

DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALVA J. MCCLAIN AND GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY TO A HISTORY OF DISPENSATIONALISM

by
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In writing an essay on the distinctive contributions of Alva J. McClain and Grace Theological Seminary to a history of dispensationalism two assumptions must be made: first, that there are sufficient similarities to merit including Grace Seminary in the theological stream of normative dispensationalism; and second that there are enough distinctive emphases and variations and innovations in the dispensationalism of early Grace Seminary to merit a discussion of their *distinctive* contribution. It should be noted at the outset that this essay is not an attempt to join the chorus of voices intent on fragmenting early dispensationalism in order to justify more radical changes in the system or to otherwise discount traditional dispensationalism. It is true that this essay concentrates on peculiarities of the theology of early Grace Seminary; however, it by no means plans to so magnify these differences as to give the impression that the integrity of dispensationalism is infinitely malleable.

For better than a decade now it has been the penchant of “progressive” dispensationalists, in order to justify their more radical changes to the dispensational system, to minimize the continuity within early dispensationalism and to deny it a univocal voice.² This essay rejects this trend. That there are differences between the backgrounds, emphases, and constituency of early Grace Seminary and the historically more powerful dispensational voice of Dallas Seminary in that era cannot be denied. However, there was considerable camaraderie between the two as well. Louis S. Bauman (the foremost populist leader of the nascent

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²See Craig A. Blaising, “The Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism,” in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993), 9–56; idem, “Changing Patterns in American Dispensational Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 29 (Spring–Fall, 1994): 149–64; and more recently, Herbert W. Bateman IV, “Dispensationalism Yesterday and Today,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999): 21–60.

Grace Brethren movement and McClain's self-acknowledged mentor)³ and Lewis Sperry Chafer freely exchanged pulpits in the early 1900s,⁴ and in the correspondence of Bauman one can find many instances of correspondence between Bauman and Chafer discussing the merits and placement of Brethren students at Dallas Seminary, a clear signal that Bauman and Chafer had similar agendas.⁵ In one letter to Melvin A. Stuckey dated 17 June 1937, Bauman readily affirms, "Dr. Chafer is a close personal friend of mine."⁶ As further evidence for the camaraderie between Chafer and the Brethren is the interesting fact that in 1927 Bauman and Chafer discussed together the formation of a satellite of the Evangelical College at Dallas (later Dallas Theological Seminary) in the facilities of Bauman's church in Long Beach, CA, under the governance of none other than Alva J. McClain.⁷ Further, Grace had Dallas-trained instructors from its earliest days.⁸

Having said all of this, it nonetheless remains a fact that Grace

³Bauman precipitated the 1937 division at Ashland Seminary that resulted in the dismissal of McClain and Hoyt and the corresponding genesis of Grace Seminary by withdrawing from the board of Ashland in 1936 in protest of Ashland's liberalizing trends. As founder and pastor of the Long Beach, CA, Brethren Church, Bauman also shared in the responsibility for (if not the authorship of) the famed "open letter" of 1937 that increased popular awareness and rallied popular support for the conservative cause at Ashland Seminary. In 1937 Bauman personally donated \$5,000 (no small sacrifice in the waning days of the Great Depression) as the very first gift toward the founding of what would become Grace Seminary (see Ronald L. Clutter, "A Background History of Grace Theological Seminary," *Grace Theological Journal* 9 [Fall 1988]: 225–26; 230–31).

⁴Dale R. Stoffer, *Background and Development of Brethren Doctrines 1650–1987* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, 1989), 185.

⁵See, *passim*, in the Bauman Letters of the 1920s and 30s (Winona Lake, IN: Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary).

⁶Bauman Files (Winona Lake, IN: Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary), 1937.

⁷Louis S. Bauman to Edwin E. Jacobs, 27 June 1929, in the Bauman Letters. Rohrer adds that McClain "spoke often at Dallas Theological Seminary, having been invited to serve on its faculty when the school was started by Lewis Sperry Schafer [*sic*]" (*A Saint in Glory Stands: The Story of Alva J. McClain* [Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1986], 46). Please note that no critical biography of McClain exists, and though Rohrer's work is helpful in establishing some details in McClain's early career that are not found elsewhere, it is unfortunately also lacking in documentation, rendering much of the material unverifiable.

⁸This contribution is from an interview with Homer A. Kent Jr., 19 July 2004. Kent's father, Homer A. Kent Sr., was a founding faculty member of Grace Seminary. Kent Jr. was but 14 years of age when he moved to Winona Lake, and has given his life to the seminary in various capacities, including its presidency. He still lives today a few hundred yards from the campus and was gracious enough to speak at length with the author about the history of the seminary. Both his first and final words in the interview were that the dispensationalism of Dallas Seminary and of Grace Seminary throughout his tenure at Grace were without significant differences. The minor differences that occasionally emerged were not significant enough to prevent the exchange of faculty between the schools nor to dim Kent's view of Dallas Seminary in those days as "rightfully entitled to their status as the epitome of dispensationalism."

Seminary did bring refinements to the table that contributed to the microevolution of dispensationalism between the 1930s and the 1980s.⁹ Some of these innovations consist of McClain's own peculiar emphases that were a part of Grace's initial theological fabric, among which were his mediatorial view of the kingdom and his view of being "under the law." Other innovations include areas where other Grace Seminary faculty were in the fore in suggesting refinements to dispensational and other theological topics (e.g., Kent's view of the new covenant; contributions of Freeman, Whitcomb, Davis, and others to the role of the Holy Spirit in the OT; Whitcomb's young-earth creationism and presuppositional apologetics; and varieties of approaches in the areas of soteriology and sanctification).¹⁰

The previous paragraph leads to a final introductory disclaimer, namely, that there is no such thing as a monolithic "Grace Theology" (or, for that matter, a monolithic "Dallas Theology"). At best there are theological traditions that were unique to, heavily emphasized by, or held in concert by the faculty members of Grace Seminary at various stages in the history of the institution, that can arguably render those traditions as more a Grace Seminary notion than a Dallas Seminary notion or the notion of some other dispensational voice.¹¹ I have

⁹I have selected terms and dates carefully here, choosing to end the discussion with the dissolution of Grace's doctoral program and journal in 1991 and the concurrent rise of progressive dispensationalism, a macro-evolutionary change in the history of dispensational theology that is beyond the scope of this article.

¹⁰Admittedly, many of these latter items are not central to dispensational theology; however, they are important in minimizing stereotypical images of dispensationalism. These innovations, some of which Grace Seminary led in developing, prove that dispensationalists are *not* all gap theorists, rationalists, Arminians, adherents to Keswick theology, etc. It is an interesting exercise to compare and contrast the responses to John Gerstner's vitriolic attack on dispensationalism in his *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, 1991). Of the four major responses (David L. Turner, "Dubious Evangelicalism? A Response to John Gerstner's Critique of Dispensationalism," *GTJ* 12 [Fall 1991]: 263–77; Zane Hodges, "Calvinism Ex Cathedra: A Review of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*," *JGES* 4 [Autumn 1991]: 59–70; Richard L. Mayhue, "Who Is Wrong? A Review of John Gerstner's *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*," *TMSJ* 3 [Spring 1992]: 73–94; John A. Witmer, "A Review of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*," *BSac* 149 [April–June 1992]: 131–45; [July–September 1992]: 259–76), all agreed that Gerstner's attacks lacked precision and were better suited for the dispensationalism of a bygone era. But while Hodges and Witmer (both of whom attended and taught at Dallas Seminary) defended variously classical apologetics, non-lordship salvation, the possibility of a "carnal" Christianity, and a diminished role of the Spirit in the OT, Mayhue and Turner (both of whom attended and taught at Grace Seminary) denied that these kinds of issues were essential to dispensationalism, even expressing personal disagreement with some of these views themselves.

¹¹For instance, what I have labeled as "McClain's" mediatorial view of the kingdom was preceded by George N. H. Peters and Clarence Mason (the latter an early Dallas Seminary product) and continued at Dallas Seminary in the theology of Stanley Toussaint. However, McClain's contribution to this view, as reflected in his most significant literary contribution, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), was enormously greater than the contributions of Mason and

endeavored to reflect this in the research to follow, though I undoubtedly fall prey to a failure to include sufficient ifs, alsos, and maybes to satisfy all readers in this regard. For this I apologize in advance.

INFORMING EMPHASES DISTINCTIVE TO THE HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GRACE BRETHREN DISPENSATIONALISM

Remote Context of the 1937–1939 Brethren Division

Louis S. Bauman, introduced above as the populist leader of what would become the Grace Brethren, is the proper starting point for a discussion of the emerging fundamentalist branch of the Brethren Church.¹² In about 1900, the energetic Bauman was called to be pastor of the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia.¹³ There he came into contact with A. C. Gaebelein, R. A. Torrey, and A. T. Pierson.¹⁴ He also began attending the Winona Lake Bible Conference, where William G. Moorehead (Xenia Seminary) and James M. Gray (Moody Bible Institute) regularly spoke. It was during this first decade of the 1900s that Bauman's "interest in the prophetic element of the Book was deepened and clarified, an interest which bore fruit richly in later years, leading some to speak of him as the outstanding prophetic teacher of his day."¹⁵ An earnest but remarkably staid evangelist, Bauman also conducted evangelistic campaigns, during one of which (a 1912 meeting in Sunnyside, WA, at a church pastored by W. S. Bell), Alva J. McClain and his wife were converted.¹⁶ From Sunnyside, Bauman went to Long Beach, CA, where a successful evangelistic campaign led to the founding of First Brethren Church of Long Beach, where Bauman would pastor for the next 36 years. In his roles as

Toussaint, and was embraced more fully by the graduates of Grace Seminary than by the graduates of Dallas Seminary. It is on this basis that I have described the mediatorial kingdom view as distinctive to McClain and early Grace Seminary.

¹²Stoffer is probably correct that Bauman's dispensationalism and Keswick views on sanctification can be traced to J. C. Cassell, who preceded him at the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia. Cassell, in turn, was influenced by A. B. Simpson and the Christian Missionary Alliance (Stoffer, *Background and Development*, 178–79; 184). However, Bauman is surely the most important early popularizer of dispensational thinking among the Brethren.

¹³Alva J. McClain, "The Place of Dr. Louis S. Bauman in the History of the Brethren Church," manuscript, McClain Files, Unpublished Manuscripts "B" (Winona Lake, IN: Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary), 2. An exact date for this event is difficult to establish. McClain's approximation of "around 1900" is corroborated by the equally vague suggestion offered by Robert G. Clouse that Bauman's Philadelphia ministry began "by 1902" ("Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Brethren Millennialisms," *Brethren Life and Thought* 46 [Winter–Spring 2001]: 115).

¹⁴Clouse, "Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Brethren Millennialisms," 115.

¹⁵McClain, "Place of Bauman," 2.

¹⁶Ibid.

evangelist, Bible Conference speaker, and writer, Bauman almost single-handedly brought dispensational thought into prominence in the Brethren Church.

Alva J. McClain, an eager disciple of Bauman, followed him to Long Beach. There he attended the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (founded by fundamentalist oilman Lyman Stewart, and made famous by R. A. Torrey) from 1914–15.¹⁷ At Bauman's advice McClain from there went to Xenia, eschewing Bell's advice to go to Ashland to "get both sides of the theological questions."¹⁸ In 1918 McClain interrupted his studies to assume the pastorate of the First Brethren Church in Philadelphia (Bauman's old work), a post that also gave him opportunity to hone his teaching skills as an instructor of apologetics at the Philadelphia School of the Bible (the school founded by Pettingill and Scofield) until 1923.¹⁹ In that year McClain returned to Los Angeles to complete his B.A. at Occidental College, fulfilling the requirements to receive his Th.M. from Xenia in 1925. From Los Angeles McClain went to Ashland College to teach and to lead in the establishment of a graduate school there. At Ashland dissatisfaction would simmer for the next twelve years, ultimately culminating in the deep and nearly even division of the small denomination.

Immediate Prelude to the 1937–1939 Brethren Division

The feud at Ashland that culminated in 1937 with its division and the formation Grace Seminary, and in 1939 with the formation of the Grace Brethren denomination, is both storied and well-documented.²⁰

¹⁷Rohrer, *Saint in Glory Stands*, 46.

¹⁸Ibid., 47.

¹⁹Ibid., 48, 69–70.

²⁰For histories sympathetic to the Grace Brethren, see Alva J. McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," in *Xapts: The History of Grace Theological Seminary, 1931–1951*, ed. John Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1951), 9–39; Homer A. Kent, Sr., *Conquering Frontiers: A History of the Brethren Church*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1972); David R. Plaster, *Finding Our Focus: A History of the Grace Brethren Church* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2003); Ronald T. Clutter, "A Background History of Grace Theological Seminary," *GTJ* 9 (Fall 1988): 205–32; idem, "The Development of Grace Theological Seminary and the Division of the Brethren Church," *GTJ* 10 (Spring 1989): 51–66. For a history unsympathetic to the Grace Brethren see Albert T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church* (Ashland, OH: Brethren Publishing Co., 1968), 287–447. See also the exchange between the two groups among the weekly issues of the *Brethren Evangelist*, 1937–1939, but particularly during January–September of 1939. Other treatments include Stoffer, *Background and Development*, chap. 15; Dennis Martin, *Law and Grace*, an independent study presented to David Maas at Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, 1973; Robert G. Clouse, "Brethren and Modernity: Change and Development in the Progressive/Grace Church," *Brethren Life and Thought* 23 (Summer 1988): 205–17; idem, "Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Brethren Millennialisms," 112–23; idem, "Changes and Partings: Divisions in the Progressive/Grace Brethren Church," *Brethren Life and Thought* 42 (Summer–Fall 1997): 180–98.

The Progressive Brethren (whose existence as a distinct denomination extends only back to 1882, when they splintered from the Schwarzenau or German Baptist Brethren) did not survive long as a unified group.²¹ As was true in many of the leading denominations of the early twentieth century, theological liberalism infiltrated the ranks of the key Brethren denominational institution of higher education, Ashland College (a college founded by the German Baptist Brethren in 1878 and reincorporated twice in 1888 as a Progressive Brethren institution, barely having survived the 1882 denominational schism and some ensuing financial woes). John Lewis Gillen, most vilified, perhaps, for his proposal to replace the Bible with experience as the final authority in matters of faith, is often cited for actively bringing liberal theology to Ashland just after the turn of the century.²² Many grass roots pastors of the Brethren Church objected sharply (particularly those in southern California and the Philadelphia regions), and their objections led to the 1921 adoption of the “Message of the Brethren Ministry,” an unambiguously fundamentalist (though not dispensational) statement authored by McClain.²³

It was under the false security of this “official” doctrinal position that McClain agreed in 1925 to teach at Ashland and to help organize a graduate program there. Unfortunately, McClain was frustrated in his attempts by an unreceptive administration, and left the school in 1927 to teach Christian Doctrine at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles.²⁴ Here McClain pursued his dream of a seminary with his mentor, Bauman, and plans were made to establish the new work in the

²¹It is important to note here that the Brethren group under discussion here is unrelated to J. N. Darby’s Plymouth Brethren, who are responsible for formulating the modern expression of dispensational theology. Darby’s group was English/Irish in origin and was initially composed largely from disillusioned Anglicans. The Progressive Brethren emerged in 1881–82 in the U.S. as part of a three-way split of the German Baptist Brethren: the Old German Baptist Brethren (ultra-conservative), the Church of the Brethren (moderate, or in that day labeled “conservative”), and the Brethren Church (progressive). It is the last of these groups, distinguished for their toleration of modern innovations of dress, lifestyle, and worship, that is in view here. For a helpful summary of various Brethren groups, see Ronald J. Gordon, “Brethren Groups” <http://www.cob-net.org/docs/groups.htm>, September 1997, last updated July 2011, accessed 26 October 2012.

²²Clouse, “Changes and Partings,” 182–83; idem, “Brethren and Modernity,” 208; Plaster, *Finding Our Focus*, 91; McClain, “Background and Origin,” 11.

²³McClain, “Background and Origin,” 12. Interestingly, it was not until 1969 that the “Statement of Faith of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches” replaced the “Message of the Brethren Ministry” as its doctrinal statement, rendering dispensationalism an “official” doctrinal position of the Grace Brethren. These two statements, along with the 1937 “Covenant of Faith” of Grace Theological Seminary (a dispensational document), can be secured in many places, but are conveniently collocated at <http://www.gracebrethren.info/sof/default.htm>, accessed 26 October 2012.

²⁴McClain wrote, “I repeat here that the sole reason for my leaving Ashland was ill health” (*Brethren Evangelist*, 25 June 1927, 3). In 1951, however, he would write of himself in the third person that “he resigned... because of ill health and dissatisfaction with the situation and prospects there” (“Background and Origin,” 12).

facilities of the Long Beach church. Ashland's president, Edwin Jacobs, fearing that funds would be diverted from the college to the proposed new seminary, countered with a proposal of an autonomous seminary program at Ashland that McClain would lead.²⁵ Wooed by the generous offer, McClain returned to Ashland. His hopes would again be deferred, for while the seminary flourished, disdain and administrative obstructions from college board members, administrators, and faculty, and a flouting of the official doctrinal standards by the same caused animosity to build. Bauman contributed to the fray in 1936 by resigning (along with Charles H. Ashman) from the board and organizing the dispersal of an "open letter" of complaint to Charles Anspach (then president of Ashland) among the Brethren.²⁶ The following year, both McClain and Herman A. Hoyt were dismissed from the faculty, and nearly the entire seminary student body followed these two men, together with Homer A. Kent Sr.²⁷ in starting a new seminary in Akron, OH.

Excursus: The Literature of the 1937–1939 Brethren Division

In analyzing this string of events, it is necessary for the purpose of this essay to ask whether McClain's dispensationalism was a factor in (1) the Brethren division or (2) the founding of the new seminary. As we shall see, one can scarcely dispute that dispensationalism played a role in the establishment of the new seminary; the question whether it played a role in the division of Ashland, however, is disputed.

²⁵The "Seminary Transcript" that outlines the details of this program is reproduced "rather fully as they appear in the original manuscript" by McClain in "Background and Origin," 17.

²⁶Dated 16 June 1936. Copies of this letter may be found in both the McClain and Bauman Files, 1936. In its 13 pages are outlined nine points of protest: (1) a "gag rule" imposed against the fundamentalist minority of the Board of Trustees; (2) the "giving of a dominant place on the Board of Trustees to...men...who are not in sympathy either with Brethren doctrines or standards of life"; (3) granting control of Ashland "to men who not only are not Brethren, but who are not even numbered among the Fundamentalist forces outside our Church"; (4) a dual standard of "clean, wholesome, Christian living" that allowed "card playing, dancing, theater-going, the use of tobacco, and, possibly, quaffing the social glass" for secular students, but denied them for ministerial students; (5) engagement by President Anspach himself in movie-going, a practice disapproved even by the "ultra-modernistic" Federal Council of Churches; (6) the administrative censure of seminary students who were distributing tracts on the college campus; (7) the fact that the rift between the college and the seminary was being publicly perpetuated by the college and its officials; (8) the dissolution of the fourth seminary faculty position; and (9) the wresting of control of the college from the hands of its denominational pastors.

²⁷McClain notes that it was only after Kent had agreed in 1936 to fill the fourth seminary faculty position at Ashland that Anspach eliminated the position, causing "great embarrassment" (McClain, "Background and Origin," 24–25).

Grace Brethren Literature Surrounding the Ashland Division

The literature from the Grace group all but excludes dispensational themes from their discussions of the schism, and one can say with certainty that dispensationalism is absent from their official statements.²⁸ Though these documents are filled with clarion calls for a separated life and adherence to *fundamentalist* dogma, *dispensational* dogma is noticeably absent.²⁹ And while many articles in the *Brethren Evangelist* advocated dispensational doctrines during the 1930s, this author could find, with one possible exception, no articles clearly calling the denomination to rally around dispensationalism as essential to biblicism, Christianity, Brethrenism, or even fundamentalism.³⁰

Two documents are of particular note. First, McClain, in his 1935 annual report to the board of the seminary listed no dispensational issues among complaints leveled against the college, listing instead issues such as “faculty worldliness...public drunkenness among the students...contemptuous attitude toward the church and its ministry...[and] questioning the truths of Christianity, and teaching the dogma of evolution.”³¹ He closed with these telling words: “Every

²⁸For instance, the “open letter” discussed above does not mention any dispensational issues. The 1921 “Message of the Brethren Ministry” references the second coming and prophecy in a very general way, but cannot truthfully even be labeled premillennial, let alone dispensational. The only “official” Brethren document connected to the schism that was unequivocally premillennial (though not distinctively dispensational) was, amusingly, the 1933 “Standards of Faith” of Ashland College, formulated in committee by McClain, W. C. Benschhoff, and G. T. Ronk, a trio from which McClain alone would become Grace Brethren (one can read the “Standards of Faith” in their totality, along with McClain’s explanation of their origin and history, in the *Brethren Evangelist*, 5 August 1939, 23–26). See Martin, “Law and Grace,” 232, for a listing of leading Grace and Ashland figures.

²⁹It cannot be denied, of course, that dispensationalism and fundamentalism rose together. This is likely due to the fact both groups held a high view of Scripture. No doubt the dispensationalist call for a literal hermeneutic also resonated with the fundamentalist call for the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. However, it is not fair to speak of dispensationalism as synonymous with fundamentalism, for there have always been a great many non-dispensational fundamentalists. Fundamentalists affirm inerrancy, the validity of the supernatural within history (miracles, the virgin birth, the resurrection, and the Second Coming), the deity of Christ, and his substitutionary atonement; further, they willingly separate from those who fail in these cardinal issues. Dispensationalism, however, has not historically been on the same level as these more critical doctrines (see esp. Rolland D. McCune, “Doctrinal Non-Issues in Historic Fundamentalism,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 [Fall 1996]: 179–80).

³⁰See, e.g., Herman Hoyt, “Distinctive Elements in the Brethren Faith,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 24 October 1936; Charles Ashman, “The Prevailing Church,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 31 July 1937, 11–14; Raymond Gingrich, “Some Tendencies Against Which We Must Guard,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 11 February 1939, 11–14. Even in McClain’s excoriating attack on changes in Ashland’s “Standards of Faith,” in which he described premillennialism as “so dear to the Brethren Church,” he stopped short of calling dispensationalism an essential Brethren dogma (McClain, “The Changed ‘Standards of Faith’ at Ashland College,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 21 January 1939, 12). The “one possible exception” is discussed below.

³¹McClain, “Dean’s Report,” Ashland Theological Seminary, 1935, 9–10.

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.”³² In a second key document, Louis Bauman’s article, “What Has Divided the Brethren Church?” Bauman forcefully denied that the Ashland split was due to dispensational views of the Sermon on the Mount, antinomian legalism, or Calvinism; citing instead (1) modernism in Ashland College, (2) free-masonry, and (3) personal animosities.³³

It would be remiss, at this point, for the author to ignore an article by Bauman that seems to militate against this conclusion. In it, Bauman gives some evidence that, at least in his mind, the denial of dispensational truth contributed to theological liberalism. Note the following words published just three months before the Ashland division:

The anti-dispensationalist spiritualizes everything. The virgin birth is spiritual; the atoning blood is spiritual; the resurrection is spiritual; the ascension is spiritual; the antichrist is spiritual and the devil is spiritual; heaven is spiritual and hell is spiritual. The anti-dispensationalist vaporizes everything from the virgin birth in Bethlehem to the Davidic throne in Jerusalem.³⁴

These comments suggest that Bauman’s view of a dispensationalist as fundamentally a *literalist* causes him at least to associate non-dispensationalism with modernism. However, note his admission in the same article of a category of “partial dispensationalists,” i.e., theologians who

believe in common with the dispensationalist in a literal virgin birth, blood atonement, bodily resurrection, bodily ascension, bodily coming again, a literal devil, a literal hell, and a literal heaven; but he joins with the anti-dispensationalist in the business of spiritualizing the plain statements of the Word of God as to the throne of David, and all that applies to the future restoration of that throne....³⁵

In view of these comments, it is probably safe to say that Bauman held that non-dispensational anti-literalism, *when pressed to its logical conclusion, tends* to theological liberalism, while dispensational literalism is a sure preventative against theological liberalism. Bauman’s identification of non-dispensationalism with theological liberalism is not absolute—being a non-dispensationalist does not receive the same censure

³²Ibid., 11.

³³Louis S. Bauman, “What Has Divided the Brethren Church?” *Brethren Evangelist*, 2 September 1939, 15–20. See also Alva J. McClain, “Why a New Seminary?” (Grace Theological Seminary, n.d.), 4–7.

³⁴Bauman, “Is Dispensationalism in the Christian’s Bible?” *Brethren Evangelist*, 6 March 1937, 9–12.

³⁵Ibid.

from Bauman that being a modernist does. Were the issue at Ashland *merely* dispensationalism, it is difficult to maintain from Bauman's comments that the split would still have occurred as it did.

Ashland Brethren Literature prior to the Ashland Division

The Ashland and General Conference documents immediately surrounding the Ashland division are likewise devoid of dispensational references. The 1936 General Conference Meeting, in which the denomination first began to involve itself heavily in the fray, was dominated by questions of theological liberalism, the breach of Ashland's (non-dispensational) "Statement of Faith," standards of conduct, and denominational control of Ashland's board.³⁶ The "Report of the National Conference Committee on Investigation of Ashland College" commissioned at this meeting and signed by a "bipartisan" committee of two Ashland men and three Grace men affirmed that the College administration was remiss in its attitude toward spiritual conduct and for allowing its faculty to "openly question statements of the Bible," including the virgin birth, blood atonement, the new birth, and Christ's Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming, but neglecting any reference to dispensational dogma.³⁷ McClain and Hoyt were subsequently dismissed "because of a continued lack of harmony and cooperation between the arts college and seminary, which are essential to the success of the institution,"³⁸ a dismissal prompted by McClain's dogged reference "again and again" to the flouting of Ashland's statement of faith by Ashland personnel and his ensuing request to remove the seminary from the college, dividing the endowments and library between the two.³⁹ William S. Bell, an Ashland leader, likewise insisted in early 1939 that this was "not a controversy of faith and doctrine."⁴⁰

³⁶McClain, "Background and Origin," 25.

³⁷W. H. Schaffer, C. A. Stewart, R. F. Porte, Ed Wolf, and Henry V. Wall, "Report of the National Conference Committee on Investigation of Ashland College," delivered 25 August 1937. A copy of this document may be viewed among the Bauman files for that year.

³⁸"Report of the Board Investigating Committee," as cited in the "Further Report of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Ashland College," *Brethren Evangelist*, 31 July 1937, 17. Note also a wealth of Ashland reports and statements cited in chap. 17 of A. T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church*.

³⁹"Further Report of the Meeting," 17. McClain's evaluation of the reason was as follows: "In neither the official action of the board nor the letters of dismissal was there any specific charge of any kind whatsoever, either against Dean McClain or Professor Hoyt [and a glance at these letters, preserved in the McClain files, reveals this analysis to be correct]. The board's published version referred vaguely to a lack of harmony between college and seminary, but made no attempt to explain what the problem was or who was responsible. Basically, of course, there was only one problem—the problem of Christian faith...[reflected in the] school's own 'Statement of Faith.'" (McClain, "Background and Origin," 28).

⁴⁰W. S. Bell, "Ways of Peace vs. Ways of Separation," *Brethren Evangelist*, 4 February 1939, 12; see also idem, "Who Are the Disturbers of the Peace in the Brethren Church?" (Ashland, OH: Brethren Loyalty Association, n.d.) for Bell's

Ashland Brethren Literature after the Ashland Division

After the Ashland division escalated in 1939 toward the split of the denomination, a change occurred in the writings of the Ashland loyalists. These men, who to this point had ignored (and in some cases even embraced) dispensationalism, began painting dispensationalism as the major culprit in the Ashland division. Appealing to the historical Brethren way of “obedience to all of Christ’s commands,” the Ashland Brethren maintained that one of the foremost reasons for the split was the Grace Brethren dispensational denial that the whole Bible, and specifically the Sermon on the Mount, was directly applicable to the NT church.⁴¹ George T. Ronk gave the most comprehensive early statement of this explanation for the denominational split in his four-part series in the *Brethren Evangelist*, “The Antinomian Controversy in the Brethren Church.” In this article he raised alarm that the dispensational denial of the present-day applicability of the Sermon of the Mount undercut the traditional Brethren doctrine of pacifism.⁴² McClain gave a scathing reply to the first (and most significant) article of this series, dismantling Ronk’s claims as “horrible slander,” rebuking Ronk for allowing this so-called “antinomianism” to go unchecked for years without ever expressing disapproval, and suggesting that Ronk “made up the whole story when he ran out of legitimate arguments.”⁴³ Martin summarizes McClain’s position well: “Touting the Golden Rule, baptism, and the Sermon on the Mount was merely an attempt to skirt the real issue of the ‘separated life’...by a vague appeal to a general Christian ethic, an ill-defined and therefore useless, life of love.”⁴⁴

Another late-emerging doctrinal reason from the Ashland men for the split was McClain’s “extreme Calvinism—dispensational Calvinism,”⁴⁵ or, in G. T. Ronk’s words, “radical Calvinism in its most

analysis of the division at Ashland.

⁴¹W. S. Bell, “A Separatist Movement,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 18 March 1939, 6; Claud Studebaker, “Standards of Faith,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 18 February 1939, 4–6. It is interesting to note that dispensational eschatology was not a concern. Brenda B. Colijn, in her historical discussion of eschatology among the Brethren, for instance, notes, “Before their split in 1939, those who became the Brethren Church and those who became the Grace Brethren shared a similar dispensational eschatology, differing only in their emphases” (“The End Times Among Evangelical Brethren Today,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 46 [Winter–Spring 2001]: 125).

⁴²*Brethren Evangelist*, 15 April 1939, 6–10; 20 May 1939, 6–11; 17 June 1939, 7–13; 12 August 1939, 7–13.

⁴³Alva J. McClain, “Brother Ronk’s Antinomian Antinomy,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 20 May 1939, 15–17.

⁴⁴Martin, “What Has Divided the Brethren Church?” 115.

⁴⁵A. T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church*, 447. This accusation is leveled despite the absence of any reference to dispensationalism or Calvinism in the whole of his chapter on the Ashland division.

violent, aggressive historic form,” reminiscent of Ann Hutchinson and the Salem Witchcraft.⁴⁶ By this was essentially meant McClain’s affirmation of (1) salvation that was not dependent on Brethren ordinances and traditional piety and (2) eternal security that was not connected to works. The latter proved to be the most scurrilous to the Ashland group. Note the following charges: “The essence of this incredible innovation...apparently lies in the adoption of the foreign doctrine, ‘Once saved always saved, Once in grace, always in grace,’ recently renamed ‘Eternal Security.’”⁴⁷ And also, “Many of those in the Grace group have emphasized the doctrine of ‘Eternal Security,’...which I understand to mean, that a person who has accepted Christ as Lord and Savior can never be lost. In other words, it is impossible for such a one to be lost, no matter what he may do.”⁴⁸ McClain’s reply to this novel charge was masterful, demonstrating first that Bell’s jaded understanding of eternal security was radically removed from the orthodox Calvinist understanding of perseverance (citing Hodge at length), then proving that eternal security was a historic Brethren doctrine that had long been taught (and in fact was *still* taught in 1939) at Ashland Seminary.⁴⁹ He further exposed the irony of the charge, noting that the conduct of Ashland students and faculty was far more questionable than that of their Grace Seminary counterparts.⁵⁰ McClain’s most devastating rejoinder, however, was the reproduction of a lengthy portion of his own notes on Christian Doctrine that were then being taught at Grace Seminary—notes that rendered Bell’s comments groundless:

The doctrine of Eternal Security does not mean that a person who believes will be saved, no matter what he does. Such a doctrine would break down all morality, contradict the moral requirements of the Bible, and empty salvation of its ethical meaning. Christ came to save his people *from* their sins, not *in* them. Such passages as Eph. 5:5–6, Phil. 3:18–19, and Heb. 10:26–29 declare very plainly the certain doom of those who continue in the practice of sin or open apostasy, no matter who they are.

But positively, the doctrine of Eternal Security does mean that God secures the final salvation of all true believers, and by means of this very security He keeps us from that practice of sin or apostasy which would lead surely to perdition. And when we say that God secures our salvation, we mean that He secures the *present* salvation as well as the future, that He secures our *continuous* salvation as well as the final, and also secures the *means* as well as the end.

Like many other Biblical truths, there are two distinct sides to the truth

⁴⁶G. T. Ronk, “Antinomian Controversy, section 1,” 10.

⁴⁷Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸Bell, “Separatist Movement,” 5. See also Robert F. Porte, “Theology and Theologians,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 18 March 1939, 8–9.

⁴⁹Alva J. McClain, “‘Eternal Security’ and the Brethren Church,” *Brethren Evangelist*, 15 April 1939, 14–16.

⁵⁰Ibid., 17.

of Eternal Security: First, on God's side, He *preserves* the believer. Second, on our side, we must *persevere*. These two things always go together, and to neglect either will get us into trouble. But we must never forget that our perseverance is the result of God's preservation. We persevere because God preserves us. "*Work out your own salvation....for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*" (Phil. 2:12–13). Compare also I John 3:9, Jude 21 with 24, and 2 Tim. 2:19, for the relation of these two sides of the truth.⁵¹

McClain closed this section by noting that "the doctrine of Security..., as held by the various great Reformed Churches [is] as many of us have taught it for many years in the Brethren Church."⁵²

In representative summary, we finally note that, despite W. S. Bell's strong affirmation in February, 1939, that the Brethren split was "not a controversy of faith and doctrine,"⁵³ he affirmed a scant month later, "after making a careful review and deeper study of the divided and disturbing situation in the church," that the controversy was theological after all, and based on new Grace Brethren views of salvation, eternal security, and dispensational teachings.⁵⁴ This sudden reversal was endemic among the Ashland Brethren, casting doubt on the ethics of their argument, and rendering them guilty of a revisionist manipulation that more than merits McClain's remark that "various and sometimes desperate attempts on the part of the College faction have been made to divert the attention of the churches away from the original issue, which has always been the liberalistic tendencies of that institution."⁵⁵ Despite continued insistence among Brethren historians that dispensationalism and Calvinism were major factors in the Brethren divisions of the 1930s,⁵⁶ the documents of the period show that the controversy was solely about theological liberalism.

A Brief Survey of the Founding of Grace Seminary

Interestingly, much of the literature announcing the new seminary at Akron, OH, also omits dispensational emphasis. Included within the literature under scrutiny are the open letter of introduction for the

⁵¹Ibid., 15.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Bell, "Ways of Peace," 12.

⁵⁴Bell, "Separatist Movement," 5–6. He made this evaluation even while conceding that there were dispensationalists on both sides of the controversy (6).

⁵⁵McClain, "'Eternal Security' and the Brethren Church," 14.

⁵⁶In addition to Ronk, *History of the Brethren*, 447, see Stoffer, *Background and Development*, 218–19; 226–27. In a surprising revision of Kent's *Conquering Frontiers*, even David Plaster, longtime instructor at Grace Seminary, includes Calvinism, premillennialism, and dispensationalism as theological factors in the Ashland division (Plaster, *Finding Our Focus: A Revision and Continuation of Conquering Frontiers by Dr. Homer A. Kent, Sr.*, 97–98). These factors are absent from Kent's earlier treatment of the controversy.

new seminary by A. V. Kimmell, president of the Brethren Biblical Seminary Association,⁵⁷ a 16-page introductory pamphlet by the same association,⁵⁸ and a one-page statement, “Why Grace Seminary,” by the president of the new student body.⁵⁹ From these representative documents, it seems evident that the early Grace Brethren were not inclined to divide the denomination over dispensational distinctives.

However, once free to write their own doctrinal standards, the Grace Brethren were pleased to include dispensational elements. Listed among the Grace Seminary’s “ideals” on the cover of the pamphlet containing its 1937 “Covenant of Faith” is “5. A Premillennial Hope and Viewpoint,” an ideal that is fleshed out in the covenant itself to include a pretribulational “translation” of the Church and a literal 1,000-year reign.⁶⁰ Likewise, Grace’s first *Bulletin* lists “the Premillennial Hope and viewpoint” as one of Grace’s distinctives.⁶¹

In conclusion, the historical data suggests (without any objection that this author could find), that dispensationalism, while not the greatest of the factors underlying the establishment of Grace Seminary, was nonetheless integral to Grace’s founding.

A Brief Summary of Distinctively Grace Brethren Dispensational Emphases As Drawn from the Historical Data through 1939

The dispensationalism that marked those men who were to become the leaders of the new Grace Brethren group was derived from the same sources that contributed to the mainstream dispensationalism of the day, whose foremost scholarly expression is found in the literature of Dallas Theological Seminary. There was a common fondness for Scofield, a participation in common dispensational Bible institutes of the early twentieth century (e.g., Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Philadelphia School of the Bible, Moody Bible Institute, etc.), a

⁵⁷Dated 12 August 1937. The second paragraph of this letter reads, “The new *Seminary* is made necessary by the tendency toward liberalism, which is the opening wedge of Modernism, in Ashland College and by the changing of the constitution by the Board of trustees which makes it impossible for the church to elect trustees to correct this menacing situation.”

⁵⁸The Brethren Biblical Seminary Association, sponsor, “Why a New Seminary?” n.d. Available in the McClain files (Winona Lake, IN: Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary).

⁵⁹John H. Squires, “Why Grace Seminary?” (Akron, OH, n.d.), likewise available in the McClain files.

⁶⁰Untitled pamphlet headed, “Grace Theological Seminary” (Ellet [Akron], OH, n.d.), most of which is dedicated to Grace’s “Covenant of Faith.” This pamphlet was apparently circulated in 1937 as an introduction to the new seminary.

⁶¹*Grace Theological Seminary Bulletin* 1 (October 1937). Premillennialism is listed in addition to “all the great fundamental truths of the Christian Faith,” language that indicates that while premillennialism was surely a Grace distinctive, it did not rank as one of the “fundamentals of the Christian faith” in the minds of the founders.

common influence of key dispensational persons (e.g., Torrey, Moorehead, Gaebelein, Pierson, Gray, etc.), and a common abhorrence of Modernism. It is thus impossible to identify the Grace Brethren as promoting a separate species of dispensationalism. However, distinctive emphases do emerge.

First, Grace's was a dispensationalism that was deeply and systemically connected with the fundamentalist expression of a separated life. While a pure life was stressed, to a greater or lesser degree, among many early dispensationalist groups, the "traditional Brethren emphasis on non-conformity to the world" made Grace's emphasis on separatist behavior as a necessary product of new birth particularly pronounced.⁶² The antinomian charges foisted upon the early Grace Brethren may have been appropriate for some dispensationalists both then and now, but McClain's emphasis on perseverance seems to have set a direction for Grace Seminary that steered it away from the rejection of "perseverance" in lieu of mere "preservation" that emerged at Dallas Seminary and other dispensational venues.⁶³

At the same time, due to their aversion to the legalism of the Ashland Brethren from which they separated, the Grace Brethren seemed more than usually concerned about the "two ways of salvation" that Scofield had carelessly introduced into his original Study Bible.⁶⁴

Third, though the Grace Brethren version of dispensationalism was heavily influenced by Keswick teaching, Stoffer notes that dispensationalism and Keswick were introduced separately and not as an essential package.⁶⁵ Homer Kent, Jr., also informed the author in an interview that, while Keswick understandings of sanctification involving the "carnal Christian" were accepted at Grace, they were "never that big a deal," and that nothing like Lewis Sperry Chafer's practice at Dallas Seminary of beginning each year with a chapel series developing his distinctive view of sanctification ever occurred at Grace.⁶⁶

Fourth and finally, while McClain presented a far more structured

⁶²Clouse, "Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Brethren Millennialisms," 119.

⁶³In particular the author has in mind the "non-lordship" salvation emphasis that was maintained throughout the 1980s and 90s by many at Dallas Seminary, and is epitomized by Zane Hodges and his Grace Evangelical Society.

⁶⁴Note for instance, in the committee meetings for the *New Scofield Reference Bible* [hereafter *NSRB*], that McClain was at the fore in calling for a change to the notorious note on p. 1115 in the 1909/1917 edition of Scofield's Bible that suggests that OT saints were saved by works. The rewriting of the note, in fact, was assigned to him (see the *Transcriptions of the Meetings of the New Scofield Reference Bible Editorial Committee*, 32 vols. [Winona Lake, IN: Morgan Library, Grace College and Seminary, 2004], 23:26–28).

⁶⁵Stoffer, *Background and Development*, 184; I. D. Bowman, *Brethren Evangelist*, 21 November 1901, 11.

⁶⁶Interview with Homer A. Kent, Jr., 19 July 2004. Cf. John Walvoord's introduction to Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), [5].

theology than was common within the non-creedal Brethren denomination,⁶⁷ his dispensational structure was not as elaborate as most dispensationalists of his day.⁶⁸ This may explain why the faculty of Grace Seminary proved quicker to reject Chafer's two new covenant view, kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven distinction, strong emphasis on Keswick theology, and strict discontinuities of the Spirit's work of regeneration and indwelling in the OT as *essential* dispensational doctrines.

DISTINCTIVE EMPHASES IN ALVA J. MCCLAIN'S DISPENSATIONALISM

It has already been established that McClain's dispensationalism does not differ radically from that of other prevailing dispensational voices of his day. However, some distinctions do surface. A key source for discovering these is the *Transcriptions of the Meetings of the New Scofield Reference Bible Editorial Committee*, recently made available in 32 volumes from the aging originals in McClain's papers by the Morgan Library staff at Grace Theological Seminary.⁶⁹ In these volumes about a dozen of the leading dispensationalists of the day discussed together and revised Scofield's notes for a new edition of the study Bible that was eventually released in 1967.⁷⁰ While McClain's theology can be only selectively discovered from this source,⁷¹ two key issues (and a few lesser emphases) emerge as distinctive to McClain—views which he persistently maintained in the face of some opposition. These issues will supply the outline for this section.

McClain's View of the Kingdom

McClain is perhaps best known for his distinctive view of the kingdom, which eventually became the subject of his longest published

⁶⁷See, e.g., Stoffer, *Background and Development*, 185.

⁶⁸Consult McClain's comments in the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, 23:27. When requested to prepare the above dispensational note, McClain demurred, saying, "Frankly, I'm no expert in the field of dispensations."

In the author's interview with Kent (19 July 2004), he noted that, if there was a real distinction between early Grace theology and early Dallas theology, it was here. He mused that Chafer's dispensationalism seemed more rigidly structured than McClain's, and seemed to force dispensational themes into their exegesis and onto unrelated points of doctrine where they were not warranted. He hastened to add, however, that this was only a personal perception, and offered no substantive examples.

⁶⁹See *supra*, n. 64.

⁷⁰Though only nine men were named as part of the official editorial committee, a few other men participated in the meetings.

⁷¹Not only was McClain silent in some of the discussions, he also missed, due to illness, one of the key meetings (Trans. K, 20–23 April 1960, filling vols. 27–29 of the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*) in which the main discussion of the NT from Acts–Revelation took place.

work, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. The prevailing dispensational view of the kingdom of McClain's day, as reflected in the "Old" Scofield reference notes (and defended among the participants of the New Scofield Reference Bible Committee by John Walvoord) was that there were two distinct kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. The former was spiritual and eternal; the latter physical and Messianic. McClain's alternative scheme, which is sometimes misunderstood as a mere relabeling of these kingdoms,⁷² had several major differences. It is hoped that the following discussion will successfully disclose some of those distinctions.⁷³

First, though McClain suggests that while "in one sense it would not be wholly wrong to speak of *two kingdoms* revealed in the Bible,"⁷⁴ these are not totally separate kingdoms, but a single kingdom with two aspects: (1) a *universal* kingdom that is to one degree or another rendered and (2) a *mediatorial* kingdom by the introduction of various human vice-regents. McClain notes that "the first refers to the extent of rule and the latter to the method of rule."⁷⁵ The lexical distinction (of God/of heaven) is overstated and should not be used to press the idea of separate "kingdoms."⁷⁶

Second, the *mediatorial* kingdom for McClain is broader in scope than the eschatological *millennial* kingdom.⁷⁷ For Scofield and Chafer, in particular, the kingdom of heaven was offered in Christ's earthly ministry and rejected, resulting in a distinct "mystery form" of the kingdom in its place.⁷⁸ For McClain, the mediatorial kingdom began

⁷²This author is convinced, having read several pertinent sections from the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, that McClain's view was fully understood by few if any on that committee.

⁷³Herbert W. Bateman has a similar discussion in "Dispensationalism Yesterday and Today," 23–31. His discussion, however, covers the distinctions between the "Old" Scofield view and the collective view of the *NSRB* Committee. This paper is more interested in McClain's own view, and not the view represented in the New Scofield Reference notes. As we shall see, the *NSRB* notes reflect an amalgamated position, or, better, a compromise position that really reflects neither Walvoord's view nor McClain's view.

⁷⁴McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 21.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., 20–21. McClain notes the "kingdom of heaven" motif used in the Gospels "acquires its significance solely in relation to the Old Testament prophetic concept," and is ablative in meaning—it is the visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God that incidentally comes *from* heaven (ibid., 279).

⁷⁷McClain writes, "The Mediatorial Kingdom may be defined tentatively as: (a) the rule of God through a divinely chosen representative who not only speaks and acts for God but also represents the people before God; (b) a rule which has especial reference to the earth; and (c) having as its mediatorial ruler one who is always a member of the human race" (ibid., 41).

⁷⁸C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), notes on Matt 3:2 and 6:33; Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:173; 5:315–58. For Scofield there seems to be no OT expression of the kingdom of heaven, its "forms" being restricted to (1) its "at hand" form during Christ's earthly ministry, (2) its

with Abraham/Moses but was interrupted when the last of the Davidic kings died and the Shekinah Glory departed.⁷⁹ Thence began a period of prophecy that culminated in the rejection of Christ, an event that inaugurated an *inter-regnum* to last until Christ's Second Coming.⁸⁰ For McClain, this period is not a new and separate "mystery form" of the kingdom of heaven as advocated by Scofield and the early Dallas school of thought. Instead, the "mystery" was a divinely preordained change in God's *universal* kingdom program: a new dispensation unrelated to national Israel and thus disconnected from her mediatorial kingdom. The Davidic/mediatorial kingdom is wholly future, having neither a "spiritual" nor a "mystery" form today, and is in complete abeyance until the Messiah takes up the Davidic throne in the Millennial Kingdom.

These details should not divert attention, however, from the real genius of McClain's view of the kingdom: it created a comprehensive view of the kingdom of God through history, successfully creating a unifying principle for a dispensationalism that was regularly characterized (and perhaps rightly so in some expressions) as pessimistic, lacking in continuity, and suggestive of a God whose decree is alterable and unfixed. In Mark Bailey's words, McClain "refuted the charges that dispensationalists hold a pessimistic view of history and lack a unifying plan to understand the Scriptures."⁸¹

While some members on the *NSRB* Committee had taken a step toward McClain's view by recognizing problems in Scofield's kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven scheme,⁸² no one else advocated an alternative as complete as McClain's. Walvoord, however, was unwilling even to take this first step.⁸³ The inevitable clash between Walvoord,

"mystery form," and (3) its "prophetic aspect" (*Scofield Reference Bible*, note on Matt 3:2). Chafer allows for six "forms" and "modes of manifestation" of this kingdom of heaven extending from the OT to the present age—the theocratic form, the covenant form, the prophetic form, the kingdom of heaven offered, the kingdom of heaven rejected and postponed, the mystery form, and the full manifestation (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:326–27).

⁷⁹McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 126.

⁸⁰Ibid., 321. McClain has been attributed with the introduction of this term to dispensationalism in his *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 321 (see, e.g., Stephen J. Nichols, "The Dispensational View of the Davidic Kingdom: A Response to Progressive Dispensationalism," *TMSJ* 7 [Fall 1996]: 224). Whether he was the first to use the term is difficult to verify.

⁸¹Mark L. Bailey, "Dispensational Definitions of the Kingdom," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands: Biblical Leadership Studies in Honor of Donald K. Campbell*, ed. Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 210–11.

⁸²Clarence Mason, in fact, advocated complete synonymy. We must concede that George Ladd's critique in his *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 107–17, for all its anti-dispensational rhetoric, frankly devastated the view that held the kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God were distinct.

⁸³In fact, he was advocating the distinction as late as 1982 in his "New Testament

Mason, and McClain is one of the liveliest in the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, covering some nine pages of unresolved wrangling in the November 1958 meeting⁸⁴ and twenty-four more the following April.⁸⁵ While McClain entered into the 1958 discussion only minimally,⁸⁶ he was quite active in the latter. His chief objection then, however, was not primarily Walvoord's lexical contrast between the kingdom of heaven/God;⁸⁷ instead, he focused his comments on defending the sovereignty of God as ruling over "everybody: willing and unwilling" in his universal kingdom in opposition to Walvoord, a theme he reiterated again and again.⁸⁸ In this author's opinion, the logic of McClain's arguments were lost on the committee, who were ultimately content to maintain much of Walvoord's system, content merely to tone down Scofield's language, eliminating the terms of stark distinction and replacing them with milder, less definite language, a compromise that won a majority (but apparently not a unanimous) vote.⁸⁹

McClain also figured prominently in the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee* in the discussion of the "mystery" of Matthew 13, making efforts to replace the "mystery form" of the kingdom with the "mystery aspect" of the kingdom,⁹⁰ and the idea of a mere "interval" with the idea of an "inter-regnum."⁹¹ He also protested that Walvoord's proposed language unduly included the Church in the mediatorial kingdom.⁹²

Doctrine of the Kingdom," *BSac* 139 (July–September 1982): 206.

⁸⁴*Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, 19:78–86.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 23:170–81; 244–55.

⁸⁶The chief point of discussion here was Mason's proposal that the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God distinction be dropped entirely. Walvoord objected strenuously and at great length. Culbertson finally closed the discussion with the following comment: "May I suggest that I agree with what Dr. Walvoord said to this extent, that whatever we do ought to be in keeping with what Scofield has done" (19:86).

⁸⁷McClain infers, in fact, that had did not fully abandon all distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven himself (*Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, 23:176–77).

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 23:172. As I have noted above, this is the real genius of McClain's view of the kingdom. In this author's view, however, the committee members never gave evidence that they really grasped the essence and import of McClain's view.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 253. Mason said, "Oh, I'll accept them," and Gaebelein acquiesced, saying, "I think he has done the very best he can do [referring to Walvoord's concessions]. But I would be much happier if there was mention made of the other view [Mason's or McClain's?]." E. Schuyler English finally put the issue to rest by saying "We've got a majority vote, we have to move on" (even while being interrupted by Mason and McClain asking for documentation of what had just transpired).

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 19:180–81.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 19:165–69.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 19:173–74.

Likewise, McClain's attempts to insert theocratic kingdom language in the OT also met with opposition from Walvoord. Having aired his understanding that the theocratic kingdom extended from Moses to the departure of the Shekinah glory, McClain was assigned by English to write a note on the topic at Judges 21:25, to which Walvoord responded, "I'm not sure I agree with the idea."⁹³

Similarly, McClain's attempts to impose his optimistic views of divine sovereignty with respect to the kingdom were met with Walvoord's disapproval. Reacting to the heading at 1 Samuel 8:6, "God's direct theocracy rejected," McClain protested that the theocracy continued, and that "God didn't just acquiesce." Walvoord replied, "The text says that: 'They have rejected me that I should not rule over them.'" To this McClain responded, "I don't want to waste time here to explain, but you're missing something there."⁹⁴

In summary, while McClain did not offer a dispensationalism that was different from that of the leading dispensationalists of his day, his view of the kingdom stressed a *unity* in the divine program in an era where *variety* was more the dispensational norm. And by avoiding multiplied "forms" of the kingdom, McClain's few disciples seem to have been insulated from the "already/not yet" rubric of progressive dispensationalism.

McClain's View of Law and Grace

It has already been noted in the historical section above that McClain battled both legalism among the Ashland Brethren and charges of antinomianism from the same group. These battles led to a well-developed view of the Christian's relationship of law and grace, a view that became the topic of McClain's only other book-length theological contribution.⁹⁵

In his book, McClain begins with two premises. First, the "law," as it appears in the NT, almost always refers to the entire "written Mosaic law," complete with all its sanctions, under which Christ lived and died, and as summarized in the Sermon on the Mount.⁹⁶ Second, being "under law" as a *means of salvation* is a hopeless situation that is absent in every dispensation.⁹⁷ At this point, however, the discussion

⁹³Ibid., 6:241 with 6:225. McClain got his note, but the wording was modified so much that one wonders whether it should have been included.

⁹⁴Ibid., 6:269. In this instance, McClain won the right to replace the heading and insert an extensive note defending his view of the mediatorial kingdom (see *ibid.*, 6:278–79; 13:6–12). See also McClain's sharp reply to Gaebelien when the latter suggested changes to Scofield's language in Matthew's introduction that might be taken to imply that the "cross was an afterthought" in the plan of God (*ibid.*, 19:56).

⁹⁵McClain, *Law and Grace: A Study of New Testament Concepts As They Relate to the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954).

⁹⁶Ibid., 7–16.

⁹⁷Ibid., 17–23. This theme is reiterated over and over in the book (pp. 24, 30, 44–45, etc.)

becomes more difficult. McClain argues that both Jews and Gentiles were “under law” as a *way of life*, that is, they were obliged to obey its dictates (either written or “on the heart” [Rom 2:11–15]) under pain of its penalties and sanctions,⁹⁸ a condition that persisted into Paul’s day.⁹⁹ What changed in the present dispensation, McClain avers, is that the Christian, having found freedom in Christ in the provisions of the new covenant, is no longer under the law in any sense, either as a *means of salvation* (a situation that has been the case in no dispensation) or as the “sphere of his existence and actions” and thus as a *way of life* (a situation that had been true in the Mosaic dispensation, but is no longer true).¹⁰⁰ Following this discussion, McClain devotes the longest chapter in the book to a discussion of “the standard of life for Christians,” strenuously defending the profitability (though not the direct applicability) of the law as part of the “whole counsel of God,” and advocating perseverance in good conduct as an inevitable *result of* (though never a *means to*) regeneration.¹⁰¹

McClain’s view of being “under law” has been improved in the decades since the writing of this little tome;¹⁰² nonetheless, McClain’s work reflects a level of careful thought and precise expression that was lacking in some early dispensationalist writings. As we have noted, dispensationalists have alternately been accused (1) of advocating two ways of salvation, with the OT means to salvation being suspicious for its emphasis on obedience to the law; and, conversely, (2) of advocating an antinomian lifestyle for NT believers who are free from the law, unrestrained in their behavior, and devoid of any continuing obligation to persevere in faith and good behavior. And although these charges (arguably) cannot honestly be laid at the feet of most dispensationalists throughout the short history of the movement, some incautious and uninformed dispensationalists have no doubt been guilty of these charges and of (wittingly or unwittingly) propagating these errors as dispensational truth.¹⁰³ McClain’s carefully worded treatise did much to remedy this imprecision.

⁹⁸“For one to be ‘under the law’ in the biblical sense is to be under the law of God—the entire Mosaic legal system in its indivisible totality—subject to its commands and liable to its penalties” (ibid., 43).

⁹⁹Ibid., 35–36, 47–49.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 43.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 54–69.

¹⁰²The author personally recommends Douglas Moo’s “The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 203–18, and his later essay, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 319–76.

¹⁰³Scofield’s note on p. 1115 of the 1909/1917 edition of his *Reference Bible* is the most frequently cited of the first of these offenses (but cf. p. 93); and, as has been noted above, Zane Hodges’s Grace Evangelical Society and their collective denial of the inevitability of perseverance might be construed as guilty of the latter.

The topic of law and grace was likewise among McClain's regular contributions to the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*. His objection to Scofield's note on page 1115 has already been referenced above. In addition, McClain also contributed a lengthy revision of Scofield's introductory note on the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5) that maintained the profitability of the Sermon, but not its direct applicability. The note was eventually included (with some revisions) in the *NSRB*, but not before a passionate exchange between McClain and Wilbur Smith, in which Smith said to McClain, "You're just destroying one of the greatest ethical passages for exhortation in all the Gospels."¹⁰⁴ E. Schuyler English took Smith's side and traded words with McClain, an exchange McClain closed by warning English, "Be careful you don't say something that is going to get us into endless trouble on the grounds of legalism."¹⁰⁵ McRae joined the fray by agreeing "a hundred per cent with Dr. McClain's statement."¹⁰⁶ It was Walvoord who played peacemaker on this occasion, giving a lengthy statement that diffused (but probably did not resolve) the tensions.¹⁰⁷

Walvoord, however, would be the target of McClain's objection at the last meeting of the committee. Remarking on a revised note by Walvoord at 2 Corinthians 3:11,¹⁰⁸ McClain objected to Walvoord's statement that "the believer is now 'under the law' to Christ" as a "problem of linguistic conception," noting that Walvoord's appeal to 1 Corinthians 9:21 at this point was "certainly wrong."¹⁰⁹ The idea of being "under the law" for McClain, as we have noted, must mean either under the Mosaic Law *as a means of salvation* (which is never true) or under the Mosaic Law *as a rule of life*.¹¹⁰ Since neither meaning is true for Christians, McClain argued that using "under the law" would be misleading. The situation was resolved by adopting the language of the ASV, "under law," removing the word "the."¹¹¹

In keeping with his emphasis on the inevitability of perseverance apart from the Mosaic Law, McClain was also active in pressing this theme in discussions of passages such as 1 John 3:4, urging the addition of the clause, "a believer not only does not but cannot keep on

¹⁰⁴*Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, 19:98. This is undoubtedly one of the most heated exchanges in the transcriptions: the transcriber, who normally added little to the words of the speakers, resorts here to underlining and exclamation points; McClain "begged pardon" and confessed to "preaching a little bit"; and the chairman interjected, "Are you happy, Dr. McClain?" (*ibid.*, 19:98–99).

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 19:100.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 19:101.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸For the original discussion of which see *ibid.*, 31:98–108.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 32:163–65.

¹¹⁰Cf. *ibid.*, 2:102–3.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 32:165.

practicing sin as a course of life, because of the new nature of God,” an addition that was accepted with minor modification.¹¹²

In summary, McClain’s highly developed understanding of law and grace introduced nothing really “new” to dispensational theology; however, it was quite valuable in shoring up dispensational language that, to this point in history, had often proved at best to be imprecise, and at worst implicit of a works salvation and the denial of perseverance.

Secondary Views Distinctive to McClain

Although not fully developed in McClain’s theology, at least two other themes seem worthy of mention, themes that would later blossom more fully in the ensuing generation of students and faculty at Grace Seminary.

Incipient Presuppositionalism¹¹³

The first of these themes is what I would like to call an incipient presuppositionalism. John Whitcomb, who studied under Cornelius Van Til at the Winona Lake School of Theology, is generally credited with bringing a developed VanTilian apologetic to Grace Seminary.¹¹⁴ However, McClain’s theology also has internal elements that seem to lend themselves to this development.¹¹⁵

For instance, in his “Doctrine of the Scriptures,” McClain notes that “the lines of proof for Inspiration are both numerous and convincing,” but that “the crowning proof of the Bible’s inspiration is found in the testimony of Christ himself,” a topic that covers the next

¹¹²Ibid., 32:193–94.

¹¹³As was stressed in the introduction to this paper, some of the emphases discussed in this essay are not directly related to dispensationalism. Apologetics is one of them. However, these comments seem appropriate in light of Gerstner’s generalization that “dispensationalism is almost anti-philosophical...[and] has not been inclined to philosophize beyond the immediate needs of Biblical verification,” and that “dispensationalism tends to follow the historic or classical apologetic pattern, rather than presuppositionalism, but in a weakened form” (*Wrongly Dividing*, 75, 79). Gerstner does, admittedly, cite Whitcomb as an exception here (80).

¹¹⁴For a survey of Whitcomb’s presuppositionalism, see his 4-part series, “Contemporary Apologetics and the Christian Faith,” *BSac* 134 (April–June 1977): 99–106; (July–September 1977): 195–202; (October–December 1977): 291–98; 135 (January–March): 25–33. These articles are conveniently available for the reader at http://www.whitcombministries.org/documents/defending_bible.html, accessed 26 October 2012.

The interest in VanTilian apologetics was widespread at Grace Seminary, resulting in numerous theses, articles, and at least three doctoral dissertations directly addressing aspects of presuppositional apologetics (Charles M. Horne [1963], Gilbert B. Weaver [1967], and George J. Zemek, Jr. [1982]).

¹¹⁵Please note that this is not to say that McClain at any time became a VanTilian apologist, only that his theology seems inclined in that direction.

seven pages of the outline.¹¹⁶

Likewise, under McClain's discussion on the existence of God, he gives token reference to rational and empirical paths to the knowledge of God, but lists these as "partial, distorted, and inadequate," pointing out that the Bible is "vastly superior" to these means. In the margin of McClain's notes is the following note by a student, arguably from McClain: "Don't go from nature to nature's God, but from nature's God to nature."¹¹⁷

In the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, we also find that McClain proposed a lengthy note on Paul's Mars Hill address that sounds remarkably reflective of themes found in various VanTilian interpretations of the address.¹¹⁸ The note was ultimately rejected by the committee in lieu of a shorter and more impartial note.¹¹⁹

As a final observation, appeal is made to Dennis Martin's analysis of McClain's epistemology: "[McClain's] concept of truth and his firm belief that such truth dare not be compromised left little room for the

¹¹⁶McClain, "Doctrine of Scripture," in "Theology Notes," class notes bound in 3 vols. (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, [middle 1950s]), 3–9. One particularly VanTilian-sounding statement preserved in these pages is as follows: "This testimony cannot be invalidated without logically putting a question mark after all recorded history."

Whether these commitments translated into an embrace of Young Earth Creationism by McClain is a point of some debate. Richard Grant, in an 11 June 1992 letter to John Whitcomb, insisted that McClain did, in fact, embrace the Young Earth cause. In the letter Grant recalls a conversation in the 1960s in which McClain said, "Take that young whippersnapper Whitcomb, in one swoop he has wiped out our Gap Theory—and the humbling part of it is I think he is right. I agree with him. I think he has come up with a better explanation of the passage." On the other hand, Homer Kent informed the author that McClain "was never convinced that the Gap Theory was untenable" (interview, 19 July 2004), and a student of McClain's in the 1960s, Rolland McCune, informed the author in a 21 July 2004 interview that McClain explicitly claimed to be "more convinced than ever" of the viability of the Gap Theory after the release of Whitcomb's magisterial work on young earth creationism (*The Genesis Flood* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1961]). We may never know McClain's final opinion on the matter (and perhaps the disparity reflects a change of opinion). Nonetheless, we must surely concede that McClain's bibliological and apologetical commitments contributed to an atmosphere where young earth creationism was able to flourish at a time when it was being squelched in other quarters. It is not coincidental, then, that the most decisive stroke against the Gap and Pre-Creation Chaos Theories—Weston W. Fields's *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (Collinsville, IL: Burgener Enterprises, 1976)—was originally a Grace Seminary project.

¹¹⁷McClain, "Doctrine of God," in "Theology Notes," class notes bound in 3 vols., Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, [middle 1950s], 6. This note seems strikingly VanTilian, advocating a deductive rather than an inductive approach to ontology and epistemology.

¹¹⁸See, e.g., Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Encounter of Jerusalem with Athens," in *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Texarkana, AR: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 234–76; Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Areopagus Address* (London: Tyndale, 1949); Cornelius Van Til, *Paul at Athens* (Phillipsburg, NJ: L. J. Grotenhuis, n.d.).

¹¹⁹*Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, 31:73–74.

probing, ‘empirical’ approach to truth,”¹²⁰ an analysis that suggests that McClain had presuppositionalist leanings, though he never developed them fully.

Informing Understandings in the Areas of Regeneration and Sanctification

This author could find no evidence that McClain ever abandoned the Chaferian denial of regeneration in the OT, nor especially the denial of permanent indwelling in the OT.¹²¹ In the 1960s, however, a rash of Grace students abandoned this understanding, affirming not only regeneration in the OT, but also indwelling.¹²² In time, affirmation of OT regeneration and indwelling would become increasingly popular at Grace. That this distinctive understanding can be traced to McClain is dubious; however, certain themes in McClain’s theology, in this author’s opinion, may have directed his students toward this conclusion: (1) McClain viewed faith and sanctification as “evidences” of regeneration,¹²³ a view which seems to argue for a necessary connection of regeneration with faith in any era. In McCune’s argument for regeneration in the OT, for instance, he notes,

One of the inseparable effects of regeneration is faith. We may say that faith is the elicited response of the heart to the efficacious grace or effectual call of God. Before Moses or David or any of the saints of the pre-cross era could have faith in God and thus be the “sons of Abraham” (Gal

¹²⁰Martin, “Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary (1921–37): Prelude to Schism,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 21 (Winter 1976): 43.

¹²¹Actually, this author could find no direct statement denying regeneration in the OT in McClain’s writings. The discussions in his class notes on the Holy Spirit and salvation are general, though he does affirm that the Spirit’s OT work was “not general among men” (McClain, “Holy Spirit,” in “Theology Notes,” class notes bound in 3 vols. Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, [middle 1950s], 6). His comments in *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 287, are likewise inconclusive, and in a discussion in the *Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, in which Walvoord, criticizing a note by McClain on John 3, carefully distanced himself from Chafer in affirming OT regeneration, McClain was elusive (*Transcriptions of the NSRB Committee*, 23:37–39). Herman Hoyt, by contrast, was clear and strong in his denial of regeneration in the OT in his work, *The New Birth* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1961), 4. McClain was quite clear, however, that indwelling did not occur in the OT (McClain, “Holy Spirit,” 9).

¹²²The author has in possession a 1962 paper by Rolland McCune at Grace Seminary affirming both regeneration and indwelling in the OT (“Regeneration in the Old Testament,” class paper, O.T. Theology II, 22 May 1962). A Th.M. thesis by the same title and including material very similar to McCune’s paper appeared two years later (John J. Davis, “Regeneration in the Old Testament,” Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1964).

¹²³McClain, “Salvation,” in “Theology Notes,” 48. Note also a monograph by McClain, “Christian Faith—Its Nature, Object, and Intelligible Medium” (McClain Files, Unpublished Manuscripts “C” [Winona Lake, IN: Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary]), in which he describes faith as “an act...which involves the functioning of the entire man” (pp. 1–2).

3:7) they had to first have their sinful natures cleansed and eternal life imparted. Otherwise we are faced with the anomaly of a man, whom the Bible pictures as being in complete inability as far as spiritual things are concerned believing God, being justified, and performing righteous act and spiritual duties.¹²⁴

(2) McClain's strong emphasis on human depravity and the unified idea of salvation in both testaments apart from works seem at odds with the denial of regeneration and indwelling in the OT. In addition to McCune's comments above, note also the following from Davis's thesis:

As was previously noted, a large number of dispensationalists deny that regeneration constituted any part of the salvation experience of the Old Testament saint. In view of this denial, they are left with only two alternatives. Either there are two kinds of depravity in the Bible, one which the Old Testament people experienced and another which the New Testament people experienced, or there are two ways of salvation in the Bible. If the people living after the cross are described as spiritually dead and in absolute need of the regenerating work of the Spirit, then the Old Testament individual by virtue of the same condition (since it pervades the whole human race in the same manner) must be regenerated in order to conform to the demands of a holy God.¹²⁵

McCune takes this another step by arguing that "if regeneration was necessary to all the righteous acts and spiritual life of the Old Testament saints, we may say that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also necessary to the continual exercise of those spiritual functions."¹²⁶

In summary, while there is no evidence forthcoming that McClain ever accepted regeneration and indwelling in the OT, his system of theology lent to this understanding among his students. It is for this reason that the author has included McClain as an informing source to this understanding that would eventually come to characterize the dispensationalism of many Grace Seminary faculty and graduates.

CONCLUSION

In succeeding years, Grace would be on the forefront of other dispensational innovations: Hobart E. Freeman advanced the discussion of the efficacy of sacrifice in the OT,¹²⁷ Homer A. Kent, Jr., was in-

¹²⁴McCune, "Regeneration in the Old Testament," 4, but see also all of pp. 2-9. Both McCune and Davis also argue similarly from the fact of justification in the OT, an argument for which Davis even cites McClain's notes (Davis, "Regeneration in the Old Testament," 99).

¹²⁵Davis, "Regeneration in the Old Testament," 76. Note particularly Davis's contention that the denial of regeneration in the OT destroys either the doctrine of depravity or the doctrine of salvation apart from works in both testaments. McClain, of course, strongly advocated both.

¹²⁶McCune, "Regeneration in the Old Testament," 18.

¹²⁷Hobart E. Freeman, "The Doctrine of Substitution in the Old Testament" (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1961).

strumental in refining and popularizing McGahey's view of the new covenant as a single arrangement to be fulfilled in Israel but participated in soteriologically by the Church,¹²⁸ and one might be so bold as to credit Whitcomb (in addition to his contributions to dispensational presuppositionalism) with laying the first bricks in the foundation of a scholarly structure now known as young earth creationism. But this essay, being a limited survey, must cut the list off somewhere, and I do so with deep apologies to many others I have neglected, those students and faculty members whose contributions through articles, books, and dissertations helped to reinforce Grace's contribution to dispensational scholarship.

These all supplement the initial contributions of Alva J. McClain and the early Grace Brethren that have constituted the bulk of this essay. By way of review, the historical events leading to the founding of Grace Seminary produced a dispensationalism that was (1) more than usually insistent on a separated life as an inevitable product of, but never a contribution to, salvation, (2) one that was less structured than other contemporary expressions of dispensationalism, yet at the same time (3) one that was intrinsically less fragmented than prevailing dispensational schemes. These in turn led to McClain's developed views of law and grace, his universal/mediatorial view of the kingdom that emphasized the unity of the divine program, and also a theology that would prove accommodating in his pupils to views of apologetics, perseverance, and pneumatology that historically appear more in Reformed circles than in dispensational ones.

Having said, this, we must hasten to add that these dispensational variations at Grace Seminary cannot be viewed in any sense as systemic deviations from the essentialist dispensationalism outlined in 1965 by Charles C. Ryrie in his *Dispensationalism Today*.¹²⁹ The dispensationalism of McClain and early Grace Seminary never diverged from Ryrie's *sine qua non* of a literal hermeneutic, a fundamental distinction between Israel and the Church, and a doxological unifying principle for all God's activity.¹³⁰

Traditional dispensationalism has been enriched rather than fragmented by the variations and microevolutionary developments introduced by McClain and his school. It is only fitting that they should be awarded a distinguished place in the history of dispensationalism.

¹²⁸Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1972), *passim*; idem, "The New Covenant and the Church," *GTJ* 6 (Fall 1985): 289–98; cf. John F. McGahey, "An Exposition of the New Covenant" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1957). Kent also informed the author in a personal interview that McClain was sympathetic toward this understanding as well (19 July 2004).

¹²⁹Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 43–47.

¹³⁰In fact, in this author's opinion, McClain did much to strengthen the last of these points.