (Winter 1976) 43-44, 49.



teachers could be determined.”<sup>48</sup> This proposal was not received well by the administration but the trustees established a committee for the purpose of drafting a doctrinal statement. McClain wrote the original statement for committee consideration. It covered “fundamental Christian doctrines held in common by most evangelical believers, but omitting the distinctive doctrines of the Brethren denomination because at least half the college faculty were members of other denominations.”<sup>49</sup> The seven points of the proposal pertained to Scripture, person of God, person and work of Christ, person and work of the Holy Spirit, man, salvation and Christian character and conduct. McClain recollected:

The adoption of the “statement” was bitterly fought by the college officials, but when it became evident that it would pass, the president agreed to accept it and guarantee its adoption by the faculty *if the board would not require each teacher to sign it*. The hour was late, the members were tired, and the compromise was accepted.<sup>50</sup>

While the Seminary published the statement of faith in its annual catalogues beginning in 1933, the college catalogue did not include it. The college faculty had passed a motion adopting the confessional statement but the majority of its members did not vote.<sup>51</sup> It could be expected that Jacobs would not be positive toward the doctrinal standard because “he was in accord with the traditional Brethren antipathy to creeds.”<sup>52</sup> A confrontation existed in which each of the two parties considered its position best for the church: the one opting for the Brethren heritage of non-subscription to creeds, represented by Jacobs, and the other the product of the theological turmoil of the modernist-fundamentalist conflict and calling for adherence to a doctrinal statement in order to maintain orthodoxy in the church. The seminary faculty reflected the latter approach.

### *Administration Tension*

In 1934, many problems existed at Ashland. The *Ashland Times-Gazette* of April 25 reported on page one:

Dr. E. E. Jacobs was again chosen president of Ashland College by members of the board of trustees last night. He resigned as president and asked the board to elect Dr. C. L. Anspach, dean at Michigan

<sup>48</sup> McClain, “The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary,” 21.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Martin, “Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary,” 43.

State Teachers College, who refused to accept the position. Following Dr. Anspach's refusal, Dr. Jacobs was reelected head of the institution.

Reference is made in the newspaper article to the trustees' failure to take action "on a student request that 'a more extensive social program be outlined which shall include college dances, properly chaperoned by members of the faculty.'" The report continues:

A third plank in the student program that "more definite lines of cleavage be drawn between the arts college and the seminary" was not fully settled. Instead of a greater difference between the two departments, Dr. Jacobs believes that a greater union will help solve the problem. The graduate seminary students take no part in student activities, Dr. Jacobs said. The question of control of student activities is between students in the arts college and preseminary students, who are in the minority. The arts college majority, it is believed, can take control of student activities without action by any board.

The McClain perspective was summarized: "Among the college students there was much discontent, many preseminary students being disturbed by anti-Biblical attitudes in certain classrooms; while on the other hand the worldly majority were clamoring for greater liberty than allowed by the somewhat feeble rules."<sup>53</sup> Jacobs, apparently growing weary of complaints from McClain, wrote to his seminary dean:

I note that you find some criticism about the Arts College but I want to assure you that I have made as many apologies for the Seminary as you possibly could have made for the College.

The Seminary is by no means above criticism.

There is a grwoig [sic] feeling on the part of a good many good people that the Arts college should not at all be dominated by the teachings of the Seminary and I am of the opinion that the NC [North Central Association] will recommend that the two organizations be further separated.

I am as tired of apologizing for the Seminary as you could possibly be for the Arts College.

So far as the teachers are concerned, I shall do the best I can but I will not promise anyone that I will only employ those on which everyone may agree, as I have already found that to be impossible.

You are no more interest [sic] in the institution than I so no one need have any concern about my integrity or sincerity [sic]. That has been demonstrated long before the seminary was here.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup>McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 22.

<sup>54</sup>Edwin E. Jacobs to Alva J. McClain, 21 May 1934, McClain files.

An undated copy of a letter to the president and board of deans from "Members of the Graduate School of Theology" expressed what that group felt to be the answer to the college students desirous of campus dances.

We would recommend the correction of this evil by the inauguration of a definite evangelistic and soul-winning campaign. Feeling that only the Spirit of God can ultimately solve this problem, we suggest that one of America's leading evangelists and Bible scholars be brought into this place where he is so greatly needed. It is our ardent desire that you as the administrative body of this institution will feel constrained to take whatever steps may be necessary to deal effectively with the tendency toward unchristian amusements, and to this end make definite plans, in the near future, for a campaign on the campus having as its objective the deepening of the spiritual life and the winning of souls for Christ.<sup>55</sup>

#### A NEW PRESIDENT AND NEW HOPE

Possibly wearied by the conflict and by the financial problems resulting from the economic depression, Jacobs resigned the presidency in 1935 and Charles Anspach accepted the position. McClain saw a bright ray of hope in this appointment. Anspach had written to the seminary dean sharing concerns about Ashland College.

Dr. Jacobs seems to have had a change of heart now that the time is here for him to leave. He doesn't want to leave but wants to stay if I come back. We discussed all angles of the situation and I told him plainly what the future of the institution was to be if all groups agreed to my program. I told him that if stayed [sic] he must consider the fact that we would reorganize with a strong tendency toward the Wheaton viewpoint. I told him I thought in that direction there was hope and none in the direction of liberalism. I wanted him to see that we intended to do certain things and that he might not be happy in such an institution. As a result of the conference we came to the following agreement:

1. He will resign at the next meeting of the board.
2. He is not to teach his classes in such a manner as to embarrass the seminary. I told him that he could not go on saying things which would cause us embarrassment with the seminary and the church. He admitted that he said things he had no business to say and that he would hold his peace.

<sup>55</sup>"Members of the Graduate School of Theology to the President and the Board of Deans- Ashland College," no date, copy, McClain files.

3. I told him that the statement of faith would be printed in the next catalogue. He agreed.
4. I told him we would reorganize with the Wheaton viewpoint.
5. I told him we expect to contact conservative men in all denominations.<sup>56</sup>

Anspach, in turn, agreed that Jacobs be given the title of president emeritus with the salary of a dean. He was to have a semester leave of absence when possible and have a permanent position with the understanding that he would do nothing to embarrass the institution.<sup>57</sup> McClain responded with a declaration of agreement with Anspach's general policy. He had reservations about the arrangement made with Jacobs, stating that it was his "conviction that we shall find in the Church a rather widespread opposition to his staying here under any terms."<sup>58</sup> However, McClain was willing to bow to the wishes of Anspach in the matter.

At the board meeting in 1935 at which Anspach was appointed president, a second appointment of importance was made. Herman A. Hoyt was named professor of New Testament and Greek, taking the position left empty as a result of the death of J. Allen Miller. McClain's report to the board at the 1935 meeting was specific in stating what he perceived to be problems in the college which were in need of correction.

The baneful influence of fraternities which have been permitted to grow up without any semblance of control.

Faculty worldliness, including addiction to cigarets [sic], cards and movies.

Tolerance toward smoking and dancing by the students and arousing antagonism among such students by shifting all responsibility for rules upon the Board of Trustees.

Drinking and public drunkenness [sic] among students, with no apparent serious attempts to investigate thoroughly and discipline.

Contemptuous attitude toward the church and its ministry, with attempts to influence men away from preparation for the ministry.

Questioning the truths of Christianity, and the teaching of the dogma of evolutionism.

Systematic denunciation of the Seminary as being responsible for the difficulties here, the reduction in teachers' salaries, the existence of disliked rules of conduct, etc.

Attempts to discredit the character of the Seminary work by claiming to students that it has "no academic value."

<sup>56</sup>C. L. Anspach to Alva J. McClain, 11 February, 1935, McClain files.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Alva J. McClain to Charles L. Anspach, 15 February 1925, copy, McClain files.

Spreading reports throughout the community that the Seminary teachers are trouble-makers, disloyal, and leaders of a faction which is opposed to the college, as such.<sup>59</sup>

Difficult as these circumstances were for McClain, what he called the “most serious blow” was the forbidding of Seminary teachers to give instruction in any Bible classes in the college, thus closing some courses. It was communicated to McClain that North Central authorities required the move, which statement proved to be without substance. Also stopped was the practice of allowing college students to take Bible classes in the seminary for college credit. McClain took the matter as a personal slap.

The only reason I have been able to get for this absurd action, apart from the North Central story, was that neither Professors Monroe and Stuckey nor myself were academically fitted to teach even a freshman Bible class. I need not tell you that it is highly unpleasant to work in an institution where one is under a complete academic ban.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, McClain reported to the board that the seminary faculty was convinced that the situation would be improved greatly under the new president. Anspach’s proposed program was one “we have believed in and prayed for through the years of our association with it [Ashland].” He continued:

And I would like to add the every difficulty that has ever arisen between Seminary and College administration has had to do, either directly or indirectly, with Christian Faith and life. No other problem exists. Our battle is not over men, but over truth. We do not hate men; we do hate untruth and error. And we do not propose to surrender when it arises. If you expect us to, do not ask us to remain here.<sup>61</sup>

#### MCCLAIN HOPES DASHED

##### *Presidential Actions*

The optimism entertained by McClain and the seminary faculty was dashed quickly. Anspach’s inauguration included speakers alleged by the seminary faculty to be modernists. The president opposed a campaign formulated by pre-seminary students to distribute tracts on the school campus. At the 1936 board meeting, Anspach proposed

<sup>59</sup>Alva J. McClain, “Report of the Dean of the Seminary to the Board of Trustees,” Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, May 1935, McClain files.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

two standards of conduct: one, more restrictive, for the seminary and a second group of standards allowing more latitude in social activities for the majority of the Ashland campus.<sup>62</sup> McClain concluded:

No president ever began his administration at Ashland College with so complete a united support of his church constituency, or with such unreserved approval for his avowed program. Yet within a few months the new president's almost cynical violation of his solemn promises had precipitated a conflict which virtually wrecked the seminary at Ashland, lost to the college at least half its church constituency, and led to division of Brethren churches into two national conferences. To be sure, one man by himself could not have done all of this. There had been existing differences, some trivial, and others more serious, but none that could not have been handled without such far-reaching results if the actions of Dr. Anspach had been tempered with more wisdom and good will.<sup>63</sup>

Anspach proposed to the board of trustees a plan for increasing its membership from thirty-six to forty-two members. The six members to be added were to be drawn from non-Brethren sources. The proposal included a stipulation that not more than a third of the board membership could be drawn from any one particular profession, "a provision which the seminary faction interpreted as aimed at the ministers who make up half of the Board's membership."<sup>64</sup> Dennis Martin has stated:

But by far the most far-reaching change concerned the selection of all the trustees. Until 1927 thirty-three trustees had been nominated by the district conferences and elected by the Board. In that year the Board 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.<sup>65</sup>

### *Denominational Response*

Two members of the Board of Trustees, Louis S. Bauman and Charles A. Ashman, both from Southern California, resigned over the issue of the "double standard" of conduct for students. News of

<sup>62</sup>McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 25.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>64</sup>Martin, "Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary," 45.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 45-46.

the events of the board meeting soon reached the Southern California district. The result was a very long letter dated June 16, 1936, from The Ministerial Board of Southern California calling for Anspach to explain his attitudes and actions at the board meeting. A reply was expected by June 27. Anspach was involved with district conferences in Ohio and Indiana which made it impossible for the reply sought. The Ashland president wrote Paul Bauman, secretary of the Southern California ministerium.

I have gone through your statement very carefully and if my motives are as bad as the report would indicate, you have every reason to be concerned about me. I assure you, however, that I am not as bad as the report might indicate.

After giving the matter considerable thought, I believe it would be inadvisable to try to handle the matter by correspondence, for correspondence at long range in the clarification of interpretation is exceedingly difficult. Inasmuch as we are all interested in clarification of viewpoints, it is my suggestion that if my statement in the EVANGELIST is insufficient, that a group of your men meet with a group of Board and Faculty members and go over the entire matter. Such a meeting, I believe, would eliminate much of the present misunderstanding.<sup>66</sup>

Anspach's explanation in *The Brethren Evangelist* contained information that purported to show the difficulty of enforcing a rigid code efficiently.

The college shall encourage that type of behavior which shall be in conformity with Christian standards. It does not permit on campus, dancing, card playing, smoking, etc., and discourages such practice off campus. It does now, however, pledge all students to refrain from such practices off campus, as a condition of entrance. Sixty-five percent of our students live within twenty-five miles of the college and approximately fifty percent live in their own homes. Under such circumstances we cannot require that all students live the completely separated life.<sup>67</sup>

Due to Anspach's failure to reply to the pastors as requested, the Southern California body printed the letter and distributed it throughout the churches under the date of July 31, 1936.<sup>68</sup> Kent records the response:

<sup>66</sup>C. L. Anspach to Paul R. Bauman, 25 June 1936, copy, McClain files.

<sup>67</sup>C. L. Anspach, "A Statement Relative to Ashland College," *The Brethren Evangelist* 58:25 (27 June 1936) 15.

<sup>68</sup>Kent, *Conquering Frontiers*, 146.

The public revelation of the letter acted as a bombshell, rocking the Brotherhood from coast to coast. Viewpoints were quickly formed. Animosities were aroused. Articles on both sides of the question began to appear in the *Brethren Evangelist*.<sup>69</sup>

The General Conference of the denomination began its annual meeting on August 24. Albert T. Ronk wrote: "Never had the general annual gathering of the Brethren Church been more agog—more tense than this 1936 conclave. The 'Open Letter' from Southern California had out-fire-branded Samson's foxes and its authors were present to add faggots to the fire."<sup>70</sup> He also summarized conference action.

A series of motions passed the floor of the disturbed assembly.—(1) That Ashland College charter be read to the Conference. (2) That a committee of seven be created "to thoroughly investigate the condition which is causing the disturbance at this conference." (3) That the conference disapprove the proposed amendment of the College Trustees to increase their membership to 42 by adding six. (4) That the "*Conference table the motion to vote confidence in President Dr. Chas. Anspach and the entire administration of Ashland College.*"<sup>71</sup>

The investigating committee membership consisted of R. D. Barnard, C. A. Stewart, William H. Schaffer, Jr., Roy Patterson, R. F. Porte, H. V. Wall and E. H. Wolfe. Barnard was made chairman. In October, Anspach wrote to Barnard informing him that the investigating body must await an invitation from the Board of Trustees before it could visit the campus and that the trustees would not meet until March or April.<sup>72</sup> Barnard sent a letter to members announcing his resignation due to his lack of optimism regarding the possibility of the committee accomplishing its task.<sup>73</sup> Patterson also resigned. Wall was a member of the Ashland board and, therefore, could not serve very well as an investigator. Porte, Stewart and Wolfe did not participate in the investigation. Schaffer alone attended the June 1, 1937, meeting of the board which made decisions that had not been anticipated and which would rock the church.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Albert T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church* (Ashland, OH: Brethren Pub. Co., 1968) 420.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>C. L. Anspach to W. [sic] D. Barnard, 2 October 1936, Barnard files, Morgan Library, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

<sup>73</sup>R. D. Barnard to "To Whom It May Concern," 12 February 1937, Barnard files.



## THE CLIMACTIC YEAR: 1937

*Faculty Confrontation*

Early in 1937 a confrontation had taken place on the Ashland faculty concerning the proposal of certain regulations to govern that body. McClain reported the events:

This code provided, among other things, that "a member of the teaching staff may be dismissed . . . for inefficiency or neglect of academic duty, immorality, or conduct unbecoming to a gentleman." Dean McClain moved the addition of another cause for dismissal, namely, "*for teaching anything contrary to the college Statement of Faith.*" This motion was quickly defeated by a loud chorus of "No's." Pointing out the seriousness of this action, Dean McClain asked that his own affirmative vote be made a matter of record. Prof. Herman Hoyt made the same request. Someone moved that *all* the votes be so recorded, but the motion was overwhelmingly defeated. At this point the late Dr. L. L. Garber, no mean parliamentarian, informed the chairman that anyone could demand a roll-call vote. Instantly Professor Hoyt made the demand, and the roll call began. It happened so quickly that the opposition had no time to collect its wits, and the chairman simply moved with the tide. Otherwise the issue might never have come to a clean-cut public decision, as it did, with no escape for anyone.

The second name called in alphabetical order was that of the president himself. Dr. Anspach made an angry speech against the application of the college Statement of Faith and voted an emphatic "No," after which there was no longer any uncertainty as to the safe way to vote. When the vote was finished, only *five* votes were recorded as favoring the application of the Statement of Faith. Three of the votes were cast by the Seminary teachers—Hoyt, McClain, and Stuckey.<sup>74</sup>

*Board Action*

When the board convened it followed the plan of electing its own members rather than receiving appointees from the various districts. Ashman and Bauman, having resigned membership the previous year, returned as representatives from Southern California. The board chose two other men and refused to seat Ashman and Bauman.

McClain presented his report as dean of the seminary. He reminded the trustees of his 1930 report in which he had given reasons why it would be unwise to locate the proposed seminary on the college campus. He stated that the reasons given at that time remained valid and that the experiment had not worked well.<sup>75</sup> He

<sup>74</sup> McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 26.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

recommended the seminary be separated from the college, that endowment funds be divided between the schools and that the seminary library be removed from the college.<sup>76</sup>

With Schaffer in attendance the board convened in executive session. Twenty-two board members were present. A report of an investigative committee of the board which had been appointed to look into Ashland affairs at the request of college faculty members was presented.

We your Committee for Investigation, appointed by President Duker, beg leave to report as follows:

Your committee met on May 29 and May 31, 1937, receiving a fair proportion of the members of the arts and seminary faculties, and were greeted with a uniformly fine spirit of co-operation:

Your committee made notes setting forth the viewpoint of each regarding the situation at hand and its solution.

From this investigation and these interviews we have reached the conclusion that the situation cannot be solved by the continuance of the present personnel of the faculties. Therefore we recommend:

That the president of the college be instructed to secure by resignation or dismissal the elimination of Professors Alva J. McClain and Herman Hoyt from the seminary faculty, because of a continued lack of the harmony and co-operation between the arts college and seminary, which are essential to the success of the institution.<sup>77</sup>

After a time of discussion in which each board member was allowed to voice an opinion, a nineteen to three vote in favor of the recommendation was registered. The board members had heard McClain's report calling for a separation of the schools and came to the conclusion that "owing to relatively small resources of the college it would be folly to divide the funds and separate the institution."<sup>78</sup> A later report of the board members gave their interpretation of the matter.

The two professors declared themselves to be incompatible with the Arts College Faculty, but declared there was no personal ill-will preventing the fellowship of these Brethren; however, they declared it was no longer possible to continue in status quo. One of these professors declared the Board was faced with the responsibility of eliminating either twenty men or two. Since these two men were also in a spirit of rebellion

<sup>76</sup>"Report of the Dean of the Seminary," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:30 (31 July 1937) 17.

<sup>77</sup>"Report of the Board Investigating Committee," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:30 (31 July 1937): 17; cf. "Editorial Notes and News," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:24 (12 June 1937) 4.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

against the administration and the great majority of the Board, there was no other course except to demand their resignation . . . .<sup>79</sup>

Letters dated June 3, 1937, were sent to McClain and Hoyt to inform them officially of the board action.<sup>80</sup> Heeding the suggestion of L. S. Bauman, the two professors refused to resign so as not to give Ashland the opportunity of saying that the men had left on their own accord. If an explanation were to be necessary, the burden would be upon Ashland.<sup>81</sup> McClain and Hoyt responded in like manner: "Replying to your demand dated June 3, 1937, I decline to submit my resignation, preferring rather, if I must, to leave this institution by your threatened alternative of dismissal."<sup>82</sup> Letters of dismissal were sent on June 4 along with a copy of the board resolution calling for that action.<sup>83</sup>

#### NEW SEMINARY CONCEIVED

##### *Initial Plans*

Aware of the board action prior to the official notice, McClain and Hoyt had met at the home of J. C. Beal on the night of June 2. McClain described the momentous occasion.

In his home that night were gathered some of the conservative minority from the college board, members of the foreign missionary board which had been meeting at the same time, a few nearby pastors, and also representative students from both college and seminary. There was not much discussion, but there seemed to be general agreement that some provision should be made 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.

Without any human leader, the brethren went to their knees in prayer. When they rose, the late Dr. L. S. Bauman took out his pen, wrote a personal check, and said, "I want to give the first gift to the new school." Someone suggested that a paper be circulated for the

<sup>79</sup>"Trustee Committee Reply to Statement of Cal. 1938," in Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church*, 423.

<sup>80</sup>C. L. Anspach to Alva J. McClain, 3 June 1937, McClain files; C. L. Anspach to Herman A. Hoyt, 3 June 1937, Hoyt files, Morgan Library, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

<sup>81</sup>Interview with Herman A. Hoyt, 17 April 1986.

<sup>82</sup>Alva J. McClain to C. L. Anspach, 3 June 1937, copy, McClain files; cf. Herman A. Hoyt to C. L. Anspach, 3 June 1937, copy, Hoyt files.

<sup>83</sup>C. L. Anspach to Alva J. McClain, 4 June 1937, McClain files; C. L. Anspach to Herman A. Hoyt, 4 June 1937, Hoyt files.

signatures of all present who desired to work and pray for such a school.<sup>84</sup>

All of the persons in attendance, with the exception of Professor Stuckey who wished first to ascertain his status at the college, signed the commitment. Out of this meeting came the formation of "The Brethren Biblical Seminary Association" which would give birth to Grace Theological Seminary.

### *Denominational Division*

At the annual conference of 1937, Schaffer presented the report of the investigating committee. The delegates heard charges that the Ashland board had adopted a proposal to change the constitution of the college regarding the method of selecting trustees, an action interpreted as wresting control of the college from the church.<sup>85</sup> They also were confronted with the declaration that responses to a questionnaire sent out by Schaffer to former Ashland College students included testimonies of men losing their desire for further study for the ministry and being encouraged "to enter a more remunerative occupation."<sup>86</sup> The survey included accusations of theological indifference and antagonism to certain doctrines.

Two professors openly denied the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. One professor openly ridiculed the Doctrine of the Blood Atonement. One professor upheld the scriptures one day and denied them the next but on the whole was not sympathetic to the Christian ministry and denied many of the Biblical statements dealing with origins. One professor worships at the throne of modernism. Several professors believe in salvation by good works or the "golden rule." One professor denied the New Birth. One professor mocks the Second Coming of our Lord and prophecy in general. One professor doubts life after death and the resurrection body of the believer.<sup>87</sup>

Schaffer was aware of criticism of using student testimony as an accurate representation of the true convictions of the Ashland College professors.

We, however, are aware of the opinion that the most important thing between a teacher and a pupil is the impression the teacher leaves upon

<sup>84</sup>Alva J. McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 30.

<sup>85</sup>"Report of the National Conference Committee on Investigation of Ashland College," 25 August 1937, McClain files.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

that pupil. If the teacher declares he or she has been misrepresented in these statements, how does he account for the fact that all these statements are signed by men and women who either directly or indirectly heard them.<sup>88</sup>

Years later Schaffer continued to stand by his argument that the students reflected the impressions made by the teachers. He did not think it necessary to confront professors personally with the charges and said: "They may deny it."<sup>89</sup> A questionnaire circulated by supporters of Ashland show results very different from those of Schaffer's research. In the Ashland survey, seminary students were declared to be the cause of problems due to their attitude of superiority, resulting in disharmony and bitterness.<sup>90</sup>

The report of the investigating committee was signed by Schaffer, Stewart, Porte, Wolfe and Wall. Stewart and Porte had second thoughts and did not wish for their signatures to represent agreement with the findings. According to McClain, a motion was made *not* to accept the report and the vote was 263 for the negative motion and 275 against it. However, a two-thirds vote was necessary for acceptance and it was clear that such would not be possible so no further vote was taken.<sup>91</sup> It was evident that there was a definite division in the ranks. A rally was held on one evening during the conference at which approximately five hundred persons interested in a new seminary were in attendance. A denomination which could not afford to support two seminaries was about to find itself in that very situation.

#### CONCLUSION

Seven years of turmoil over issues such as evolution, Christian life and liberty, soteriology and philosophy of education had served to divide Ashland College and Seminary. In an effort to bring harmony to the campus, the Ashland Board of Trustees took the extreme step of dismissing the seminary dean and his closest associate. Peace came to the Ashland campus while Alva J. McClain and Herman A. Hoyt, in association with other like-minded Brethren leaders, formed a new seminary to carry the banner for their position, a step which resulted in the division of the domination in 1939.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>William H. Schaffer, "History—Grace Seminary," tape presentation, no date, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

<sup>90</sup>"Survey of Student Opinion of Religious Teaching at Ashland College," Ashland, Ohio, no date, McClain files.

<sup>91</sup>McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 31.