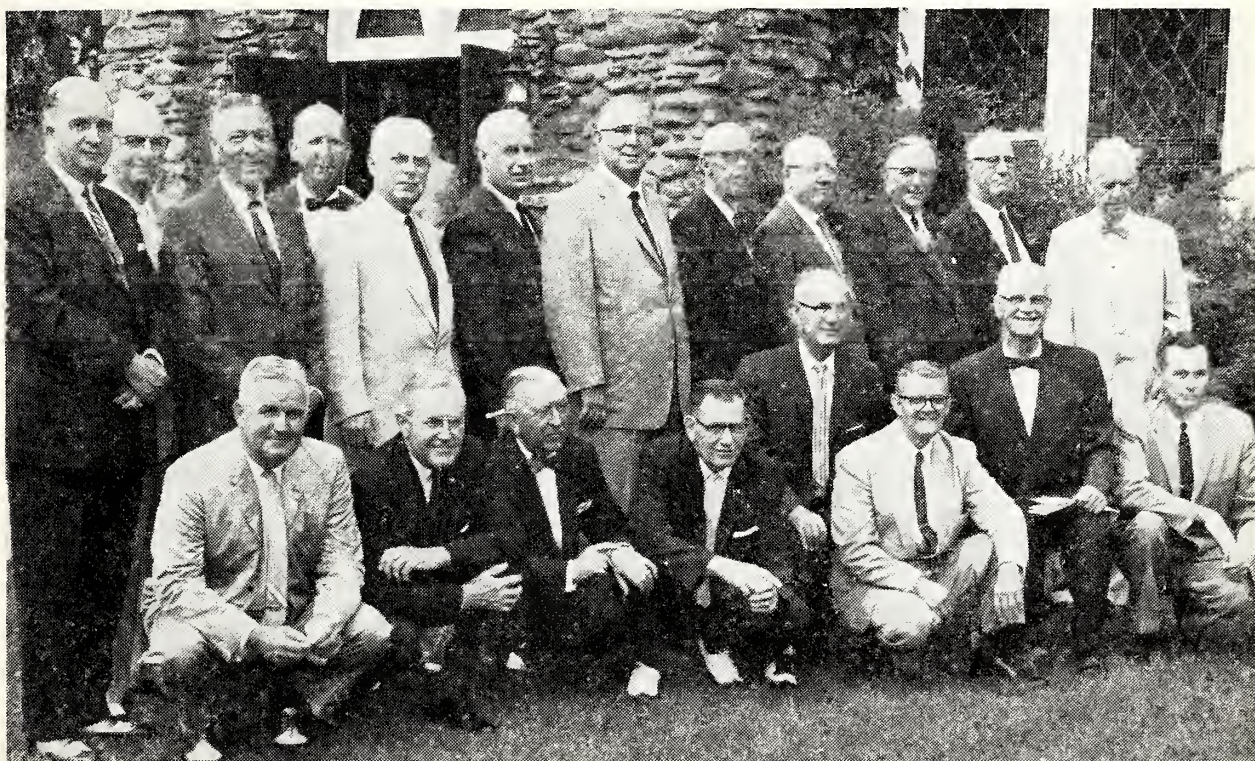


The Southern PRESBYTERIAN *Journal*

VOL. XVIII NO. 18

SEPTEMBER 2, 1959

\$3.00 A YEAR



JOURNAL DIRECTORS—Among the directors of the Southern Presbyterian Journal here for the annual meeting today in Weaverville are, left to right, front row: Dr. Charles G. McClure of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., A. R. Shaw of Charlotte, Frank W. Robertson of Huntington, W. Va., Aubrey Miree of Birmingham, Ala., Andrew C. Hamilton Jr. of Dallas, Texas, Dr. H. B. Dendy of Weaverville, Dr. L. Nelson Bell of Montreat and Dr. Aiken Taylor of Alexandria, La. Back row: W. Gettys Guille of Salisbury, V. G. Philips of Tallahassee, Fla., Col. Roy LeCraw of Atlanta, Henry Boney of Lake Worth, Fla., John M. Ward of Montgomery, Ala., Dr. Robert Strong of Augusta, Ga., Dr. H. E. Dustin of Houston, Texas, Dr. R. Wilbur Cousar of Raleigh, Richardson Ayres of Alexandria, La., Kenneth Keyes of Miami, Horace Hull of Memphis, and Charles C. Dickinson of Charleston, W. Va.



THE CIRCLE BIBLE STUDY for Women of the Church for October will appear in the September 9 issue.

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EDITORIAL

Big Presbyterian — Little Christian

This editorial is written at the request of an elder who is a big Christian and perhaps a bit indifferent as to whether or not men rate him a big Presbyterian. He asked for it in view of an objection in Presbytery to the temporary use of a minister who had not as much Presbyterian training as the objector wished—An action which seemed to the elder to exalt Presbyterian education above Christian character and conviction.

One undertakes such a theme with great trepidation. Who is competent to speak on this subject? How often have I let Presbyterian peccadillos overshadow Christian consideration? Who am I to throw stones? If this be a sermon it must be preached first of all to the writer.

Yet as one looks over the recent story of the Church there is cause for re-examination. It is so easy to be a big Presbyterian insisting on some shibboleth in Presbytery or in the Commission on the Minister and His Work and forgetting the weightier matters of justice, mercy and the love of God. Have I stood for some detail of the Book of Church Order or some action of Presbytery or Session and forgotten the exhortation of the Apostle, "If a man be overtaken in a fault ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of gentleness considering thyself lest thou also be tempted?" A young minister serving his first term on the Commission unburdened himself about as follows: a certain John Doe advocated no mercy for Richard Roe when a problem concerning this brother minister was before the Commission; and shortly thereafter John Doe was himself before the commission for transgressing the commandment of God. And he who spoke against mercy for his brother, received from the brethren the mercy he asked for himself!

May the experiences of life conform in our hearts loyalty to our great Presbyterian system of doctrine. But if I turn my maintenance of every item of the Confession into a good work in which I trust, I overlook the main drive of the Apostles Creed which is to place my whole trust in the grace of God our Saviour — that is, in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

When it comes to discipline the big Presbyterian may crack down on one who is allegedly a trouble maker to the big shots in the Presbytery with scant regard for the rights granted in the Book of Discipline to which we all subscribe — and then cushion the treatment accorded a big wheel in the Presbyterian cog who is guilty of drunkenness or immorality. But would not a great Christian rather stand up for the weaker brother for whom Christ died? Would he not heed the Word of God, "Thou shalt not fear the face of a man in judgment"?

Would not a big Christian respect both the conscientious convictions of a pastor who differed from the views of leading members of his congregation, and also the principles of officers who differed from their minister on divisive issues before the Church? Would he not insist that a prophetic ministry meant that the pastor did not have to preach the positions of his officers? Rather, as Calvin well said, he is to dare all things BY THE WORD OF GOD. On the other hand, when the pastor is committed to some such issue as Church Union ought he not to recognize that responsible officers who oppose such union have as much right to their convictions and to a fair presentation of the same in their Church as has the Pastor? If he be only a big Presbyterian he may insist on having only his side of the case aired, and if that leads to schism and the organization of a new congregation he may even deny to his mission pastor the privilege of going to Presbytery to vote his own convictions as to this new church — if those convictions are the opposite of the Pastor's. But a big Christian will so recognize the rights of those who differ as to chasten his own utterances, allow for the presentation of the opposite views when requested by responsible officers, and give every other minister in the Presbytery the same right to be present and vote his convictions as the Pastor exercises for himself.

May God give each one of us grace in the future to be bigger Christians, to put first things first, and to keep details in their proper proportion. Jesus said of some in His day, "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The true Christian, the true Presbyterian, position is the Word of God through Isaiah:

The Lord is our Judge,
The Lord is our King,
The Lord is our Lawgiver;
He will save us.

—W. C. R.