

Julian C. McPheeters

My Friend and Administrative Comrade

Frank Bateman Stanger

I opened the pages of *Who's Who In Methodism* and read these words concerning Julian C. McPheeters:

b. Oxley, Mo., July 6, 1889; s. William Garland and Edna (Greer) McP.; Ph.B., Marvin Coll., 1909; D.D., Asbury Coll., 1931; LL.D., John Brown U., 1940; m. Ethel Chilton, Jan. 28, 1914; children-- Chilton Claudius, Virginia Wave. On trial, St. Louis Conf., deacon, 1911, 1916, full connection, 1921, elder, 1919. Pastor, St. Louis Conf., Oran, 1909-10, evangelist, 1912-16, Williamsville, 1917, Mellow Meml. Ch., St. Louis, 1918, Summersville, 1919-21, Missoula, Mont., 1921-23; trans. Ariz. Conf., Univ. Ch., Tucson, 1923-30; trans. Calif. Conf., Glide Meml. Ch., San Francisco, 1930-48; pres. Asbury Theol. Sem. since 1942. Author.

How inadequate are these compressed, concise, factual biographical details to describe my friend and administrative comrade. Every man has to be born and belong to parents. Most persons whose names appear in such a volume have attended institutions of higher learning. Most of the people have been married and a large proportion of these have had children to bless their homes. Certainly all these "who's who" persons have had careers of achievement and distinction. They have been related to influential groups. They have filled positions of leadership and responsibility. All have traveled widely and garnered honorary awards and degrees. Many have authored books.

But Julian C. McPheeters to be truly known must be revealed in ways other than through mere biographical data. His personality, his spirit, his energy, his dedication, transcend all

human efforts merely to categorize or catalogue the vital statistics of his life and his ministry.

May I be permitted to speak of him as my friend and my administrative comrade, not through impersonal biographical details, but through the image of comparing him with some of the great hearts whose spirit is reflected in God's Holy Word?

"By faith . . . he went out,
not knowing whither he went."

Like Abraham, the friend of God, Julian C. McPheeters has lived a life of mighty faith. How often, in obedience to God, he has moved forward, not knowing whither he went. And how often, in response to that heroic faith, mighty miracles of God's presence and power have resulted! The miracle of personal physical healing! The miracle of building a great institutional church at the heart of a throbbing city! The miracle of a phenomenally growing theological Seminary.

"Though he slay me, yet will
I trust in him: but I will main-
tain mine own ways before
him."

Like Job, the servant of God, Julian C. McPheeters has known the severe testings of a maturing faith. Too often when we look at a life that is mellowed in its sweetness and radiant in its confidence we are prone to think that all must have been smooth and comparatively free of struggle during the years of that life. But perish the thought! It is never that way. The oak is strengthened in the fury of the storm. The vessel is proved by the tempest and gale. The pure gold can be produced only as the result of the refiner's fire.

Dr. McPheeters' administrative years have known severe testings. There has been institutional poverty which often affected personnel and facilities. There have been misunderstanding and opposition. There were the lean years of the loss of accreditation.

But in and through everything there was the calm, implicit trust on the part of this servant of God. He discovered a boundless optimism in the strength of God. So deep was his confidence that the sun of faith was always shining though there

were times when he seemed to be the only one who basked in its warmth and hope.

". . . He went . . . apart to
pray . . . and . . . he was
there alone."

Like Jesus, the Son of God, Julian C. McPheeters is a man of prayer. Truly he follows his Saviour along the pathway of prayer. His personal life is fragrant with the incense of prayer. His relationships to others are hallowed by prayer.

Especially have I been impressed by the way in which he has bathed his administrative life in prayer. He has prayed about everything. Few times have I talked with him about administrative matters when he did not end the conference with a prayer that was pertinent to the subject which we had discussed.

He prays specifically. "Lord, Thou knowest that we need \$27,500 more to complete this project. Thou knowest those individuals who are able to make these funds possible."

He prays expectantly about administrative matters. His triumphant expectation manifests itself in his lusty "A-A-Amen" when he has finished praying.

Truly he is a saint and a man of prayer, so "big in prayer" that on his knees he reaches all the way to heaven; an example to all, of dedication, of godliness, of unwavering faith.

"Elijah passed by him, and
cast his mantle upon him."

Like Elijah, the prophet of God, Julian C. McPheeters in recent years has been deeply concerned about his successor. This concern not only characterizes a wise prophet, but it is also characteristic of an alert executive.

Because of my personal involvement in this, may I be permitted to speak rather intimately and in utter sincerity at this point? I realize that just as Dr. Henry Clay Morrison "laid his hands" on Dr. McPheeters, so Dr. McPheeters has "laid his hands" on me. I do not understand the reason for this "executive succession." I can only believe, and I do believe, that God is in it all.

I shall never forget those memorable moments along the seashore when Dr. McPheeters first revealed to me his desire

concerning "succession." I shall always appreciate those intervening months when he stood by, ready to offer advice and encouragement, at the same time maintaining a "hands-off" policy. Then came a decisive telephone call from him to me while I was participating in a Spiritual Life Conference in the majestic mountains of North Carolina.

He has been magnificently gracious and totally cooperative in all our administrative relationships. He has been instantly responsive to all creative suggestions and has been unabated in his desire that I be given all the means and opportunities to work out that which is best for the Seminary. Truly I am blessed by the comradeship of such a predecessor.

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy
servant depart in peace . . .
for mine eyes have seen . . ."

Like Simeon, the witness to our Lord, Julian C. McPheeters has tasted of the deep inner satisfactions of the rewards of faith and of the achievements of success. Certainly this reference to Simeon is in no way to be mistaken as a eulogy. Rather is it the triumphant song of a victor in the arena of accomplishment.

I must refer to a scene that only four persons were permitted to witness. It was February 16, 1962. The place was the Board Room. A special meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees was in session. Sensing from remarks of the Business Manager what was about to happen, I, as Vice President of the Seminary Corporation, assumed the Chair to permit the President to make a motion.

A steady confident voice spoke these words: "Mr. Chairman, I move that the Business Manager be authorized, out of available funds, to pay off the total remaining indebtedness of the Seminary." There followed a hasty seconding of the motion and a quick vote of unanimity.

Then the same steady confident voice spoke again. But this time the words were more deliberate, and punctuated by restrained emotion. But even then, all the tears could not be kept back. The words were words of triumph, and success. It seemed like the valedictory of a Moses who had seen the Promised Land of institutional solvency and who now looked on into a horizon of even greater accomplishment. It was the

acknowledgment of a Simeon, giving witness to his deep inward satisfactions, because God had kept all His word.

I salute Julian C. McPheeters, the designate of the Seminary's founder to be the second president of the institution, the builder of the Seminary's present, my friend and administrative comrade.