

BULLETIN
COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Reverend
William Marcellus McPheeters,
D.D., LL.D.
1854-1935

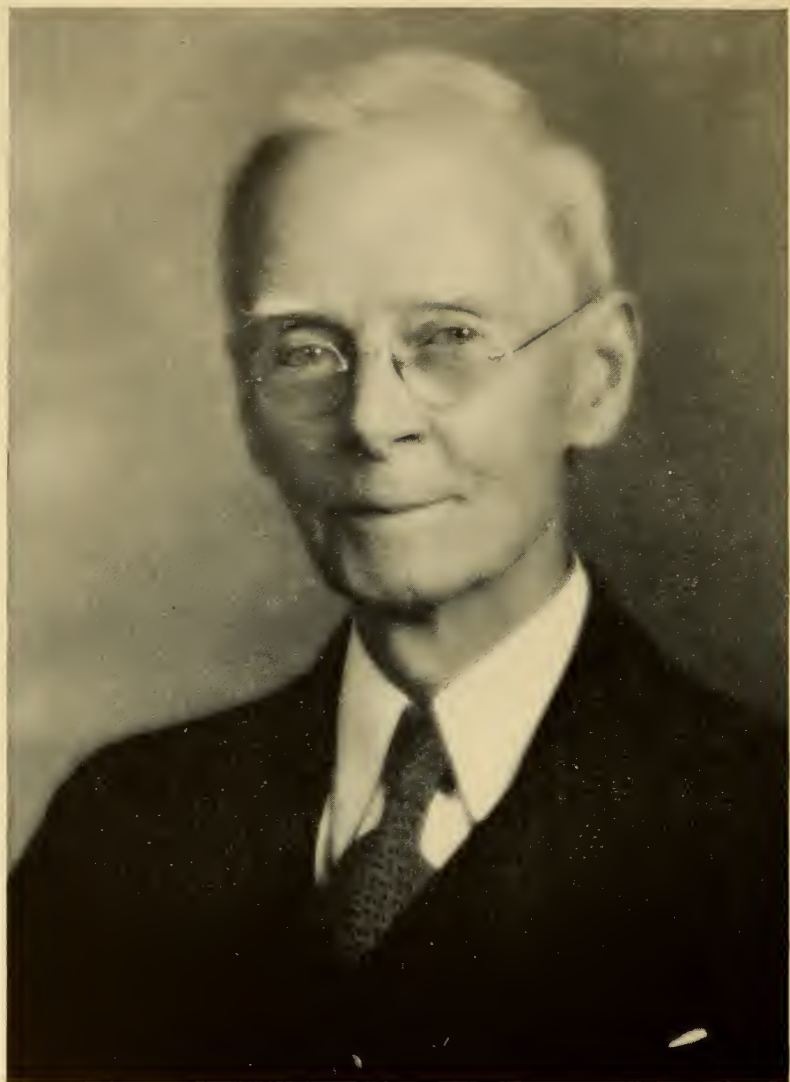
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W. M. McPherson

In Memoriam



William Marcellus McPheeters

BORN APRIL 8, 1854

DIED AUGUST 14, 1935



PROFESSOR OF
OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE AND EXEGESIS
COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
1888-1935

MEMORIAL SERVICES OF
REV. WILLIAM MARCELLUS McPHEETERS, D.D., LL.D.
SEMINARY CHAPEL
MAY 7, 1936

DR. J. SPROLE LYONS, *Chairman of the Board, Presiding*

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Dr. McPheeters—The Servant of the Church

By REV. S. C. BYRD, D.D., LL.D.,
Vice-President of Queens-Chicora College, Charlotte, N. C.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Rev. William Marcellus McPheeters, A.B., D.D., LL.D., was born at St. Louis, Mo., on April 8, 1854. He was a son of the Rev. Samuel Brown McPheeters, D.D., and Eliza Shanks McPheeters. Completing his secondary education in the secondary schools, he entered Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va., and graduated with the degree of A.B. in 1874. He then entered Union Theological Seminary, Hampden-Sydney, now at Richmond, Va., and graduated in 1878. He was ordained to the ministry of the Gospel in the Presbyterian Church in the United States by the Presbytery of Montgomery in 1879. During the nine years following his ordination he served as Stated Supply of Liberty Church, Bedford City, Va., as City Missionary in Lynchburg, Va., as pastor of Rocky Mount Church, Rocky Mount, Va., and as pastor of Royal Oak Church, Marion, Va. In 1888 he accepted a call to the professorship of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in Columbia Theological Seminary, Columbia, S. C., which position he occupied until his honorable retirement, by reason of failing health, as Professor Emeritus in 1933.

In 1878 he united in marriage with Miss Emma Gold Morrison, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Brown Morrison, M. D., of Rockbridge Baths, Va. After a long and happy life together Mrs. McPheeters preceded him in death by three years. To them were born four children, all of whom survive: Samuel Brown, Joseph Charles, Thomas Shanks and Mary Gold, now Mrs. Frank W. Jarnagin.

His life closed with a long, and at times very painful, illness of about a year. Through all the period of physical suffering and weakness, his mental vigor and spiritual grace endured, increasing in power unto the end. One visiting him in his last days would probably find by his side on the bed on which he lay some of the beloved companions of his years—the Hebrew, Greek and English Bibles and standard books and periodicals on subjects in the field of his life study. He was fully conscious of his condition and declining physical strength, and, like his Master, steadfastly and triumphantly set his face toward the last great conflict, in the spirit saying to the Father, "Not my will but Thine be done." Knowing that his trans-

lation was near, he arranged and wrote out the entire program for his funeral, selecting the ministers who would officiate at the service, the passages of Scripture to be read, the hymns to be sung and the honorary and active pallbearers. He then passed in quietness and peace to be with God on August 14, 1935, being 81 years, 4 months and 6 days of age. His body was laid to rest in Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte, N. C.

His Contribution to the Church

Any discriminating appraisal of the moulding and productive forces which have entered into the making of the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States during the past half century, and have been most dominant in determining the exalted and noble character of its testimony and service, must include the influence of certain great personalities, among whom I confidently enroll the name of William Marcellus McPheeters.

In presenting that phase of the life and service of Dr. McPheeters assigned to me, I will review especially those ideals and activities which more or less uniquely characterized his ministry and constituted its supreme emphases, and wherein lay, in my judgment, his greatest contribution to the Church. I shall exhibit these under four heads: his influence as a teacher, as a minister, as a scholar and as a presbyter.

In the providence of God, the privilege was given to Dr. McPheeters for forty-five years to take the sons of the church, who were called of God to become its teachers and leaders, and to train them for their high and sacred mission. This he did in an eminently worthy and efficient manner. He was a teacher par excellence, but I am not now wishing to direct attention to his pedagogical ability and technique, as superior as these were, but to certain ideals and virtues which, as a teacher, he exemplified in high degree and inculcated in his classroom, which, flowing up and out, like the life of a tree, strong and vibrant, and fruiting in his own personality cast their seeds into the life-soil of his pupils where they germinated and brought forth an enlarged harvest to the enrichment of their own lives, and through them the life of the church, as they went forth to the exercise of their ministry.

The greatest and most permanent influence of Dr. McPheeters as a teacher lay, I think, within those concepts of truth which he held dominant in his own life, and which he ever urged upon his pupils for guidance in their thinking and teaching. These were: the supreme value of truth, the vital importance of the knowledge

of truth, the high romance of the love of truth, and the moral obligation imposed by truth. To him truth was a pearl of great price, the excellency of which is transcendent, and for the possession of which no cost of time or effort is too great a price to pay. God has graciously endowed man with the capacity to think His thoughts after Him, to know the truth and "to enjoy that blessed liberty and security which is full and triumphant deliverance from all enslaving fetters of error and falsehood forged by the father of lies." The altar of truth is an altar for worship, for a man made in the image of God, and it is a sacrilege too great and too unworthy for any man, to say nothing of a candidate for the Gospel ministry, "to turn from this holy temple to offer oblations of any kind upon the polluted shrine of ignorance and falsehood." Hence the acquisition of truth is the first and great quest. All things must be proved, therefore, all conclusions must be preceded by the most thorough and accurate investigation, be based only upon competent evidence, and be expressed in clear and exact word. Pride, prejudice and private opinion, rationalistic speculation and utilitarian expediency can have no standing in this court of inquiry. The spirit of philosophy is the true spirit of the minister of God—one who loves truth, and he is altogether unworthy of his high calling who is controlled by any other motive. Then having found the truth, one's greatest duty and sublimest privilege is to hold it fast even though he thereby suffer ridicule, reviling and persecution. Shame and disgrace be upon him who is guilty of trimming, compromising, concealing or neglecting truth. Nothing less than this can be dignified as the love of truth and be worthy of any serious-minded exponent and teacher of truth.

Associated in the philosophy and religion of Dr. McPheeters with the virtue of the love and pursuit of truth was the virtue of hard work. To him fidelity to duty was a *summum bonum*, and this involved the expenditure of every effort needful to attain the goal. He himself was one of the most conscientiously, systematically and persistently hard-working men I have ever known, and this ideal and obligation he inculcated in his classroom by both precept and example. If any sin in the catalogue of sins in the life of a ministerial student was more heinous than all the rest in the sight of Dr. McPheeters surely it was that of indifference and laziness. Inadequate preparation for any worthy task was a matter for shame to him. He could not conceive how any candidate for the position of a prophet of God, a messenger of glad tidings of life and salvation to perishing immortal souls, could trifle with opportunities and squander time; he could not conceive how any one under a sacred call to prepare himself for a work for the doing of which the very

angels might well be envious, could in faithlessness fail to make the most diligent use of every God-given power and every precious moment of time; he could not conceive how any beneficiary of the offerings of God's people for his support and education, could be so indifferent and ungrateful as to be devoid of zeal in preparation for a proper discharge of his high commission. He had, therefore, just about as much respect for a slacker Seminary pupil as the patriot soldier, giving his life on the battle field for his country, has for a citizen slacker.

Such an emotion for truth, loyalty to truth and such faithfulness and diligence, exemplified daily by the honored teacher, sent his pupils forth from the classroom with the glowing torch in their hands, impelled by a like emotion and loyalty and inspired to become workmen who need not to be ashamed. And surely the Southern Presbyterian Church has been greatly strengthened, enriched and blessed by the love and loyalty to truth and the ministry of hard work which have characterized that large and influential number of its ministers who sat at the feet of Dr. McPheeters and there learned these things.

Dr. McPheeters adorned the profession of the Gospel ministry, as a holy calling, in like manner and in such degree, as have characterized the large majority of our ministers. In this respect he had many colleagues and equals. I do not speak now of that splendid contribution to the church which he made in common with many others, but of those features of his ministry which were outstanding, and in which he excelled.

The first of these features which I shall mention, is his advocacy and defense of the doctrine of the unity of the church. He firmly believed that the church visible, as well as invisible, is one body in Christ, and all believers are members in particular of this one body; that the church is an organism and not an organ. In this respect Presbyterianism is differentiated from Congregationalism, which makes of each particular congregation a whole, from Episcopacy, which establishes a system of coordinate monarchies, and from Prelacy, which realizes unity in one human head. According to the Presbyterian principle what affects one part of the church affects the whole, and because it does, the humblest church member possesses sacred and inalienable rights with respect to the actions and doctrinal decisions of the body as a whole or any part thereof. It follows, therefore, that the acts and decisions of any part of the church are, and should be regarded and treated as, of important and vital concern to every member within the church, and that Presbyterian Government should declare and grant the right of complaint by any member of the church, anywhere residing, against any act or decision

of any court of the church, whether or not the complainant is subject to the jurisdiction of that court. Not only so, but it likewise imposes upon every member of the church at large a solemn, moral responsibility for maintaining, in both faith and practice, the purity and integrity of the entire church, by the exercise of this right of complaint.

Dr. McPheeters revered this principle as not only fundamental in the Presbyterian system, but also vital in the life of the church. He believed it and taught it, and, with honesty of conviction and obedience to conscience, he acted upon it, though his actions were misunderstood and censured by some, and his pleadings were unheeded by others.

Another principle of our standards to which Dr. McPheeters valiantly adhered and bore a distinguished witness is the nature of ordination promises and the character and force of the obligation imposed thereby. These promises, he correctly held, are moral and religious, and are of the essence of a solemn covenant between the man himself and other men and between the man himself and God. As a covenant between men, the procedure is profoundly sacred and cannot be violated with impunity, and as a covenant between man and God, the promises assume the nature of holy vows and solemn oaths. In both aspects of the nature of the promises a most sacred obligation is imposed, the failure to observe which involves grave consequences and great guilt.

The spiritual commonwealth of the church is built on faith and confidence, and "the sacredness of a promise is the foundation of unity, harmony and peace" and the guarantee of cooperative activity. A man must be a man of his word, else he is a deceiver and a liar. Veracity is the keystone of any social order, and in the words of Dr. McPheeters, "covenant-breaking means the breaking up of the very foundations of organized life among men and the violation of a promise is covenant-breaking. Happy, fruitful concerted activity is at an end, and we go armed either with weapons, or with wits that are ceaselessly on the alert for our self-preservation." The sanctions of both truth and justice bind to the full performance of every covenant promise.

If it be so with covenant-breaking between man and man, how vastly stronger is the obligation and how much more heinous is the offense, when the promise is between man and God as a holy vow, a sacred oath, as it is in the case of an officer, minister, elder or deacon, of the Presbyterian Church. In this event the violation surely is nothing less than moral perjury, irreverence and treason to truth, whose "peculiar guilt consists in taking the name of the Lord our God in vain" and in lying to the God of all truth.

To this teaching of Christian ethics and of the standards of the Presbyterian Church Dr. McPheeters gave entire assent, and to the doctrine he bore a faithful and heroic witness. With an honest conviction of right and duty and constrained by a profound sense of responsibility, he, very reluctantly I am persuaded, but nevertheless, conscientiously and masterfully championed, by both voice and pen, the cause of the integrity and purity of the church, of divine truth as expressed in the standards of the church, and of the honor of the Lord as involved in the covenant promises of officers of the church. This he did, knowing full well the unpopularity of his cause and the possible effects upon his own popularity. For his actions he was regarded by some as a meddler and criticized by others as a heresy-hunter. But in spirit and purpose he was not either merely. His efforts and his zeal were for truth's sake, and so he was undeterred by criticism, censure and rebuff. He was of the spirit of which martyrs are made, and he fought the good fight and finished his course, not, it may be, as a victor, but as an ambassador and commissioned witness for the King.

There have ever been periods in the history of the church in which, because of apostasy in faith or conduct or both, it was needful that God should raise up, qualify and send forth some messenger prophet to admonish, reprove and rebuke in His name. In the days of old there appeared an Amos and a Jeremiah, speaking fearlessly the message of the Lord; then a John the Baptist, preaching the Kingdom and crying repent, repent; then a Peter and a John, declaring boldly the sins of religious leaders and people; then a Luther and a Calvin, nailing protesting theses against cathedral doors and proclaiming the majesty of our sovereign God; then a Wesley and a Whitefield, denouncing a free-thinking, pleasure-seeking religious formalism; then a Thornwell and a Palmer, thundering against an unholy union and the desecration of the crown rights of our Lord; and now a McPheeters, crying aloud against treason to truth and covenant-breaking. Were his efforts untimely and ill-advised? Did his love and passion for the church and its heavenly truth make him see guilt and danger where none existed? Did he magnify the insignificant and unimportant in the religious life of the church of his day? On the contrary, he was a discriminating, conscientious observer and interpreter of phenomena in the life of the church, and as a party to the covenant promises between himself and other men and between himself and them and God, he felt profoundly his personal responsibility in face of the situation as he saw it, and moved by the sacredness of his ordination vow to be "zealous and faithful in maintaining the truth of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the church" he did what he did.

As in many another period of ecclesiastical history, the prophet-crusader seemed to fail, so it may appear to some that Dr. McPheeters was a voice crying in the wilderness with only the echo of his own voice as a result, but I am persuaded that such an estimate of his ministry is far, very far, from the truth. The visible triumph of a faithful ministry is no test of its success. There are times when the Holy Spirit Himself seems to work in vain. But the promise is sure, and "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." There is always a "remnant according to the election of grace." But even now, I am sure, there is many a wavering and weakening will that was strengthened, many a drowsy and slumbering conscience that was quickened, many an emotion of lost first love and loyalty that was stimulated by the life and work of Dr. McPheeters. And furthermore, I am confident that the future of the church and Kingdom of God will justify the true wisdom of his witness and prove the high value of his service, as, under the immortal and virile inspiration of this man of God, they advance to the conflict against sin and error.

Christianity has had many foes—the skeptic, the agnostic, the atheist, the infidel, and all have done their direst for its destruction; but the most dangerous enemy to any cause is the enemy within the ranks, the deceiver, the hypocrite, the traitor. The Christian religion has suffered much from such enemies. One of the most formidable attacks ever made upon it sprang out of its institutions of higher learning in Continental Europe, the British Isles and America and was led by the most astute and ripest scholarship of the 19th and 20th centuries. The onslaught was upon the very citadels of the faith, the Holy Scriptures—the canon, the date and authorship of the writings, divine inspiration, the integrity of the text and the interpretation of the message. Many of the old defenses seemed, for the time, threatened with demolition, as many an intellectual Goliath appeared to defy the orthodox hosts of the Lord; naturalism was on the ascendancy and supernaturalism appeared to be on the decline, with the faith of many growing weaker and weaker. The situation called for a valiant and aggressive conservative scholarship—a scholarship fully equal in ability, breadth and profundity with that of the enemy and capable of meeting him at any point within his own chosen field of attack.

In the providence of God, just at this emergency in America, the Board of Directors of Columbia Theological Seminary called Dr. McPheeters to the chair of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in that institution. He accepted the call and brought to the position a rich cultural and religious heritage, a native ability of excelling quality,

a zeal for learning, a rare capacity for hard work and a sublime devotion to historic, evangelical Christianity. Conscious of the strength and danger of the rationalistic and radical forces which were arraigned against the high causes to which he gave his trust and loyalty, and with a keen and watchful enthusiasm for the faith "once delivered to the saints," he devoted himself to the pursuit of scholarship and to the defense and propagation of the faith. His fields of activity were the classroom, courts of the church, lectureship foundations and writing. In all these he made a most valuable contribution to the cause of Christ. His scholarship was characterized by a thoroughness of investigation, accuracy of observation, clearness of insight and honesty of judgment, and his performances were signalized by a strong style, stimulating logic, discriminating reasoning and pungent power. With the scalpel of his own virile intellect, and with a brilliancy and an awful earnestness, he exposed every proposition that came before him for consideration, laying bare its truth or falsehood. The church was greatly honored and blessed by his consecrated scholarship and efforts, offensively for the maintenance of the truth and defensively against every destructive and subversive attack upon it. He always threw the giant strength of his personality and learning on the side of historic Christianity, and it as interpreted in the standards of the Presbyterian and reformed churches. There he took his heroic stand, and there he stood until the day of his death, like the great general of the Southern Confederacy, a stone wall.

The teaching, debates and writings of Dr. McPheeters won for him a national and international reputation. He easily took his merited place, *primus inter pares*, in the rank of the great conservative American scholars and defenders of the supernaturally revealed religion, together with William Henry Green, Robert Dick Wilson and A. T. Robertson, and was worthily accorded recognition as the ablest and most widely known and influential teacher and scholar in the department of Biblical introduction in the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Many of our illustrious scholars, teachers and preachers become so engrossed in the work of their specific fields that they either lose interest in, or neglect the administrative and practical affairs of the Kingdom. This was not the case with Dr. McPheeters. While the life of the student and teacher was most alluring to him, yet he was not the hermit scholar, the cloistered teacher, or the cribbed writer and publisher. On the contrary he was ever mindful of the fact that the disciples of our Lord and Master had received a sacred commission from Him to go into all the world and evangelize the nations, teaching them all things whatsoever He had said, and that

for the execution of his commission He had established a spiritual commonwealth comprehending legislative, administrative and judicial functions to the faithful performance of which every member of the commonwealth is solemnly bound. He, therefore, gave to the Church's program and work a proper share of his time and talents. He was faithful in attendance upon the meetings of church courts, and was a willing and efficient laborer in any part of the Kingdom to which he was assigned. In the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly he rendered valuable and conspicuous service as a member, a committeeman or a Moderator. In the field of practical Christianity he was a conservative-progressive, cautious in discarding the old, but open-minded in regard to the advantages and superiorities of the new. He was at one time a leader and at another time a follower.

Among the greatest services of this practical nature which he rendered was, doubtless, that in the development of church education in the Synod of South Carolina. He was one of the two or three leaders in that Synod who visioned the need and executed a program for a system of colleges owned and controlled by the church. To him belongs a large share of the honor attached to the establishment as church institutions, of the Presbyterian College for men and Chicora College for women, on whose Boards of Trustees he served as a member and as vice-president for many years. His love, loyalty and service to Columbia Seminary are well known and recognized. He devotedly stood faithful to the institution under all circumstances. In the days of adversity and in the days of more hopeful prosperity he was its friend. He had a strong conviction as to the future growth and development of these Southeastern States, which constitute the peculiar constituency of the Seminary, and of the real and vital need for a strong evangelical Theological Seminary within their bounds. He was, therefore, one of the most earnest and ablest advocates of this need, and hence of the advisability and duty of maintaining the Seminary within this territory. Accordingly to this end he labored most energetically, and vigorously opposed every proposition or effort, to remove Columbia Seminary from the bounds of these states. He was happy when, in the providence of God, a way appeared to be opened for the realization of his hopes by the permanent establishment of the Seminary in Atlanta, the thriving, prosperous metropolis and Presbyterian center of this territory and when he was given the high privilege of going over with his beloved institution to dwell upon this goodly campus amidst the beautiful buildings of this magnificent plant.

Dr. McPheeters died as he lived, heroic and unafraid, assured of the reality of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

We mourn the great loss of one of the church's most fearless, faithful and consecrated leaders, profoundest thinkers, ripest scholars and greatest teachers, but in our sorrow we recall for comfort the beautiful Hebrew legend about Israel's great leader of old as we apply it to our own departed teacher, minister, scholar, presbyter and friend: When Moses went up into Mount Nebo and returned not to the people, the anxious children of Israel climbed the mountain to seek and to find him. They found him not, but, in one of the clefts they beheld his heart, which he had left behind, and the people wept and were consoled. May I not say in reference to Dr. McPheeters that, though we have him with us no longer in the flesh, as we reverently roam the sacred hills and halls of Columbia Seminary and visit the holy precincts of the Synod of South Carolina and the Presbyterian Church in the United States, if we were endowed with the spiritual vision to see, we would find in some hallowed cleft his heart, and behold pouring forth from it his spirit of sublime devotion and loyalty to truth and the God of truth, of singular consecration to duty and the performance of duty, and of service a whole burnt offering resplendent in works that honor God and bless His church, and all as a glorious heritage and benediction which are with us never to die. His name we honor and his memory we cherish with mingled feelings of profound gratitude and admiration.

"That life is great which answers life's great end."

Perhaps we could not close this review of his life and contribution to the church more fittingly than with the chant of trust and triumph which he selected to be sung at the grave, in which his body was laid to rest until the day of resurrection, when it shall be raised in glory and the mortal shall put on immortality.

"The strife is o'er, the battle done,
The victory of life is won,
The song of triumph has begun—
Alleluia.

"The powers of death have done their worst,
But Christ their legions hath dispersed,
Let shouts of holy joy outburst—
Alleluia.

"Lord, by the stripes which wounded Thee,
From death's dread sting Thy servants free,
That we may live and sing to Thee—
Alleluia."

Dr. McPheeters—The Educator

By REV. JAMES McDOWELL RICHARDS, D. D.

It is by no means an easy thing to define the meaning of the term, education. The process of education is not simple in itself, nor are the aims of all education the same. Hence it is not strange that different men have given varying descriptions of the process and diverse statements of its purpose. In the last analysis, however, we can hardly do better than to go back to the simple root meaning of the word from which our term has been derived, and to see education as simply a leading out—the guiding or drawing of an individual into the way which leads to greater fullness of life, whether that life be physical or mental or spiritual.

It is in something of this sense that I would speak tonight of Dr. McPheeters as an educator, for he was one who gave his life to the task of leading others out into new effort and new growth. For this reason I shall not endeavor to speak of him to any large degree in the technical terms of scholarship, though the results of his work as a scholar are sufficiently important to merit our most careful consideration. While not forgetting the things which he taught, however, let us remember primarily the way in which he taught them and the larger ends to which the work of his study and his classroom were but a means.

The general details of Dr. McPheeters' work as a teacher and scholar are familiar to the most of you even had they not been previously reviewed here tonight. Called in the prime of his young manhood to the Professorship of Biblical Literature in this institution, he later became Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis here and gave forty-five years of active service to the work of the classroom. He was then for two additional years connected with the Seminary as Professor-Emeritus. He was ardent in research work and was constantly busy with his pen, producing articles on a variety of subjects related to his field for periodicals both of his own and of other churches, and he served both as a founder and an editor of the *Religious Outlook* and *Bible Student*. His scholarship earned for him a recognition extending far beyond the confines of his own classroom and the boundaries of his own Church, for he was a contributor to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* and to *Hasting's Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, and in 1911 he was invited to deliver the lectures upon the Stone Foundation at Princeton Theological Seminary. Although he was

not permitted to carry out his purpose through the completion of a *magnum opus* in which the principal results of his life work in the field of interpretation would have been embodied, he has left extensive literary remains and his collected writings, which have been preserved for the Seminary Library in three bound volumes, constitute a real monument to his learning.

Although his own work, and consequently his immediate interest, lay in the field of theological education, the vision and activities of this man as an educator were by no means limited to his own particular segment of the educational world. For him all education worthy of the name was Christian Education, and he paraphrased Huxley's definition of the educational process to make it read: "All Education is the instruction of the intellect in the laws of *God*, under which name I include not merely things and their forces, but men and their ways; and the fashioning of the affections and of the will into an earnest and loving desire to move in harmony with those laws." Hence he was keenly interested in and concerned for the entire educational program of our church, and to its development he gave largely of his time and strength. His philosophy of Christian Education was well expressed by his "Open Letter to the Board and Faculty of a Presbyterian College" which appeared in the *Christian Observer* of June 26, 1929, and which was reprinted in pamphlet form that year by The Presbyterian Educational Association of the South. Although this discussion of the function to be performed by the Christian institution and the Christian teacher is brief in compass, Dr. Henry H. Sweets, Executive Secretary of Christian Education for the Presbyterian Church, U. S., has well said of it that it is one of the finest statements on the subject in existence. Its statesmanlike treatment of a great and difficult theme is indicative of the ability and insight of its author, and it presents a viewpoint which is well worth the study of our church—or of any church—today.

Dr. McPheeters' unique contribution to the field of Biblical Scholarship lay in the field of Hermeneutics, and here he went far, not only toward showing that a real Science of Interpretation is possible, but toward establishing the basis for that science. His thought on this subject, which was the outgrowth of a lifetime of study, forms a consistent and striking addition to the world's greatest scholarship in that field. This thought is carefully and effectively set forth in the syllabus of his lectures, but is of such a nature that it cannot be adequately summarized here. Briefly, however, we may be content to say that his emphasis was upon a careful, complete, and objective examination of the context of which any particular writing under consideration might be a part, and he himself pointed to the heart

of his system in his statement that "The context—that is to say the original context and the entire context—determined and will disclose the significance and force of the symbols which together constitute a given writing." It followed that the real task of the interpreter or the exegete was to reconstruct the original context with "completeness and precision" and with such respect for the objective nature of that original context as to assure a high degree of "verification and control." In the case of every particular writing, there is a Grammatical, a Literary, an Historical, a Logical, and a Psychological Context, and the scientific exegete must prepare himself for an interpretation of each one of these elements in the larger or complete context. This method of interpretation was abundantly illustrated and supported in his teaching not only by examples from secular history and by reference to the world's great interpreters of the Scripture, but especially by a study of the example set by our Lord Himself, for He, in his interpretation of the Old Testament Writings, is and always will be the supreme model of the exegete. With the sure insight of the real educator, Dr. McPheeters devoted the most of his time in the classroom to the inculcation of the great principles and hypotheses on which his work was based, leaving it for the individual student to learn by actual experiment how these principles might best be applied to the interpretation of individual Scripture passages.

Important as was the contribution of this man to the thought of his own department and to the educational philosophy of our church, however, his greatest contribution was not in what he consciously taught in the classroom, but in what he actually and unmistakably was. Students could, and sometimes did, fail entirely to appreciate the value of what the instruction which he gave; they could not fail to recognize the genuine Christian character of the man and the consistency existing between his thought and his conduct. In his case, the old adage was reversed and those who really came to know him for what he was were compelled to say, "What you are speaks so loud that I cannot help listening to what you say." He was an educator indeed, in the fact that his personality did draw out much that was finest in his students, and that by his example he did lead these men out into a fuller and more harmonious development of their intellectual and moral and spiritual lives.

There were certain facts in connection with the life of Dr. McPheeters which could not fail to make their impression upon one who sat in his classroom or walked and talked with him on the campus. He had the instincts of a scholar in that he was a true lover of books. His study, and the time he spent in his study were

sufficient evidences of that fact, yet books to him were not an end in themselves.

As a student, he was remarkable in the range of his interests and in the fact that he counted no sphere of human learning as alien to his own task. Poetry and fiction, science and philosophy, psychology and history—all of these were fields in which he delighted to read and even to the end of his life he was constantly making the acquaintance of new authors and beginning with eagerness the mastery of new subjects. Broad as were his interests, however, he avoided that danger of superficiality which is apt to be so characteristic of the modern reader, and sought always to impress upon his students his own conviction that it was better to master one good book than to form only a slight acquaintance with half a dozen.

Painstaking and thorough to the highest degree in his own work, one of the great aims sought in his classroom work was the development of an equally conscientious attitude in his pupils. Many were the individuals and many the classes which during the years were driven virtually to the point of open rebellion by what seemed to them at the moment his almost unreasonable requirement of scientific and literal accuracy, yet most of those who sat under him will bear witness to the fact today that they received from him an impulse to thoroughness and to scholarly habits which can never be entirely lost. Especially was this true of his attitude toward the Bible, for, to him, the Word of God was too sacred to be hastily or carelessly treated, and he had no patience with the student who was not willing to take the necessary pains in order that he might arrive at the real meaning of a passage. The man who had passed through his classroom might still go out to be guilty of shabby exegesis, or of wresting a verse entirely out of its context in order to make it fit his subject, but he could never again do so without a conscience made uneasy by the words and the example of his teacher.

A man of deep convictions and of passionate loyalty to the Scriptures and to the standards of his church, Dr. McPheeters left the impression of his sincerity, his courage, and his faithfulness to duty firmly fixed upon those who sat under his teaching. At the same time they failed utterly to find grounds of encouragement for an uninformed dogmatism or for bitterness in his attitude toward those who differed from him. His own spirit is clearly shown in statements of the open letter to which I have already referred, declaring that the Christian position cannot be commended "by a heated and harsh *denunciation* of the persons and views that today are aligned in opposition to these Biblical conceptions," and his attitude toward many of the men with whose positions he differed most uncompromisingly as to essentials was yet one of charity and, so far as possible,

of respect. Loyal to revealed truth as all too few have been in our day, he engaged sometimes in controversy, not because he found pleasure in so doing, but because of a stern and unrelenting sense of duty. He held fast always to the form of sound doctrine, but he did so truly in love, and in this also he was an example to his students.

I have said that, to Dr. McPheeters, books were not an end in themselves. Loving his books with the devotion of a born student, there were yet two affections which took precedence in his life over them. The first of these was his love for his fellowmen, and especially for his brethren of the household of faith, which was deep and true in a degree that only those who knew him well could fully understand. I remember talking once with Dr. McPheeters about the question which was then before me as to whether my own life should be spent in the teaching ministry or in the pastorate, and how, as he urged the necessity for Christian scholarship, he earnestly said, "Some one has to make the sacrifice of leaving the pastorate in order to teach." The words seemed strange to a young student who had not yet entered upon the experiences of the pastorate and did not know what these could mean to the pastor; they do not seem strange to him now. Dr. McPheeters loved books for themselves, but he loved people more, and only because he saw the use of books as a way to win men was he willing to sacrifice the trials and the joys of pastoral service and to spend his life in the cloistered, but for him none the less strenuous, labors of the academic world. It was only because of this fact that he could be the great and effective teacher of ministers that he became, for the successful pastor must be one whose heart is aflame with love for his people, and seminary students cannot learn that passion from teachers who do not themselves possess the pastor heart.

The Supreme loyalty and the Supreme love of the life of this man, however, was neither for books nor for men, but for his Lord. To him books and the mastery of books were important because of the use to which they might be put in the advancement of the Gospel, and in the winning of men to faith in and love for his Lord. It was because of this latter love that he opposed error so unceasingly; it was because of this love that he labored so long and so earnestly over his studies; it was supremely because of this love that he loved his fellowmen so well. In him devotion to Christ was so truly the ruling passion of life that one may well apply to him the words which F. W. H. Myers used as expressing the spirit of the apostle Paul:

“Christ, I am Christ’s, and let the name suffice you;
Aye, for me, too, He greatly hath sufficed:
Lo, with no winning words I would entice you;
I have no honor, and no friend, but Christ.

“Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning,
Christ shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for He was the beginning;
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.”

In this spirit lay the real greatness of the man whose memory we honor tonight. Distinguished as he was both by natural gifts and by scholarly achievement, he will be remembered as a really great educator chiefly because his learning was consecrated to a great cause, and because he possessed in singular degree the ability to awaken in generations of his students a like loyalty to his Lord.

Dr. McPheeters—A Man of God

By REV. JOHN MCSWEEN, D. D.

No student who ever sat at the feet of Dr. McPheeters could feel more unworthy of paying a worthy tribute to his memory than I do on this occasion. But no one whose life has ever felt the power which emanated from his life could appreciate more the honor or speak more feelingly and sincerely out of a deep sense of indebtedness to him than I.

One of the outstanding memories of my early childhood is of the good Doctor who came from the Seminary at Columbia to preach to a small group of loyal Presbyterians in a community where at first there was no church building of that faith. Into the home he brought that gentle air of high culture and gracious but simple charm of manner so characteristic of him, but above all a piety which impressed without obtruding. For forty years I enjoyed his friendship and through these years have admired his scholarship, marvelled at his capacity, honored him as a great teacher and looked up to him as a Presbyterian. But it is as a man who walked with God that Dr. McPheeters will always stand out in my mind and heart and make me grateful all my life that it was my privilege to have the honor of his friendship. No testimony to the truth of the Christian religion I have ever heard, no apologetic in defense of the doctrine of Christ I ever read, helped me lay hold of the truth more really than the intimate fellowship I enjoyed with this man of God, whose memory we honor at this time. May I be permitted to speak simply, and out of my heart, of some of those characteristics of him as a man of God which were apparent to me and which made the deepest impression on my life.

I. HE WAS A MAN OF FAITH

Like Abraham of old, "He believed God." Although he was a profound scholar and versed in the arts of scholarship, his simple, abiding, child-like faith had an appealing quality on the one hand and on the other led one to feel that his feet were solidly planted upon a Rock which all the storms of agnostic scholarship could not shake.

His faith in the Bible as the Word of God was no mere item in a creed to him; it was a light from God's own Throne that illumined his every step.

His trust in the atoning merit of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, was not only a theological concept to which he gave full mental assent; it was an overwhelming experience which brought a constant thrill to his soul.

His belief in the supreme sovereignty of God in the affairs of the universe was not only to him the only reasonable system of thought; it was a glorious reality which brought to him the deepest satisfaction for time and for eternity.

II. HE WAS A MAN OF HONESTY

One of the convictions which grew on me as a student under him was the high type of intellectual honesty which characterized his thinking. On several occasions I went to him with problems which brought concern to a young theological student. If he had not thought through the particular problem he would not attempt to speak concerning it but would ask for time to study it. When later he had spoken I had the feeling that he had brought to bear all his fine powers of thought, aided by every instrument he knew, in arriving at the conclusion he reached. He was honest in his thinking with himself and with others. This has been a wonderfully steady influence in my intellectual life. Not only was one stimulated to be intellectually honest by contact with him, but one felt that any proposition to which Dr. McPheeters gave whole-hearted assent could be relied upon. If one could not answer, by the processes of his own thinking, the destructive theories of the radical Higher Critics one knew that Dr. McPheeters had weighed all the claims and honestly had faced and rejected the heterodox for the orthodox position.

Because of the intellectual limitations of many of us who sat in his classes, the comprehensive and deep scholarship of the man was often "wasted as fragrance on the desert air." But the humblest of us could not fail to realize the fact that in his presence we stood in the light of knowledge which had been arrived at by no royal road.

The very fact that Dr. McPheeters accepted and championed the conservative viewpoint in the theological controversies of the past and present enabled many of us to hold on to "the faith once delivered to the saints" until we could think through and establish our own positions.

This same scrupulous honesty which characterized his spiritual and intellectual life impressed itself on those who knew him, as I did, in the discharge of duties laid upon him by his church in the direction of the affairs of her institutions. Whatever obligation he assumed, whether of duty or of finance, he regarded as a sacred

trust and showed a religious sensitiveness toward such which should always characterize a true man of God in these matters.

III. HE WAS A MAN OF COURAGE

Although one of the gentlest of men in his personal life, living always the more or less secluded life of a scholar who loved his books and the tools of his study, Dr. McPheeters was a man of real courage, a courage born of deep conviction and love of truth. Hence this courteous and gentle man, and humble man of God, became a militant Christian when he felt that the essentials of the faith were assailed.

Knowing him as I did I believe that controversy was uncongenial to his deepest nature but he felt that a part of his call of God was to defend the faith and when the hour of conflict struck he threw every power of his magnificent mind and great heart into the strife. Even if one did not always agree with his policy or as to the essential nature of the matter which he felt called upon to attack or defend, the courage and tenacity of the frail fighter commanded our admiration and challenged our respect. The fight he made was always for principle and there could be for him no compromise in such matters.

He was a man of courage because he was a man of God and had the sense of Divine power granted unto those who stand up for the right as God gives them to see the right. In a day of loosening convictions and compromising spirit on the part of a large section of the Church of God he fought the fight of a courageous and brave soldier of the Cross.

IV. HE WAS A MAN OF MEEKNESS

Human nature is full of paradoxes. Someone has said, "The bravest are the tenderest, the loving are the daring." And this was true of our beloved preceptor and friend. He was a man, strong and brave on the field of battle for the truth. Yet in his personal and intimate relationships he was an humble child of God, meek and mild.

Conscious of the powers with which God had endowed him, and surrendering every power to the Saviour he loved and served, he was yet conscious of his sinfulness in God's sight and kept always warm in his heart a deep gratitude to a Saviour who died to save sinners.

Often in the heat of conflict, yet he maintained always a spirit of fairness and respect for those he opposed and eliminated bitterness from his strife.

Honored and respected in every circle in which he moved he thought always of the cause and the church rather than of himself.

Great as a theologian, scholar, Presbyterian, defender of the faith, yet he was also a man who "walked with kings, nor lost the common touch." He was truly a man "whose heaven-erected face the smiles of love adorned" and we shall always warmly cherish the memory of one who truly "loved mercy, did justly and walked humbly with his God."

*The William Marcellus McPheeters
Memorial Scholarship*

Through the generosity of Mr. Thomas Shanks McPheeters, of Charlotte, N. C., and Mr. T. S. McPheeters, of St. Louis, Mo., a son and a nephew respectively of the man in whose memory this bulletin is issued, there had, even before his death, been established at Columbia Theological Seminary a fund which is to be known hereafter as the William Marcellus McPheeters Memorial Scholarship Fund. Thus through the training of generations of students yet to come the name of this servant of God will be honored in that way which he himself would have chosen and in connection with that work to which he gave his life.

It is the hope of the Seminary Faculty—as it was also the dream of Dr. McPheeters—that eventually a sufficient amount may be added to this endowment from other sources to make possible an income which will provide an annual fellowship for graduate theological study, and which will become a means of continual contribution to the productive scholarship of the Church.

Scripture Passages

Selected by Dr. McPheeters for Use at His Own Funeral

PSALMS 90:1-2.

JOHN 3:16.

PSALMS 48:14.

MATTHEW 11:28-30.

PSALMS 103:8-18.

JOHN 11:21-25.

EXODUS 34:5-7.

JOHN 14:1-6.

ISAIAH 40:10-11.

II CORINTHIANS 4:16, 5:3.

ISAIAH 40:25-31.

I CORINTHIANS 15:35-38.

ISAIAH 42:16.

I THESSALONIANS 4:13-18.

REVELATIONS 7:9-17.