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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.

THE FOREIGN MISSION SITUATION IN OUR CHURCH.

The condition of the interests of Foreign Missions in our Church is serious. How can it be wisely dealt with? It is the resultant of a number of contributing causes. The most important of these is the remarkable opening up of foreign lands in recent years to the gospel. The cry that comes up from China, Japan, Korea and Africa, not to mention other countries, has mightily stirred the Church and induced her to put forth efforts for the evangelization of the heathen unheard of heretofore in the history of missions. Protestant Christendom has farmed out the mission fields among various branches of the Church, 25,000,000 of heathen people being assigned to us of the Southern Presbyterian Church as our share of the whole for whose evangelization we are asked to become responsible. The Students Volunteer Movement swept over the Church and large numbers of consecrated young men and women offered themselves for the work. About five years ago our General Assembly adopted a missionary platform and policy urging our people to make the goal of their endeavor a contribution of \$4.00 per member annually for the support of this cause. A mistake was made in trying to put this policy into immediate operation before the people were either ready or able to meet it. The Forward Movement was inaugurated and many of the churches were visited by special agents and urged to make liberal subscriptions which were intended by the canvassers to be continuing, but which in numerous instances were misunderstood by the contributors. As a consequence, many churches found themselves pledged to make annual payments which were above the level of their generosity and perhaps in some cases of their ability. In the meantime a change in the financial policy of the Church was inaugurated—the Executive Committees were combined and reduced to four in number,

the "budget system" adopted and "the every member canvass" urged upon the people. The Laymen's Missionary Movement added to the enthusiasm and under the influence of all of these causes our Executive Committee was led to enlarge our missionary operations beyond the ability or at least the willingness of the Church to sustain them. In this the committee was undoubtedly executing the will of the Church, and the whole burden therefore should not be thrown upon their shoulders. With the missionaries in the field calling loudly for re-enforcements on the one hand, and the people at home urging them to send out more laborers on the other, and with the promise of largely increased contributions from the churches, what were they to do but respond? The clamor also from churches, societies, and individuals for special missionaries to support complicated the situation and increased their embarrassment. When we calmly review the conditions under which we have been laboring for five or six years past, we should not be surprised that our committee is burdened with a debt of considerably over \$100,000.

When we turn to the remedy for this state of things there are several matters that should be carefully considered. The work has evidently gotten beyond the present ability of the Church to support it if it continue to advance at the rate at which it has been moving. Unless we consent to jeopardize the other sacred interests of the Church, it is quite clear to my mind, that our progress in foreign missionary operations should be arrested and held if possible at the present status until the Church is able to catch up. The splendid enthusiasm which has burned in the hearts of our people is admirable but it will not support our missionaries, and it is morally wrong to send out consecrated men and women to foreign lands to preach the gospel whom we either are not willing or are not able to sustain. This debt must be paid and it will have to be paid through the regular channels of the Church and not by spasmodic efforts. The cause should be earnestly presented to the Church and the debt should be gradually liquidated out of the contributions of

the people and as rapidly as the necessary demands of the work will permit.

It should not be forgotten that giving is a grace, and that as a grace it can not be forced. Christian people and especially Presbyterians, resent being held up and told that it is their duty to give to a cause a certain amount whether they feel themselves able to do it or not. Some causes in our Church have suffered from over-zealous methods of the compulsory order. We love to see our people abound in this as in other graces of the spirit, but I for one do not believe that the methods of the civil tax collector will foster the growth of it. Presbyterians have always been spontaneous givers, and they respond best to appeals addressed to the highest motives. If we forsake the elevated plain upon which our offerings for benevolent purposes have always been gathered, and adopt methods which leave the impression upon the minds of the people that they are being taxed by the Church authorities without their own consent, in my judgment, instead of increasing we will diminish the amounts received for the support of the causes.

These remarks may be deemed by some unnecessary but I believe that the rights of the pastors and sessions of churches, to say nothing of the deacons, are not infrequently invaded by unwise agents in their enthusiastic efforts to accomplish some definite purpose within a specified and perhaps mechanically fixed period. I am quite sure that such methods, suggested by the commercial spirit of the age, find no support in the Holy Scriptures.

RUSSELL CECIL.

THE FOREIGN MISSIONARY SITUATION— IS THERE A WAY OUT?

The Foreign Missionary situation in our Church in its main features is very easily understood and has been very clearly and frequently stated. Two things are needed—needed imperatively and needed at once, if we are to meet the expectations of the Saviour who gave His life for us, if we are to do the will of the King who has commanded us to make disciples of all nations. We must have, first, money to pay off a large debt upon our Foreign Missionary treasury incurred in doing the blessed work already accomplished. We must have a largely increased income, steadily and faithfully paid in, to enable us to send out the increasing number of missionaries volunteering and demanded by the thrice glorious opportunities which are challenging the Church as she has never been challenged before, and to equip and maintain the enlarged work without the recurrence of this debt. These are the things we all want with our whole heart. These are the things we would rejoice to hand over to the Church this very moment if it were in our power to do it. Isn't that so?

Well, need we stop with wishing? Are we so powerless in the presense of this situation as we are tempted to think? Is there a way out? Certainly there is a way out! "A sure and safe one," of God's own providing.

The way is one I am tempted to keep silent about but I am going to resist the temptation as of the Evil One. I have thought over the reasons for *not* suggesting this way and they are not good reasons. One of the motives for not speaking out is: "It's well known. Everybody knows that. It's a mere truism." But the Apostle Peter "stirred up the sincere minds" of his fellow Christians "by putting them in *remembrance*; that they should *remember* the words which were spoken before and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour." Christians may forget

or overlook what they well know. Another objection my mind urges is: Your suggestion will glance off the surface of peoples' minds, waking no response, unless it be a good-natured assent or a gentle smile, "Certainly, good, pious soul, that's true, perfectly true." But if God is in the suggestion he will be with it and carry it home. There will be some doubtless who will take it seriously. The sharpest temptation to keep still on this point has been the fear that the suggestion I feel moved to make will sound to many like religious *cant*. It is so often heard on lips which seem to feel so little its profound and earnest import, it is so glibly offered on so many occasions as a cheap cure-all, that one feels when he rises to utter it, foredoomed to have it flung back at him if not with irritation at least with quiet contempt not by men who have no earnest piety, but by men whose piety is so earnest that they demand reality in all religion and misunderstand the spirit of this suggestion and respond to it as true men *ought* to respond to *cant*. But if one speak out of an earnest and honest conviction there will probably be an accent of reality about his speech which will reach and commend itself to the earnest and honest hearer. In this case, moreover, we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen. We are witnesses of these things. So here goes the suggestion of "a way out."

A child may be a very weak and incompetent person in certain situations. He is constantly finding himself involved in difficulties with which he cannot cope. What is his resource? His father's wisdom, strength, wealth and general competency. In these things the child has entire confidence. When he gets into trouble he runs to his father. I once heard a story which, while it raised a general laugh yet touched my heart with its piercing pathos. A boy, the son of a multi-millionaire, was not at all bright. He was sent to a school where his teacher patiently endeavored for days to get him to understand some elementary principles, but utterly failed. Finally, losing patience, she exclaimed wearily, "You poor child, you just haven't got any brains." The little fellow's lip quivered and he answered: "Well, I guess papa can buy me some." He felt that

his father's wealth was equal to anything. Bless his heart! There are some things which all his father's money couldn't buy. But there is absolutely nothing beyond the power of our Father who is in heaven. This Father of ours owns all the silver and the gold and the cattle upon a thousand hills. He has said to us, "Ask and it shall be given you." "And this is the boldness which we have towards him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him." I wish every reader of these words would turn to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and read the 8th and 9th chapters. This is the point I call special attention to just here—that after urging the Corinthians to give bountifully Paul says this: "God is able to make all grace abound unto you, that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything may abound unto every good work." God can make his people able to give as well as willing to give. Our Church needs money—a lot of it. She needs it for the doing of a work clearly revealed to be "according to God's will." Her Father has all the money in the universe at His command. He has invited His Church to ask Him for whatever she needs and has promised in explicit terms to give her what she asks for. Now you know what my suggestion is going to be: Brethren, let us PRAY.

I said I speak as a witness. When I was pastor of the Central Church, Atlanta, Ga., we faced again and again the need of money, the need of more money than the church had been accustomed to give, of more money than the officers thought the church was willing to give. Our plan was to call a season (usually a week) of prayer over the situation. Some of our people gathered in the lecture room at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and spent 30 minutes in definite prayer for the amount we needed. We *always* got what we asked for. Once in an emergency we got precisely what we asked for and every penny subscribed was paid—a thing which our treasurer said was perhaps unparalleled in the history of church finance. That was the way we cleared away the debt on the church building. That

was the way we built our modern Sunday-school annex. That was the way we met a sharp crisis in the home mission work of our Presbytery. God never failed us when we prayed for success. We did not get the whole body of the people out to the prayer meetings either. Usually only a little group gathered at the church. Others were perhaps praying with us at home. But God heard those who *did* ask and honored their faith with the blessing. What my heart fairly aches to see is our Assembly on its knees before God for deliverance. When Israel was about to turn back into Egypt and stone Moses he fell on his face before God and the multitude was stayed. When Ezra faced the situation in the Church of Palestine he fell down before Jehovah confessing his people's sins and his own and was heard. Nehemiah wrought as earnestly in prayer as with his sword and trowel. At all crises the Church has been driven to prayer. There is nothing too hard for Jehovah but he will "be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." I wish our Presbyteries at the spring meetings would set apart a day of their sessions for prayer for this gift. I wish pastors whose hearts are burdened about it would call their congregation together for a season of concerted prayer for this gift. I wish that little groups of Christians anywhere would meet for prayer for this gift. And I wish that every one of God's people would enter into His closet and when He has shut His door would pray to His Father who is in secret. Let us humble ourselves for our shameful apathy and confess our sins of covetousness and beg for the grace of Christian liberality which is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

THERON H. RICE.