Faith and Fruition in Finance

William E. Savage

It has been my privilege to work in close association with Dr. Julian C. McPheeters for the past sixteen years, and to do so in several relationships. One major impression bears itself upon my thinking as I recall the association of this period of time: in him I have witnessed a man of God and a man of prayer at work.

At the request of Mrs. Henry Clay Morrison, I was elected to the Board of Trustees of Asbury Theological Seminary in 1945. It was her thought that I might be able to help guide the financial affairs of the small but growing Seminary into which she and her late husband had poured so much of their lives. It has always been a humbling thought to me, that Dr. Frank P. Morris resigned from the Board of Trustees in order to make a place for me. Never have I felt in any sense worthy to fill his shoes in this office.

In 1946 it became increasingly evident that Asbury Theological Seminary must, under God's guidance, expand; and I came to the Seminary in that year as Business Manager, under request that I help oversee the building program and the financial development of the institution. Dr. J. C. McPheeters, as pastor of the Glide Memorial Methodist Church in San Francisco, was still living in California at that time, and commuting between San Francisco and Wilmore to care for his duties as president of the Seminary.

The original plans for the building program called for one new building, but the Seminary was growing so rapidly that before construction could be undertaken it became clear that three new buildings would be needed almost at once. The decision therefore was made to plan for these three. At that time we had plans and funds in view for the one building only. The Committee discussed this matter with Dr. McPheeters and asked for his opinion. His reply was typical of his vision: he said he felt there was but one way for us to travel, and that was forward. His proposal was that we could move ahead in
simple trust in God for the resources to complete the larger building program. So, as a matter of faith we began the construction of two buildings at once, namely, the administration building and the Bettie Morrison apartment building. Shortly afterward, plans were made for Estes Chapel and for the heating plant; and construction of these followed.

Dr. McPheeters gave masterful leadership in the program of expansion. Being in touch with Higher Headquarters, he supplied a strong faith when times were rough. He never lost the sense of working under the leadership of the Holy Spirit; and under that impetus, he pushed ahead the total building program as essential to the ongoing of the institution. His vision has been a large and vital element in the making of Asbury Theological Seminary what it is today--a strong Seminary, proclaiming without apology the essentials of our Christian faith.

The necessity of operating at times in terms of the most strict economy made the entire leadership lean very heavily upon God in faith. There were days of severe difficulty and testing. There were times when we came to the end of the week without the funds in sight to meet our weekly payroll, but God always supplied our needs. Dr. McPheeters never faltered or lost his sense of faith and optimism during these very difficult days. He always counselled going the second mile on faith, and God did not fail us; it was He who gave victory in the building program and saw it through to completion.

The problems connected with the growth of the young and struggling Seminary have not always been in the area of buildings and finance; but in meeting problems in other aspects of the life of the institution, Dr. McPheeters has exemplified the same faith in God and in his fellow man. His strong faith and his contagious optimism in all phases of his service comes from hours spent upon his knees before God. He has been willing to discipline himself to a program of prayer; this has been, we are sure, a major secret of his life.

To come to the place which the Seminary enjoys today, we have had to go through some deep waters. Each experience has brought us into a new appreciation of Dr. J. C. McPheeters. In all experiences, whether pleasant or unpleasant, I have never known Dr. McPheeters to act in a way which I thought was unchristian. He has exemplified the Christian spirit in all respects in the administration of the work of Asbury Theologi-
cal Seminary. It was his close walk with God which has enabled him to meet all circumstances, both favorable and difficult, with strength and with Christian maturity.

There was great rejoicing this spring when the Seminary was enabled by the Lord's good providences to liquidate its long-standing indebtedness. It was most fitting that Dr. McPheeters, who has been tireless in his efforts in the solicitation of the funds for this building program and for the reduction of our indebtedness, should lead in a great praise service which was held on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. At that time many of us were reminded once more of the manner in which our President had for years combined faith with works in a night-and-day effort in behalf of the institution.

We are gratified that Dr. McPheeters will continue to work with us, and will continue to help guide the development program at Asbury Theological Seminary following his retirement from the presidency in June. His position will be that of Director of Development. Speaking from experience as Business Manager of the Seminary, and as a long-time member of its Board of Trustees, this writer is gratified that Dr. McPheeters' gifts will continue to be at the service of our institution. Inspired by the accomplishments, under God, of the past, and imbued with deep faith for the future, Asbury Theological Seminary moves into a new day of service and spiritual advance. We are happy that Dr. Julian C. McPheeters will have a significant place in this new program of development.