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EDITORIAL

BOOK REVIEW

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THE UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

Vol. XXIII.

FEBRUARY--MARCH, 1912

No. 3

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

BY PROF. CHAS. W. SOMMERVILLE, PH. D.; D. D.
Clarksville, Tenn.

I. *The Presbyterian Ritual.*

The Southern Presbyterian Church has a ritual in as true a sense as the Baptist churches have a creed. They disclaim the existence of a creed among them or say "Our creed is the Bible." In fact they have a creed and are remarkably loyal to it, much to their praise.

Our Church as truly has a ritual, though supposed to have none, and is not always loyal to it. To call attention to this and to recall our younger ministers to the ritual of their Church in the conduct of public worship is the object of these comments.

Ritual is defined as "the manner of performing divine service in a particular Church or communion"; also "a book containing the rites to be observed." Out of this latter meaning has grown the common idea of ritualism, "confidence in mere rites or external ceremonies," which our Church conspicuously and as a unit resists. In the first sense given above our Church has a ritual and a noble one, the chief characteristic of which is simplicity and such absence of form that one might be misled into the statement that we have no ritual, a supposition as far from reality as the assertion that our Baptist brethren have no creed.

DR. GIRARDEAU AS A PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER.

BY THOENTON WHALING, D. D., LL. D.

President, Columbia Theo. Seminary.

The personality and character of a great man is elusive, defying definition or adequate representation. And yet approached from different angles and photographed in its different aspects we can obtain something like a rounded and full orb'd conception of the essential spirit of the man, manifested perhaps in manifold ways and in many diverse spheres. Dr. Girardeau was a many-sided man, who achieved the first rank in a number of different and apparently conflicting departments and yet all who really knew him detected beyond doubt the fact that whether as soldier, patriot, preacher, presbyter, teacher, controversialist or author he was essentially the same.

The friend and familiar in the most intimate social and affectional relations was in no wise different from the star which blazed in the pulpit or shed lustre wherever its orbit led it. It is an essential part of his character that he was so true to his own type and individuality that his biographer has no difficult task of reconciliation, as in so many other cases, where one part of a man's life must be harmonized with another or one aspect of his character demonstrated as consistent with others. He makes this unity of impression because sincerity, reality and conviction had unified the elemental bases on which life and character are builded.

Dr. Girardeau was of Huguenot and Welsh extraction and the characteristic marks of these two great races were reproduced in him in striking and suggestive form. *Physically* he was a model of strong and vigorous and graceful manhood. His voice was musical and powerful, capable at once of the tenderest notes and of the organ tones. He held it in perfect command as the responsive servant of every mood of feeling

and delicate shade of thought and though speaking a foreign language that matchless voice would have commanded audience as a masterly instrument rendering impressive music. He had a magnetic and speaking eye and a facial expression which gave unconscious and swift response to every utterance. His action and gestures were easy and graceful, the natural result of bodily symmetry and of the dominance of the material by the spiritual. He had great powers of physical endurance, on more than one occasion having sat up all night in preparation to preach on the succeeding day, without any signs of exhaustion or fatigue in the delivery of the sermons. *Mentally* he presented an unusual combination of the imaginative and rational powers, rendering it sometimes a disputed question as to which was the stronger in his intellectual make-up. The blazing passion and glowing imagery in which he often indulged in pulpit or public speech sometimes concealed the iron logic and globe deep granite of his reasoning. But his imagination was superinduced upon his reason as it were, and the strongest faculty of his mind was the thought or rational power which could know no satisfaction until it reached the ultimate and basal. Everywhere and in all spheres, in conversation, studies, in pulpit or class-room his inveterate habit resulting from the imperative of his natural constitution was the search for the last analysis which would give the all conditioning and interpretative truth. By instinct, by nature he must get to the bottom and reach bed rock or he was restless and dissatisfied in his mental processes. No one would claim that he always succeeded, for this would make him more than an infallible pope, but all who knew him must know that whatever subject his mind touched, his inevitable effort was to find the fundamental principles which were determinative in that field. *Emotionally*, he had powerful affections which showed their strength in the domestic, social and ecclesiastical circles. He was generous to a degree in dealing with the faults of his brethren and friends. He was lavish in his gifts to those who sought his aids; and sometimes doubtless was unwise in their bestowment. It would frequently have been wise to empty his pockets.

before going into the streets in order that beggars might not reap the contents. His loyalty to his friends was as marked as his affection for them. In short he had a great heart which loved deeply; and his passionate affection for family and friends and State and Church was the result, and thus secured for him also a generous measure of affection from those associated with him. I believe he never had a student who failed to love him or who cherished any doubt of the interest and sympathetic regard which his teacher had for his student. And yet like John Calvin, of the same race and to whom it seems he must have been blood relative, he was also a "good hater." He abhorred falsehood, and fundamental heresy and meanness. As with the Apostle Paul and with every man who has ever wrought valiantly for God's Kingdom he had a strong combativeness, which did not make him an easy foe or lead him to any hasty or inglorious retreats. Strong and right emotions will not only show themselves in love for righteousness but also in hatred of evil, and the man who loves God sincerely will also likely have some strong feelings of an opposite character toward the devil and his minions. A man who is incapable of being a controversialist is made of dough and putty, is in fact an amorphous mass of molluscous stuff, and no material of the sort entered into the structure and building of Dr. Girardeau's character and therefore he was a good fighter who did not use a lath for a sword or a pop-gun for a weapon. He had a *powerful will*, which drove under its own self-decision all his powers to their appointed task. Central in the man, sometimes hidden from view by the activities of other faculties, like Pike's Peak concealed for a season by the clouds, but always there and ever determinative and controlling by the momentum of its sheer weight was the inflexible will, which always pointed to the center and which unlike the magnet could not be diverted by extraneous influences even for a little while to point in any other direction. After all, will is most central, powerful and personal and when will is shot through and through with reason you must have a forceful and impressive character. Be the derivation of the word man what

it may, you can not get the fact man unless around the will as a center you build all the other integral powers and element by which the will acts and through which the man realizes himself. This was the impression he made, rational will central and controlling and all the other powers obedient and serving satellites; and we have thus the man fitted for the high uses of service and life to which he consecrated himself.

His natural characteristics were colored and flavored by the section into which he was born and the environment in which he grew up. James Island, virtually a part of the environs of Charleston, South Carolina, was his birth place and early home. The world has never yet produced a higher type of gentleman than the real South Carolina gentleman. And such was he. Charleston too produces fruit having its own flavor: and choicer fruit no man can show. The Virginia Baptist, Dr. Jeter, used to have an often quoted saw to the effect, What is the difference between a gentleman from Boston and one from Charleston? The answer is, the gentleman from Boston looks like I know everything there is to be known in the universe; while the gentleman from Charleston looks like, I know everything it is worth a gentleman's while to know. The Charleston gentleman at his best estate is represented in our South Carolina preacher and theologian. Even the physical features of sea and land were somehow imprinted on him. And those manners gracious and considerate, free from every trace of self-assertion on the one hand or efforts to ingratiate on the other had a good exemplar in him. He loved his State and city with passionate fervor. He fought for it with unquestioning devotion. He loved the music of the waves upon its beach. He once said that when he reached heaven, he would ask for a boat that he might row upon the crystal sea and live hard by the resounding thunder of the surf upon the shore. He spent his life within the confines of his own beloved Carolina. Though often called to great positions North and East and West his lot had been definitely and finally cast in with his own people to live and to die with them. He knew its history and its people, their virtues and their faults, and all of the patriotism of

his nature exhausted itself in the great love which he gave to his State and the Southland.

His education strengthened the impress which his own city and State made upon him. He graduated at the head of his class at the Charleston College, and afterward pursued his theological studies at the Seminary in Columbia, the capital of South Carolina. The selectest culture of his State contributed to the rare scholarship and character, which proved as in so many cases, that no excursions beyond the State confines were necessary to make the scholarly and cultivated gentleman and the efficient and well-equipped man of affairs. I once heard the distinguished Dr. Henry M. Bruns who taught the classic language when he was a student at the Charleston College almost regretfully speak of the splendid teacher of Latin and Greek who had been lost when the pulpit and theology claimed him as their own. He laid solid foundations which bore well the strain that the superstructure placed upon them; and the whole work bore the South Carolina stamp in every part of it as the old builders used to imprint their mark on every brick which they used in erecting their edifices. Like his great predecessor Thornwell he was a typical South Carolinian and it might have been told of him as truly narrated of Thornwell that returning from a tour in the old world when told that at last he was on South Carolina soil again, he leaped from the vehicle in which he was riding, fell prostrate on the ground, kissed the soil of his native State over and over again with expressions of profound affection.

The grace of God did not alter Dr. Girardeau's hereditary traits, natural temperament, native gifts, acquired scholarship, his racial, social, intellectual tendencies, but lifted all these to higher ends and consecrated them to the service of Christ and His Church. The man who was by nature great became the Christian who was by grace still greater. His natural powers were magnetized and vivified by the supernatural revelation to which he submitted with the assent of his whole being. His imperial *imagination* visualized and envisaged eternal realities until they became to him and seemed to others as vivid and substantial as

the solid globe itself. He revelled in imagery which almost interpreted to sense-perception the themes of which he spoke. When speaking of heaven he saw its glories, when speaking of hell he saw its horrors, if preaching of patriarchs or apostles he saw the procession pass before his eye as though they were in the street before him. The entire contents of Scripture, so far as possible, had passed through the alembic of his imagination and received the stamp of his own individuality in his mental representations of them and this gave a wondrous vividness to his presentations of Scripture in pulpit or class-room or private converse. His *reason* found full scope for exercise in his construction of the system of doctrine in the inspired Word, and the distinctive feature of his every utterance whether in pulpit on some great occasion or in prayer meeting on a rainy Wednesday evening or at informal conference with his students was that every interpretation of Scripture however apparently extemporaneous, sought to find the fundamental embedded in the particular passage in Scripture. The Infinite Reason appealing to the finite reason found in him one who believed it was good religion to use the rational power to its utmost in receiving and construing the thoughts which God offered to intelligent creatures. It was not always easy listening to follow him as he poured out the results of his intense reflections, relieved and colored though they usually were with the imaginative products which helped to explain them. He drove a splendid chariot with reason and imagination as the fleet and winged steeds and lazy listeners and students sometimes found themselves wondering whither the chariot had gone. His powerful *emotions* were evoked by grace and redemption and through these divine channels were poured the tides of his great affections. Few preachers or teachers in all the ages have ever had the power to exalt in so glowing words the Saviour and Lord of lost sinners, for few have had so great a heart so much absorbed in love for this Lord and Saviour. Those spontaneous and irrepressible outbursts of blazing and contagious emotion expressing his religious feelings of adoration and love for his God and Saviour marked him everywhere,

in converse with a single friend, in teaching a cloistered class, in debating some controverted part, in preaching to hundreds of eager listeners, and they were as natural as the springing fountain which must relieve the pressure that forces it out of the depths. His *will* was braced by grace for the duties and conflicts of the Christian life. He knew the meaning of sin and redemption. He did not conceal the fact that he had a hard fight in living the life of faith. A nature so rich as his must have been the scene of a fierce internal conflict. The temptations and trials and duties of the minister of Jesus Christ as he so well knew them strained to the utmost his grace controlled will re-enforced though it was by the supernatural power of God. A profound experience of the subtlety and masterfulness of sin, resulting in a contest as if for life and death, a contest often renewed, and bringing an ever increasing abhorrence of sin and deeper dependence on the Almighty grace of God's Spirit—this was the experience of conflict issuing in growing triumph through grace that disciplined and developed his will for the uses of the Kingdom. A dynamic personality by nature belonged to him, but rendered still more dynamic by his profound experience of grace; the man and the saint, scored deep their own individual impress on every one capable of impression is remarkable and striking.

In all the spheres in which Dr. Girardeau served this unity of impression is remarkable and striking. In the pulpit the combination was the same as in the professor's chair or in the forum of debate or in the author's seat. I venture to give a personal recollection. When the Synod of South Carolina in 1886 met in Cheraw in the church of which I was pastor Dr. Girardeau was appointed to preach on the morning of the Sabbath day. His text was Ps. 53:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." The subject "Anti-theistic Theories." Agnosticism, Pantheism, Materialism received their philosophic deserts there that day. But there were not a few who while they knew something great was going on were not aware of exactly what it was. In the afternoon he preached in a mission chapel six miles in the country to an audience of

plain laborers and peasant farmers. The theme was the "Gospel of Reconciliation" and for one hour the doctrine of grace had elaborate and logical exposition, but through it all the audience sat breathless, with the stillness of death, tied by the elocution, the delivery, the passion, the imaginative outbursts and perhaps in part too by the majestic doctrines which the theologian was unfolding. The same evening to the Colored Presbyterian Church in the town he preached on Mark 10:49, "Rise, he calleth thee." His imagination seemed to have been unlimbered and liberated by the sermons of the morning and afternoon. He gave it the bridle and allowed it to career at will. It rained falling stars—the aurora borealis, the lightning, a storm at sea, the thunder of artillery in mighty battle all combined could not have been more impressive. He moved his audience, both white and colored, like the wind a field of wheat. It was evident now why in his great negro church at Charleston hundreds both white and black had thronged to hear him. Yet through it all the bed rock of Scriptural doctrine and theology was the base on which he built and to which he returned. At the close I ventured as an old student of his to say to him, "Doctor, I have heard you three times today, and you reached the climax tonight." He seemed surprised and almost inclined to regard as humorous the statement of the speaker. But it was the truth, the philosopher spoke in the morning, the theologian spoke in the afternoon, and the preacher preached in the evening. The writer has never changed his opinion that the evening sermon in that little negro church in Cheraw was the finest illustration of popular pulpit eloquence which he ever heard and he is inclined to doubt whether the Church in our day has had another man who could have equalled it. Dr. James Buckley, the editor of the *Methodist Advocate* of New York, happening somewhere in the nineties one Sunday afternoon to stray into the little church in Columbia of which Dr. Girardeau was then pastor to hear him preach one of his usual, ordinary sermons, wrote back to his New York paper that night, "I have just heard the greatest living preacher."

As a controversialist the same man was in evidence. Sometimes his apparent over-refinements in debate confused the less thoughtful and scholarly of his listeners, but he must go to the bottom though others might decline to go with him. He was a powerful debater and the combativeness which is a part of every strong man's make-up was not always absent. The coward who fears a fight will never prove the hero who wins a battle. His war record as chaplain and soldier is known and treasured by thousands, in his own personal experience he had to "fight the good fight of faith" and in his ecclesiastical life his conscience led him into more than one controversy. His courage, fearlessness of personal consequences, loyalty to duty and truth as he saw it no one could properly doubt. Dr. Girardeau's ablest products are in the controversial field. His refutation of Spencerianism in his "Philosophical Discussions" is as fine an illustration of remorseless logic tracking down falsehood from one concealed position to another as our modern philosophy has to show. And his "Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism" is the strongest piece of righteous polemics which our American theology can put on exhibition. In a world of sin and falsehood he thought there was something better than always "keeping the peace"—and any estimate of his personality would be fractional that failed to emphasize his determination not to be at peace with anything which he regarded as sin or falsehood. If one did not wish to know from him what he regarded as the truth it was better not to put him on the witness stand. On one occasion while sitting as an auditor in a Methodist Church the preacher undertook to give the *ordo salutis* and said, "I see in the audience the distinguished professor of theology in Columbia Seminary who knows of course that this is the right order." Rising in his seat at once our professor said, "I would not have said a word on this occasion had I not been mentioned by name, but I feel constrained to say that the *ordo salutis* as given by the preacher is totally different from that which I hold." Let us suppose the preacher learned the lesson of wisdom in selecting more carefully his witnesses. While not pugnacious or ugly in seeking combat

the truth of history would not be served by denying that there was a real congruity in the appointment of Dr. Girardeau as a professor both of Dogmatic and Polemic Theology.

As a teacher his dynamic and singularly homogeneous personality made a powerful impression upon qualified and appreciative students. His class room was an intellectual gymnasium. There was without intermission the most earnest grappling with the profoundest themes. There was no skimming of the surface. He who wanted easy sailing upon calm seas had better study theology elsewhere. Believing in the essential harmony of the divine and human reason, the teacher busied himself largely with the philosophic and rational construction of the contents of Scripture. Faith itself was construed as the highest exercise of reason. The modern church has produced no theologian who wrought more continuously and successfully at the problem of the conciliation of reason and faith and who exhibited more impressively the rationality of the Calvinism which constitutes the heart of revelation. And yet his class-room was never dull. Dr. Dry-as-Dust was no occupant of the chair in which he sat as professor. Imagination lit up every topic with illuminating illustrations. The wealth of pertinent examples and imagery which he caused to revolve around every theological subject clothed it with magnetic interest for all except the mentally dead or only half-alive. Blazing emotion, sometimes poured out like red-hot lava, tied attention to his exposition if the student had heart to feel. The teacher could not treat the doctrines of grace as coldly as if they were mathematical formulae, and the instincts and habits of the trained and powerful preacher showed themselves in the handling of the great truths of Scripture. One requisite—amongst many—he had in supreme degree as a teacher of theology, viz: that he could preach theology while teaching it to the very students he was teaching and to whom at the same time he was preaching. If there has ever been any place more thoroughly alive than Dr. Girardeau's class-room in theology I have never happened to visit that place. On occasion the class became the forum of debate. The teacher was ready to be challenged

and to accept the challenge. The student learned not to lightly challenge, for his challenge was not allowed to pass without support of valid reasons, and he who was without reasons for opposing found it better to keep silence. The teacher's resources were never so fully and successfully used as when some bright and eager students with the teacher's full permission, controverted the teacher's position and found that there was now a debate on hand, in which the skill and the resources of the student were to have severest test by the combat with the skill and resources of the teacher. It was interesting, thought-provoking and perhaps no superior method of teaching living theology to actual students could be devised. The careless challenger might sometimes think he was roughly handled, the immature debater would see in the lightning flash his own immaturities revealed, but the thoughtful and earnest seeker after light would find his difficulties met and his doubts resolved, while the disputatious gainsayer—and such sometimes develop even in a theological seminary—would find that the Charge of the Light Brigade was not a circumstance to the thunders of artillery which demolished his feeble array of foolish argumentation. The Confederate Soldier and chaplain of whose courage so many Johnny Rebs like to tell was of a piece with the professor who counted every false doctrine as his foe, and who if he drew fire was ready to return it.

In private life and social converse the same man impressed his friends and tied them to himself with links of steel. Conversation with him did not mean trivial gossip or indulgence in a train of inconsequential reminiscences. In private as in public his reason was ever wrestling with fundamental truth and imagination and passion were partners in the interprise. Some of the most illuminating expositions of doctrine I ever heard from him were heard when only two were present, and some of the most searching debates in which I ever engaged with anyone were engaged in with him when only the same two were present. And eloquent as he was in pulpit or class-room or Church court with a naturalness and spontaneity which denied repression, so eloquent often was he with the same spontaneity when friend

met friend, when mind stimulated mind, and heart stirred heart, in the contacts of social or friendly intercourse. No grander utterances ever fell from his lips than multitudes of his sayings around the study fire, or walking on the street or riding by the side of friend on the train. They were the natural and inevitable products of a great mind and heart animated by a profound experience of the grace of God.

And all his gifts and graces, all the strength of personality and character flowered out in that mighty faith which was his most distinctive mark, which was at once the expression and the secret of the man he really was. His biographer must tell the life story which illustrates this statement. I close with a personal recollection. I saw him for the last time only a short time before his death, when confined to his room and as he himself said in conscious prospect of his speedy departure; and then without referring to his published sermon on "The Pastoral Presence of Jesus with his People in Death" he gave his personal testimony and experience as to the presence of his Lord with him. He said "I have had a fierce conflict. Satan with all his hellish arts has assaulted my soul, but the Lord has brought me into his pavillion, in the secret of his tabernacle he hath hidden me, and the darts of the wicked one can no longer reach me. *Teneo et teneor*. I hold and I am held. I hold because I am held. O that *et teneor*." I cannot reproduce the words further; I cannot describe the scene. I have never again heard words so moving, spoken in a manner so impressive from the lips of man. The powers of human speech and eloquence I believe could reach no higher than in the unconstrained and spontaneous testimony which he gave that day to his one listener. It was the crowning revelation of his personality and character.