

THE LIFE WORK

OF

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COMPILED AND EDITED

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CHAPTER VII

THE PRESBYTER

By R. A. WEBB, D. D., LL. D.

J Dr. Girardeau was first of all a *Christian*. His piety was intellectual, bottoming itself upon the profound and steady convictions of his great mind. It was fervent, drawing upon all the strong emotions of his sensitive heart. It was ethical, involving his conscience in the deepest sense of sin, and making duty stand above him as an imperial master. It laid its hand upon his will, carrying him fearlessly to his tasks, and into controversies which were painful to his spirit. He was above all a devout man.

Next to his piety he was a *preacher*. Among others, he stood *par excellence*. Reasoning and rhetoric, physique and presence, voice and vocalization, gesture and grace, all waited upon his command. His pulpit eloquence was not like the gradual ascent of the Rocky Mountains, by one long, splendid, continuous climb; there were a succession of climatic flights in each sermon, like the undulating beauty of the picturesque Blue Ridge.

The story of his sermon on "The Last Judgment" illustrates his reputation and popularity as a preacher. He prepared this sermon while a student in the Theological Seminary. It became very popular, and congregations frequently called for it. Once, after he had become a professor in the Seminary, the Legislature of South Carolina requested him to preach it. He did so in the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia. A

great congregation was present, crowding both the floor and galleries, which were then on three sides of the building. The preacher was fully up to himself, in voice, gesture and spirit. Contrary to his general custom, he delivered it from the manuscript. It was an hour and a half long. Attention was tense from the first. But when the flute-like voice rose to its best, reinforced by the silent language of gesture and face, many of the hearers stretched themselves forward as far as they could reach. Tears poured down cheeks and spittle fell from relaxed mouths. When the preacher's voice hushed the multitude fell back into position with an audible heave, which sounded as if it had come simultaneously from every breast.

Then he was a *philosopher*, whose mind roamed, with intoxicating delight, the raised fields of loftiest speculation, but always settled down at the footstool of Consciousness and Common Sense.

He was next a *theologian*, interpreting the facts of the Bible into the doctrines of the Christian Faith, then organizing them into a system which satisfied his loyalty to both Revelation and Reason.

But, in his many-sidedness, he was also a *presbyter* of the first rank. He loved the Christian Life, the Christian Faith, and the Christian Philosophy, and the Christian Order also. In his estimation, Church Polity took not an unimportant, but only a lesser, rank than Doctrine. He thought much upon this topic, and read widely in this department. He was an ecclesiastical statesman, and a skilful practitioner in the courts of his Church.

He believed that *the Church was a divine institution* and not a human organization. Its constitution and powers, its officers and agencies, were all indicated in

the Scriptures. He held tenaciously to the principle, "Whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden." He applied it in the realm of doctrine, discipline and worship. It was the only one which would safely protect the conscience, and insure religious liberty for the members of the Church. He always resisted any proposition, policy, or custom which he thought logically infringed this fundamental tenet. With him it was regulative, and all-controlling. He denied that voluntarism which phrased itself, "Whatsoever is not forbidden is permitted." The Church was a divine organization, with a divine constitution, and all ecclesiastical action must be remorselessly ruled by the proposition that whatsoever is not commanded, either explicitly or implicitly, in Scripture is unlawful and forbidden. The Church has no discretionary power. None in its didactic, in its diacritic, nor in its diatactic spheres. Both its ecclesiology and its practice must be wholly biblical. He had not the least bit of sympathy with voluntarism in any of its forms or applications.

Yet, while holding this high doctrine of the nature, organization and authority of the Church, Dr. Girardeau was not a High Churchman. He believed in the fallibility of all synods and councils. Their decrees were of force only when consonant with the Word of God. Then they were binding, not because they were ecclesiastical, but because they were biblical. As ecclesiastical, they were venerable presumptions, but they must be sanctioned by Scripture to bind the conscience and conduct. The Church was not a source of authority. It was but an organ for expressing the authority of God to the world. Hence all its decisions must be biblical to be binding.

He passionately believed in the *spirituality* of the Church. He thought its sphere was defined by the Scriptures, even as were its powers. Church and State were separated by the ordinance of God. Each was a trespasser when it obtruded into the realm of the other. Synods and councils could handle nothing but biblical matters. Political, social, economic topics lay entirely outside its charter. The Church must protect, as well as sanction, the human conscience. He was hostile to Romanism and all prelatical tendencies to put the Church over the State. He was just as stoutly opposed to all forms of an Erastianism, which would subordinate the Church to the State. They were not intersecting circles. The Church was limited to the religion of the Bible, and all its powers, when acting upon purely biblical subjects, were only ministerial and declarative. She has no right to inflict any physical penalties of any kind whatsoever. Hence, when the General Assembly of his Church in 1861 laid down a political policy and prescribed a political programme, he joined the party of Southern resisters and found himself one of the founders and fathers of his denomination. To the day of his death he held this doctrine of the spirituality of the Church, and in its interest resisted all efforts at organic union with the Northern body, which he felt had offended against it, and had never adequately repented of doing so.

Dr. Girardeau was a *jure divino* Presbyterian. He was no opportunist. He did not believe that the Scriptures were non-committal on the form of church government, leaving the whole matter to the discretion of each body of believers. He believed a pattern had been shown in the Mount, and that that pattern was Presbyterianism.

His Presbyterianism was not a mere inheritance. It was not the expedient product of his environment. He was born in a community where both prelacy and independency were influential. His ecclesiology was the product of wide reading and much reflection. He earnestly investigated Popery and Prelacy, Congregationalism and Independency. I have not infrequently heard him say that it was easy for him to see the unscripturalness of Popery and Prelacy, and also Congregationalism in its pure and unmodified forms; but that it was not so clear to him, in his early ministry, that the Independent Presbyterian Church was not the New Testament ideal. There was the Church at Jerusalem, and the Church at Antioch, and the Church at Corinth, and at other places. Each was Presbyterian in its form, but was there a Presbytery binding them into an organic union with each other? This was not so obvious. By and by he came to see that there were not only "churches," but a "Church," of which they were units. Then as each of the "churches" were Presbyterian, by good and necessary inference the "Church" over all must be Presbyterian. It was then easy for him to see the logicalness of applying the presbyterial idea to the formation of "sessions," "presbyteries," "synods," and "assemblies." And sometimes he talked fascinatingly and enthusiastically about Thornwell's dream of a "Presbyterian Parliament of the World." Yet he opposed the formation of "The Pan-Presbyterian Alliance" on expedient grounds.

While Dr. Girardeau was thus soundly convinced that the biblical form of church government was Presbyterian, he was not bigoted and exclusive. His evangelical spirit made him fraternize, with all big-heartedness, with all evangelical denominations. He used to

tell the story that once his beloved brother and friend, Dr. Gadsden, an Episcopal clergyman, said to him, "Girardeau, the older I get the less denominational I become." Dr. Girardeau replied, "Gadsden, the older I get the more denominational I become." Dr. Gadsden answered, "Your statement is surprising; I thought you were growing in grace." Dr. Girardeau replied, "My denominational creed teaches me that there are other sheep not of the Presbyterian fold; and the older I get the more heartily do I believe it; hence, as I grow in grace I am growing in denominationalism."

The story illustrates that he was a convinced Presbyterian, a loyal and devoted lover of his denomination, but unbigoted and catholic in his spirit towards all the evangelical denominations. At the same time he was unfraternal and uncompromising towards those who denied essential doctrines of the Christian Faith. For example, he was intolerant of Papists and Unitarians.

He was faithful in his attendance upon the church courts. He almost invariably participated in their deliberations. In his discussions he would illuminate principles, draw distinctions, extricate the proposition from confusion, set it out clearly, and then advocate it or oppose it, with a logic that was generally convincing, and with an eloquence that was always charming. He kept a watchful eye upon all policies that were proposed, and when their subject-matter was serious, he took a hand in their consideration. When he offered a report he generally sustained it with a speech that appealed to the reason and the heart of the members. Many of his finest arguments and most thrilling declamations were on questions where opinion was not divided. It was always an object with him to clear the minds and stimulate the interest and arouse the zeal

of his fellow-presbyters. When an issue was joined with him he was always a courteous debater, never indulging in flings, almost never personal, argumentative and fair. He never dignified trivialities. He never wrangled for victory. Meetings rarely broke with a sting which he had caused. It was his habit to forecast, as far as he could, the matter which would come before the body, and then carefully prepare himself for its discussion. He made a rule early in his ministry to go to the meetings of the judicatories of his Church with at least one topic carefully considered, and laid out in an orderly manner in his mind. Many of the brethren went to the Presbytery in the hope of hearing a speech from him. It was always a treat and an edification when he took the floor on any matter.

He despised every species of politicating in the church courts. He never sought his ends by indirection, arts, or tricks. Open in all his views, transparent in all his methods, he scorned to take "the under hold." Brave and honest, he relied upon truth and fact. Generous, he confessed when defeated, and acknowledged when a point was made against him. He was a leader, not by seeking the pre-eminence, but by his commanding intellect, suffused with his lovable qualities of heart.

He was not litigious and captious and quarrelsome. To him the filings of the sanctuary were worth all the gold of Egypt, all the gold of the world, and he unshrinkingly contended for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." It was this spirit which carried him into the controversy over evolution. He felt then that the Bible's statement of fact was challenged, and that his loyalty to the faith called upon him to resist its introduction into the teachings of his Church.

While he did not relish defeat, he had little ambition for mere personal triumph.

His brethren often sent him as a commissioner to the General Assembly, the supreme court of his Church. Especially when they foresaw some important matter looming upon the horizon. He was made the Moderator of that body in 1874, when it met at Columbus, Miss. The next year it met at St. Louis, and, according to custom, Dr. Girardeau preached the opening sermon, which was an argument to show that the Church had no discretionary power, but must restrict itself, in all its teachings and actings, to the Word of God. All his life he was a member of the Charleston Presbytery and the Synod of South Carolina.

The views on many Church questions which Dr. Girardeau espoused, and advocated with tongue and pen, are interesting.

Having been a missionary to the negroes when they were slaves and after they were freed, he had a deep and abiding concern in the religious and ecclesiastical life of these inferior people. Both on his own account, and at the instruction of Presbytery, Synod, and Assembly, he gave much attention to the best solution of this problem. He knew that these people were, by nature, almost destitute of executive and managerial qualities. He consequently opposed the organization of an Independent Colored Presbyterian Church. He also knew the irreconcilable antipathies of the two races to being mixed in a common organization, and felt that such a course would be against the religious welfare of both. He consequently favored their organization under the tuition and patronage of their white brethren until such time as they might be prepared for a separate and independent Church life.

He opposed the introduction of instruments of music into the public worship of God's house. In this he stood with Thornwell, Breckinridge, Dabney, Peck and Adger. He defended this position on the ground that it was violative of the great Protestant principle that whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden. He held that the instruments of music, which were used in the Temple, belonged to its typical and symbolical service, and passed away with all the ceremonial system of Israel. He consistently never had an organ in a church of which he was pastor.

He was opposed to all ritual and liturgy, for the reason that they did not belong to a spiritual dispensation of religion, and logically lead to a dead formalism. Throughout his life he resisted any proposition which looked in the direction of giving any forms of worship. The shroudings of the middle ages made his heart sick, and the unheartiness of present-day ritualists filled him with fears. Worship must be free and untrammelled, the uncrutched coming of the soul into the presence of its God.

Dr. Girardeau held a high doctrine of the ministry. It was a sacred office. No man might take it upon himself. He must be called of God. A conviction of the Spirit in the soul of the applicant was an essential element in this call. He must be well educated in the original languages of the Bible, in church history and theology, and in all the subjects specified in the Book of Church Order. Ordination put the applicant into possession of the office, and installation put him into the exercise of that office in a particular charge or work. When thus set apart, he must devote himself supremely to its duties. As a presbyter, he ever sought to hold up

the standards of preparation, and insisted upon regularity and fidelity.

He drew a distinction between "preaching" and "exhorting." One was official and authorized, the other was unofficial, and motived by the general Christian spirit. Hence he thought "candidates" and "lay evangelists" ought, in the interest of good order, to keep before the public that they were not the official expositors of the gospel, but were commending it on their personal responsibility. He thought a good way to make such an advertisement was for the "preacher" to occupy the pulpit, and for the "exhorter" to stand on the floor when addressing public assemblies. He was eager for every lover of the Lord Jesus to do his level best to lead people to the Saviour, but he was a strict constructionist. He loved order. He feared disorder. "Let him that heareth say come," but let him always respect the ways prescribed in Scripture. Contempt of "red tape" would lead to confusion. Confusion would ultimate in injury. A door was wide open to every disciple of Christ, ordained and unordained, male and female, young and old. But each must observe the rules of Christ's house. As a presbyter he always respected the constitution of his Church, and resisted all efforts to run over it, or to go around it.

Women were not eligible to the sacred office. Not because they were intellectually inferior. Not because they were deficient in piety. He often poured forth streams of matchless eloquence in praise of "those women which labored with us in the gospel." But Scripture had not laid this burden upon them. In mothering the race they were carrying their full share of the tasks and responsibilities of life. It would be inequitable to impose upon them the work of the minis-

try. To suffer them to assume it, in their zeal for the cause, would be ungallant. It was a man's task. It was a man's duty. The apostle, in forbidding women to speak in mixed assemblies, was not arbitrary, nor cynical towards the sex, but chivalrously protecting them.

Having himself been a missionary to the negroes, Dr. Girardeau had an abiding and enthusiastic concern in all the foreign and domestic missionary enterprises of the Church. He and his session and congregation of the Glebe Street Church in Charleston did a wonderful work in saving the churches of the seaboard of South Carolina after the desolations of the Civil War. On the floor of ecclesiastical bodies he often lifted up his voice in rousing speeches and proposed policies in behalf of all the extension work of the Redeemer's kingdom. In this connection he gave much time and thought to the powers of the evangelist, which was mooted in Church circles. He held that the evangelist was a minister extraordinary, especially commissioned in view of unorganized conditions. He was not a bare preacher, or revivalist. He had in his single person the authority of a presbytery. There were limits, however. As soon as he had organized a session, the most elementary court in the Presbyterian system, he could not be a bishop over it, but must be subordinate to it. In a foreign country such a session must be regarded as the nucleus of a Presbyterian Church—an embryonic presbytery, synod and assembly. He was watchful against the slightest movements in the direction of an episcopacy. Power could be put into the hands of a single individual only for extraordinary purposes, and as soon as the circumstances changed the power must lapse back to the principal.

He held to the official parity of elders and preachers. During his day this was a topic of live debate. Some thought that the preacher held an official rank above the ruling elder—making a kind of house of lords in the Church. He participated in this discussion, and did yeoman's service in making triumphant the official equality of teaching elder, or preacher, and the ruling elder. They were officers of the same rank. They had the same functions. Each was a teacher. Each was a ruler. It was the stated business of the preacher to expound and instruct in the gospel. The elder was to preach as occasion called for it, but it was not his set employment. Each was to rule, but conjointly in the session and in other courts. No power of government vested in the preacher as preacher. He was entitled to "double honor" only because he was supposed to exercise the twin functions of his office, preaching and ruling, in a manner especially praiseworthy. He denied that the office of preacher included the office of elder as the higher includes the lower. The office is one, the functions are two, preaching and ruling; each holder of the office may exercise both its functions.

A controversy began in the undivided Church prior to the Civil War over boards and committees. Boards were commissions; their actions, within their spheres, were as final as if they had been taken by the original bodies. Committees were held to be agents of the body appointing them; their actions were always subject to review, and were never final until they had been approved or disapproved by the appointing body. Thornwell led the opposition to boards. He argued that Christ had given power to his Church, laid upon it a duty and responsibility, and that it could never delegate this power and responsibility to any other agency.

As against boards he favored executive committees. Dr. Girardeau stood with Thornwell, and held that no body could create another body that would be independent of the original. As a presbyter, he helped to set up the scheme of executive committees in the Southern Church, none of whose actions are final without the imprint of the General Assembly.

During the life-time of Dr. Girardeau, the Church undertook the complete revision of its Book of Church Order—that part of its general Constitution which prescribes the principles of its government and discipline. While this project began in the undivided Church, and, as completed, was the product of many hands, Dr. John B. Adger, more than any one person, was the father of the New Book of Order. Dr. Girardeau was his close friend, and fellow-laborer upon its preparation. He discussed many of its propositions upon the floor of Presbytery, Synod, and Assembly. The clearness of his expositions, and the ability of his advocacy, contributed to the final triumph. It was not, however, as satisfactory as he desired. He thought some of its matters and prescriptions ought to be plainer. And the frequent overtures for changes in it, which have marked the subsequent history of the Church under it, confirm the correctness of his judgment. Nevertheless, he thought it a vast improvement upon the old ante-bellum statement of ecclesiastical law and order.

He felt that the theory of the Church, of the ministry, and of the elder had been made sufficiently clear, but he did not think that the status of the evangelist and the deacon had been made as obvious as it ought to be. He became especially interested in the deacon's case. The Synod of South Carolina in 1877 appointed

him on a committee to digest the subject, and submit to it a report of the biblical doctrine of the deacon, with a view to a better statement on this officer. He did an immense amount of reading and thinking. There were those who thought the office of preacher included that of elder and deacon. There were others who thought the office of elder took up within itself the office of deacon. The general opinion minimized this office and officer. He was being treated as a kind of subordinate servant of the preacher and the elder—scarcely more than a mere financial clerk.

The result of his labors was an elaborate report, in three sections. The first was presented to the Synod in 1878, the second in 1879, and the third in 1880. They were printed as articles, successively, in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* for the years 1879, 1880, and 1881.

The office of deacon was magnified. It was a distinct office in the Christian organization, instituted by Christ. It is not included in the presbyterate, as the lower is included in the higher. The minister is not, *ex officio*, moderator of the board of deacons. The elder is not, *ex officio*, a collector and distributor of church money. The deacon is the minister of finance in the kingdom of Christ. He ought to be the collector of all funds, the treasurer of all monies, the trustee of all property. He must look after all the temporal affairs of the Church, while the elders look after its spiritual concerns. There are, however, no “deacons’ courts.” They possess no *potestas jurisdictionis*. That is vested in the session, whose government is over the entire organization. The board of deacons is a “ways and means committee.” It may advise, but it cannot veto the session. It can recommend financial meas-

ures, but it cannot execute them, without authority from the session. Two independent authorities in the same organization must end in collision and confusion.

Dr. J. A. Lefever of Baltimore combatted the views of Dr. Girardeau. He held that the higher office of elder included the lower office of deacon. And here the matter rests to this day—uncleared and unsettled. The deacon is still wondering what are his powers, and what his duties. Does the Church need a financial officer, and a financial system? And has Christ instituted the office of deacon for this very purpose—to provide the ways and means of his kingdom in the earth? Are we to go on in reliance upon all manner of human inventions? Must we hold out our cap to any hand, and resort to any method which will yield us pennies? Shall we put in the Seminary curriculum a course in Church finance, and try to make expert financiers, and expert preachers, and expert rulers, out of the same young men? Or shall we make the deacons finance the Lord's work in the world?

Upon the subject of the diaconate, Dr. Girardeau laid down these propositions:

"1. The functions of the deacon are important as freeing the ministry and eldership from engrossment in the temporal business of the Church, and enabling them to concentrate their energies upon their own spiritual duties.

"2. The deacon's office is important in its bearing upon the support of the ministry.

"3. The deacon's office is important to the prosecution of the benevolent enterprises and the support of the institutions of the Church.

"4. The full employment of the deacon's office is important in its bearing upon the perfect conformity of our whole system of church order practically, as well as theoretically, to the pattern shown us in the Mount."

Suppose the whole body of our ministers and elders were devoted to converting and edifying sinners, and the magnificent body of deacons were devoted to financing the enterprise! It at least sounds thrilling.

Dr. Girardeau's great report on the Diaconate was, by the direction of that body, submitted to the General Assembly. After some years of postponing, and incidental consideration of it, it was finally printed in the appendix of its minutes.

In 1880 the General Assembly met in Charleston. I was a student of the Theological Seminary in Columbia, and went down to the old city by the sea, to gaze upon this great gathering of the distinguished fathers of the Church. The meeting was in the Second Presbyterian Church. Dr. T. A. Hoyt was the Moderator. I heard a great debate, the greatest I have heard, except the one in the Synod of South Carolina at Greenville, when evolution was the bone of controversy. The issue at Charleston was over the nature of the *in thesi* deliverances of church courts. The previous Assembly at Louisville in 1879 had said that all such deliverances were "only didactic, advisory, and monitory." The Synod of South Carolina asked the Charleston Assembly to "repeal, or at least seriously modify." this pronouncement.

Dr. Girardeau championed the overture. For over two hours he was heard with transfixed attention and admiration. His reasoning was ablaze, and his flights of eloquence were sublime. The historian of the occasion (Dr. Adger), who was present, wrote, "It is not often such logic set on fire is heard in any Church Assembly." Dr. Girardeau's powers at the time and for the occasion were full-orbed. He was on his native heath, and in a building which reeked with boyhood-

memories, and was clustered about by a thousand hallowed associations. He was before the Assembly of the Church of his love, and the spokesman for the Synod to which he had been devoted all his life. The issue was serious in his judgment, and bulked large in his concern. The very power of the Church to declare truth and maintain order had been eviscerated. The authority which had been unwittingly taken away must be recovered. Every thing challenged him to his mightiest and his best. He rose to the occasion in all the grandeur of discourse. Impersonal in all his utterances, his speech marred by no ungenerous flings, and tainted by no biting invectives, he held to the issue, and pleaded his cause like a statesman standing on a mountain top. He analyzed and expounded, argued and reasoned, clothed his thought in lofty diction and gorgeous rhetoric, and uttered it with the elocution of a natural artist.

He held that the *in thesi* deliverances of the Assembly were not mere advice, to be treated by its constituency as it pleased. He denied that they were the mere opinions of a Congregational Association. Such pronouncements were to be respected as the decisions of the supreme court of the Church of Christ on earth. They were to be submitted to, when consonant with the Word of God. They were not private interpretations, but official expositions. True, the Church had its standards, its Confession of Faith, but when contrary interpretations were put upon the statements of this formulary, who has the final decision as to the real meaning? All synods and councils might err; nothing was infallible but Scripture itself; but the Church, in its highest Assembly, had the authority and must take the responsibility of interpreting the

meaning of its own fundamental law. He did not hold that the Assembly had the right to make law, to formulate a constitution, but that it did have the right to give a final interpretation of its own constitution. Such interpretations were to be respected and submitted to, unless one, in the exercise of his right of private judgment, should take upon himself the responsibility of declaring them to be contrary to the Word of God. In that case, he could seek a repeal or modification of the deliverance, or, in the last resort, he could secede from the organization. He was struggling to maintain the force and respect of the Assembly as the highest court of the Church.

Dr. James Woodrow, his colleague in the Columbia Seminary, and Dr. H. M. Smith, an editor of New Orleans, replied to the speech in arguments that were acute and able. Each spoke as long. They did not display the entrancing eloquence of Dr. Girardeau, but there was a simplicity and clearness in their discussions, which made them very charming and illuminating. Dr. Woodrow's main point was that *in thesi* deliverances could not be made the premises of judicial prosecutions; offences must be charged under the text of the constitutional law, and not under any Assembly's interpretation of that text; consequently whatever else might be said about such deliverances, in their praise or condemnation, they were at bottom "only didactic, advisory, and monitory." The burden of Dr. Smith's argument was, that Dr. Girardeau's doctrine of *in thesi* deliverances would cause to grow up, beside the constitution and outside the constitution, a body of laws made by the Assemblies; authoritative interpretations of law would themselves have the force of law; we would presently have the consti-

tution loaded down with commentaries and expositions of it, as binding as the text itself; hence the only safety was in treating *in thesi* deliverances as "only didactic, advisory, and monitory."

On the ninth day of the session Dr. Girardeau made a rejoinder to both the preceding speakers. In reply to Dr. Woodrow, he admitted that judicial proceedings could initiate only against such offenses as were charged under the text of the constitution, but contended that the very text of the constitution provided that some matters could be settled in some other mode than by judicial process. Our lower courts are empowered to overture Assemblies, and Assemblies are authorized "to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience." Judicial decisions are but applications of the Word of God to a particular case; why should not such decisions be just as forceful, if impersonally applied to precisely the same matter? In reply to Dr. Smith, he contended that, if judicial decisions are concrete precedents, why should not *in thesi* deliverances be general precedents? The question was not as to the power of the Assembly to make law, but to interpret the law already made. In both speeches he contended that the Assembly had no power to make law, but affirmed that it had the power to interpret law already made, particularly by judicial decisions and generally by *in thesi* decisions.

At the conclusion of this rejoinder, Dr. Woodrow arose and offered the following paper, which was prepared by Dr. Adger, promptly seconded by Dr. Girardeau, and adopted by the Assembly:

"1. Nothing is law to be enforced by judicial prosecution but that which is contained in the Word as interpreted in our standards.

"2. The judicial decisions of our courts differ from their *in thesi* deliverances in that the former *determine*, and, when proceeding from our highest court, *conclude* a particular case. But both these kinds of decisions are alike interpretations of the Word by a church court, and both not only deserve high consideration, but both must be submitted to, unless contrary to the Constitution and the Word; of which there is a right of private judgment belonging to every church court, and also every individual church member."

By the adjournment of the Assembly the discussion was rife as to the interpretation of this very paper. Some said it meant one thing, some said it meant another. The Synod of South Carolina asked the next Assembly, meeting at Staunton, Virginia, to define its meaning. After consideration, Dr. B. M. Palmer offered the following, which was adopted almost unanimously:

"To the overture of the Synod of South Carolina the Assembly returns answer that all just and necessary consequences from the law of the Church are part of the same in the logical sense of being implicitly contained therein. The authority of this law is, however, twofold. It binds all those who profess to live under it as a covenant by which they are united in one communion, so there is no escape from its control, except by renouncing its jurisdiction; and it binds because it has been accepted as a true expression of what is revealed in the Holy Scriptures as infallible truth. The consequences deduced from it cannot, therefore, be equal in authority with the law itself, unless they be necessarily contained within it, as shown by their agreement also with the Divine Word."

Commenting upon this vexed question, and upon this last ambiguous decision of the Assembly, Dr. R. L. Dabney wrote, "a church government at once free and Presbyterian (as opposed to the mere advisory action of congregational associations) cannot be excogitated, without admitting the principle claimed

by the South Carolina Synod." The illustrious Virginian was right. Suppose a member charged with an offence under the very text of the standards. But that text itself is of doubtful interpretation. Who, but the supreme court of the Church can resolve that doubt? Some such decision is necessary to make possible the settlement of the litigation.

This whole question had originated in precisely this manner. A judicial case had started in Atlanta. A member had been disciplined for participating in what is called "worldly amusement." The case had made its way to the General Assembly. The whole hinge of this matter was whether the standards did, or did not, inhibit the thing alleged in the indictment. *Quoad hoc*, what was the meaning of the law? It needed to be interpreted, before it could be applied for acquittal or conviction. The facts were admitted by both parties. The dispute was over the scope and meaning of the law. Under one interpretation, no offence had been committed; under the other interpretation, a serious offence had been committed. Who is to decide the matter of meaning? When the judicial case was out of the way, the General Assembly was asked the question, Who has authority to decide between disputes as to the meaning of the standards? The Louisville Assembly answered, that "all *in thesi* deliverances are only didactic, advisory, and monitory." This was tantamount to saying that there is no way in the Presbyterian Church to decide the meaning of a disputed law, whereas its Constitution gives the final power to the General Assembly, "to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience." Towards such a "determination," the first step is the making of a law; and this has been done by the entire Church,

and written as its Constitution. The next step is the interpretation of this written law; and this is left to the courts of the Church, the final decision in the series being with the General Assembly.

If the General Assembly, in exercising its right of construing the law, being fallible, wrongs a member, he must submit to injury, or exercise his primal right of withdrawing from its jurisdiction. This would be the case, whether the decision was judicial or *in thesi*. Without the power to interpret, no business could be transacted.

Dr. Girardeau reflected much upon the subject of the Church and Education. It was not easy for him to see a perfectly clear and self-consistent position and policy. Had it any lawful right in the school-house? Had it a biblical commission to teach Latin and Greek, mathematics and science, or any departments of mere culture? Was not its sole topic the Christian religion, its one text-book the Bible? It seemed so.

Hence, for the greater part of his life, he stood with Thornwell, and held that education was a function of the State and not of the Church. During this period his sympathies with church-schools were weak. But on the floor of the Synod of South Carolina, meeting in Yorkville in 1890, he announced his conversion from State-schools to Church-schools, he made a speech forcefully developing the following four controlling reasons, taken from his manuscript notes:

“1. Our children belong to Christ, and must be educated for His service and glory.

“2. We are Presbyterian Christians, and must educate our children in Presbyterian Christianity.

“3. The State is tending to exclude Bible-religion from her institutions, and necessarily excludes Presbyterianism. We are

bound, therefore, to create and patronize our own institutions.

"4. If religion is to be taught, its teachers must be held responsible to Boards, which are themselves responsible to bodies above them and capable of controlling them. The only such bodies available are Church-courts."

He never had any misgivings about the Scriptural right of the Church to found and operate Theological Seminaries. An educated ministry was a first desideratum, and a plain biblical duty. Such training could best be given in theological schools, founded and operated for this specific purpose. But he was clear that the curriculum of such schools ought to embrace only such subjects as were directly germane to a preparation for the gospel ministry. He never saw his way clear to expanding the seminary into a religious university.

These things show us how intensely interested in the subject of ecclesiology Dr. Girardeau was. He labored for a clear and consistent system of order, even as he did for a harmonious doctrine of faith. He sought for the principles that were at the bottom. He was always willing for their logical application everywhere. He took a large part in the discussion of ecclesiastical questions. He had an abiding interest in the affairs of his Church. He gave liberally of his time and abilities and counsels, in all the efforts of his associates to see clearly and act wisely. He was passionately loyal to his denomination, yet catholic and evangelical in his spirit. He was opposed to the reunion of the Southern and Northern Churches, because he felt that they were divided by principles and policies, sympathies and sentiments, and could best cooperate, peaceably and effectively, in promoting the common cause of Christ, in separate organizations.

He was an eminent and arduous, a faithful and painstaking Presbyterian.