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Art. I.—THE FORMATION OF OUR STANDARDS.*

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“ON Saturday last, the Assembly of Divines began at Westminster, according to the ordinance of both the Houses of Parliament, where Dr. Twist of Newbery, in the County of Berks, their Prolocutor, preached on John xiv : 18—‘I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you,’ a text pertinent to these times of sorrow and anguish and misery, to raise up the drooping spirits of the people of God who lie under the pressure of popish wars and combustions.” In these simple and somewhat sad words, the parliamentary newspaper of the time records

* Minutes of the Sessions of the WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY OF DIVINES while engaged in preparing their *Directory for Church Government, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms* (Nov. 1644 to March, 1649), from transcripts of the originals, procured by a Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Edited by PROF. MITCHELL and REV. JOHN STRUTHERS. William Blackwood & Sons, London. [A noteworthy volume, and which, by its notes, preface, introduction, and index of names (there should be by all means, also, an index of topics), is made doubly valuable. I wish it might be reprinted, and so brought within the reach of every member of Pan-Presbyterianism.]

causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."

Art. XI.—PALMER'S LIFE OF THORNWELL.

Whittet & Shepperson, of Richmond, Va., issue, in a style uniform with four elegant octavo volumes of his works previously published, *The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell, D.D., LL.D., ex-President of the South Carolina College, late Professor of Theology in the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina*, by B. M. PALMER, D. D., LL.D., Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, La.

It is rare that any volume of biography is as fortunate as this, alike in its distinguished subject and author—and, therefore, as to its wealth of matter and felicity of style. Dr. Palmer, at once the admiring pupil, friend, and coadjutor of Dr. Thornwell, in intense sympathy with his spirit, doctrine, and policy in the great matters in which he became the foremost leader, was, if not his equal, *facile princeps* among all next below him. He has, therefore, in many important respects, succeeded to his leadership in the Southern Presbyterian Church, and in the great influence exerted by that body upon the public opinion and policy of the South. His pen is only less powerful than that of the subject whose life and traits it depicts in a manner so masterly and appreciative, so loving and reverent, that even his occasional exaggerations interest without offending. Dr. Palmer had a subject not unworthy of such laborious and enthusiastic delineation, not merely as a personal memorial of him, but on account of the great public interests which Dr. Thornwell touched and shaped and in ways as manifold as his gifts were versatile. For, whatever his infirmities, he was, every inch of him, a "public soul."

Born in 1812, in poverty and obscurity, his mother, who was a woman of strong mind and devoted piety, belonging to the Baptist Church, early imbued his mind with those Calvinistic principles of which he was through life an able expounder and champion. Early left an orphan, his extraordinary gifts were then discovered by gentlemen who bore the expenses of his education till his graduation at an early age, from the college of South Carolina, of which he afterward became a distinguished Professor and President.

Chief among these patrons was a Mr. Robbins, a lawyer of Cheraw, S. C., a gentleman of New England nativity and nurture, whose counsels, not less than his money, were of great value to young Thornwell. It is alike creditable to both, that Mr. Robbins found cause to chide Thornwell for the parsimony he practiced, in order to avoid being burdensome to his benefactor.

After graduation, he, like so many of our foremost men in every liberal profession in this country, obtained means for prosecuting his professional studies by teaching school. While teaching at Sumterville, S. C., and still undecided as to his profession, his mind became exercised in reference to personal religion, and he joined the Presbyterian Church. Although not without subsequent severe inward conflicts and seasons of spiritual darkness, he set his face toward the ministry. By intense study and improvement of every opportunity, visiting Andover and Harvard also for the purpose, he became well furnished for entrance upon his work. He was licensed to preach in November, 1834, and ordained and installed pastor of the Presbyterian church in Lancaster, S. C., June, 1835. In college, although rejected in his first application for admission to the junior class, he soon gained entrance, and was forthwith recognized as without equal or rival in the institution. His ministry, although in a humble sphere, was no less brilliant, and he was soon called from it to a professorship in the college.

The following prayer, offered and recorded on the day of his making a Christian profession, deserves notice :

“ O God ! I have to day made a public profession of my faith in the blessed Redeemer, and taken upon me the solemn covenant of the church. I would not impute to myself any merit on this account, as I have only done, and that, too, after a long delay, what was expressly enjoined on me in thy Holy Word. But, O God ! I feel myself a weak, fallen, depraved, and helpless creature, and utterly unable to do one righteous deed without thy gracious assistance. Wilt thou ; therefore, send upon me thy cheering spirit, to illumine for me the path of duty, and to uphold me when I grow weary ; to refresh me when I faint ; to support me against the violence of temptation and the blandishments of vice. Let me, I beseech thee, please thee in thought, word, and deed. Enable me to go on to perfection, support me in death, and finally save me in thy kingdom ; and to the glorious Three-in-One be ascribed all the praise. Amen.”—P. 95.

No part of this volume more charms us than those letters to his family and friends, which so clearly show that the above was the key-note of his life, while they exhibit his great tenderness and assiduity in winning all with whom he had to do to become partakers of the like precious faith.

With unimportant interruptions, his subsequent life-work was academic, first as Professor, then as President, of South Carolina College, and last as Professor of Theology in Columbia Theological Seminary. It is hardly necessary to say, that he achieved extraordinary success in all these departments. He was easily the peer of the very highest educators in the country, whether respect be had to his power of teaching, administering, governing *ad intra*, or of impressing the public *ad extra*, so as to attract students and resources to the institutions with which he was identified. He also early became an acknowledged leader in the O. S. Presbyterian Church, and *the*

acknowledged leader of the Southern part of it. He was often a member, once a Moderator, in her Assemblies, and always influential in them. We cannot bring under review his principal conflicts within the church, nor with Rationalism and Romanism outside of it, further than to say, that they are fully presented in the previous volumes of his works, and are ably summarized, as to Dr. Thornwell's side of them, by his biographer. We will only say that his antagonism was intense and pronounced against what he conceived to be New School theology, and Princeton ecclesiology. It only needs to be said, by way of qualification to the estimate of his powers which we are about to give, that his marvelous dialectic keenness and astuteness, in our judgment, *sometimes* led him, especially when predisposed by some powerful bias, to a narrowness of view proportioned to its intensity; to see distinctions where there was no substantial difference, and to fail of seeing that in the adverse side which was most material to it. But this not infrequent "infirmity of noble minds" aside; we think that Dr. Thornwell had an assemblage of pre-eminent gifts, which we may look long and far to find paralleled. We say assemblage—we cannot go the length of Dr. Palmer in giving him a peerless rank in each several department, in philosophy, in metaphysics, in theology, in the pulpit, in ecclesiastical and deliberative bodies, as an advocate, or a public-leader; but we can say, that in each of these departments he had few peers, and only the rarest superiors, while we do not call to mind among living or recent men, any one in whom, not merely some, but all these different kinds of eminence were so focalized. We are quite sure our readers will justify the length of the following quotation from Dr Palmer's estimate of him as a preacher, and the sources of his pulpit power. Nothing could do more credit to, or better explain the magic, or rather the magnetic, influence of author and subject :

"The feature most remarkable in this prince of pulpit orators was the rare union of vigorous logic with strong emotion. He reasoned always, but never coldly. He did not present truth in what Bacon calls 'the dry light of the understanding;' clear, indeed, but without the heat which warms and frictions. Dr. Thornwell wove his argument in fire. His mind warmed with the friction of its own thoughts, and glowed with the rapidity of its own motion; and the speaker was borne along in what seemed to others a chariot of flame. One must have listened to him to form an adequate conception of what we mean. Filled with the sublimity of his theme, and feeling, in the depths of his soul, its transcendent importance, he could not preach the gospel of the grace of God with the coldness of a philosopher. As the flood of his discourse set in, one could perceive the grand swell from beneath the heaving tide of passionate emotion which rolled it on. Kindling with a secret inspiration, his manner lost its slight constraint; all angularity of gesture and awkwardness of posture suddenly disappeared; the spasmodic shaking of the head entirely ceased; his slender form dilated; his deep black eye lost its drooping expression; the soul came and looked forth, lighting it up with a strange brilliancy; his frail body rocked and trembled as under a divine afflatus, as though the impatient spirit would rend its tabernacle and fly forth to God and heaven upon the wings of his impassioned words; until his fiery eloquence, rising with the greatness of his conceptions, burst upon the

hearer in some grand climax, overwhelming in its majesty and resistless in its effect. In all this there was no declamation, no 'histrionic mummerly,' no straining for effect, nothing approaching to rant. All was natural, the simple product of thought and feeling wonderfully combined. One saw the whirlwind as it rose and gathered up the waters of the sea; saw it in its headlong course, and in the bursting of its powers. However vehement his passion, it was justified by the thoughts which engendered it; and in all the storm of his eloquence, the genius of logic could be seen presiding over its elements and guiding its course. The hearer had just that sense of power which power gives when seen under a manner of restraint. The speaker's fulness was not exhausted; language only failed to convey what was left behind.

"But this picture will be incomplete if we fail to notice the magnificent diction which formed the vesture of his noble thoughts. 'It is,' says one, 'the plumage of the royal bird that bears him upward to the sun;' and Dr. Thornwell was far from being insensible to the power of language. In his early life it had been an affectionate study, and in later years it was his habit, before any great public effort to tone his style by reading a few pages from some master in composition. Sometimes it was a passage from Robert Hall, sometimes from Edward Gibbon, sometimes of Edmund Burke, sometimes of glorious old Milton; but oftener yet he drank from that old well of eloquence, Demosthenes for the Crown. His spoken style was, however, unquestionably the result of his life's study. His habits of close thinking exacted a choice of words. We think in language, however unconscious of the process. It is the only embodiment of thought, without which we cannot represent it to ourselves. Style, therefore, is not so much cut and fitted to the thought by artificial and secondary labor, as it is woven by the thought in the course of its own development. Hence, the precision which uniformly characterized Dr. Thornwell's style. He was, above other men, a close thinker—a thinker who had daily to think his thoughts aloud in the hearing of his pupils. The utmost exactness in language was required, moreover, in the studies of his department. The subtle spirit of philosophy could only be held as it was caught and imprisoned in the precise word which fitted it; and thus his whole career as a teacher was a training for himself as a master in style. In addition to all, his copious reading opened to him the entire vocabulary of his native tongue. 'Reading,' says Lord Bacon, 'makes a full man; writing, an exact man; and speaking, a ready man.' Dr. Thornwell was all three habitually, and through a long life. He read abundantly and in all directions, and acquired insensibly that copiousness which formed one of the attributes of his style. But it was the union of precision with fulness which distinguished his utterances. In the most rapid flow of his speech his diction was beyond impeachment. It was always the right word for the thought, and the whole vocabulary would not have furnished a substitute; while in the amplification of his thought, his mind, like a kaleidoscope, presented an endless variety of images, and the same combination never failed by repetition. To this precision and copiousness was added a certain richness of expression, a courtliness of style, which can only be explained by the majesty of the thought, that disdained to appear in the dress of a clown.

"To understand Dr. Thornwell's power, these several elements must be combined: * his powerful logic, his passionate emotion, his majestic style, of which

* Rev. Nathaniel Hewit, D. D., of Bridgeport, Connecticut, thus speaks of him, founding his eulogium upon a sermon published as early as 1843: "Howe, Owen, and Robert Hall reappear in

it may be said, as of Lord Brougham, that 'he wielded the Club of Hercules entwined with roses!' This generation will never look upon his like again; a single century cannot afford to produce his equal. It may listen to much lucid exposition, much close and powerful reasoning, much tender and earnest appeal, much beautiful and varied imagery; but never from the lips of one man can it be stirred by vigor of argument fused by a seraph's glow, and pouring itself forth in strains which linger in the memory like the chant of angels. The regret has been expressed that his unwritten sermons had not been presented through the labors of a reporter. It is well the attempt was never made. What invented symbols—could convey that kindling eye, those trembling and varied tones, the expressive attitude, the foreshadowing and typical gesture, the whole quivering frame, which made up in him the complement of the finished orator! The lightning's flash, the fleecy clouds embroidered on the sky, and the white crest of the ocean wave, surpass the painter's skill. The orator must live through tradition; and to meet this tradition we have described one of whom it may be said, as once of Ebenezer Erskine, 'He that never heard him, never heard the gospel in its majesty.'—pp. 548 52.

Dr. Thornwell died in July, 1862, in the fiftieth year of his age—having before suffered severe family bereavements, including the recent death of a bright and noble son in the Confederate army. He had achieved what is given to few men to do, who live their four-score years. We cannot bring this notice to a close without touching on another sphere in which he was prominent, especially near the close of his life, and which is signalized by his biographer, who eloquently defines his own as well as Dr. Thornwell's position—indeed, quite largely and representatively that of the Southern Church and people, who trusted no leaders and teachers more than these. We of course refer to the late civil war (anxiety about which in its early stages, Dr. Palmer thinks, hurried Dr. Thornwell's death) and its underlying causes—slavery, state-sovereignty, and secession—not only of the Southern States, but the Church. Upon this we shall be very brief.

Of state sovereignty, Dr. Palmer indicates his own doctrine when he says of South Carolina, in reference to the nullification struggle of 1832 :

"She demanded that this tariff should be conformed to a revenue standard. Failing to secure this modification by Congressional legislation, she interposed her prerogative as a sovereign state to judge, in the last resort, on all questions affecting her own rights, restraining the general government from collecting this revenue within her limits."—p. 469.

He proceeds to deny, as he has done in still stronger terms in his late correspondence with Dr. Nelson, that "the tremendous hazard (of the war) was incurred in the interest and for the preservation of slavery. Indeed, this was never more than the *occasion* of the war, either North or South. It was a mere rallying cry on both sides, to marshal the hosts into the ranks—a concrete and tangible issue on which to concentrate the masses. The *cause* lay deeper, in the irreconcilable theories maintained as to the nature of the

him. The philosophical acumen of Howe, the gospel unction of Owen, and the rhetoric of Hall unite in this discourse; and, in my humble opinion, no sermon has been preached in our century, in my day, in any pulpit, equal to it."

government, in comparison with which all the interest and prosperity vested in the 'peculiar institution' were as dust in the balance."—p. 482. If all this be correct, our national government is impotent, and the Union "a rope of sand." The bringing of the government to this helpless condition of subjection to state sovereignty is still, if we may judge from this volume, the aspiration of an influential part of the Southern people. As to the *cause* and *occasion* of incurring the hazards of the late war, we think slavery sustained both relations to it. It was alike the efficient, final, and occasional cause, which alone was of power to impel to it, and the security and spread of which constituted the end professedly sought by it. State sovereignty, in fact, was scarcely more than *causa sine qua non*. The literature and documents of the times, including Dr. Palmer's famous thanksgiving sermon, are sufficient proof of this. Indeed, we had marked for quotation from this volume abundant and overwhelming confirmation of the substantial justice of the view given in the last number, of the causes of the secession of the Southern Church, and of the relation of Drs. Thornwell and Palmer to it. But we much prefer to leave them out of sight, in view of the more propitious outlook for fraternal relations, on equal terms, between us and the Southern Church. On such terms, but on no other, we now, as heretofore, ardently crave not only fraternal relations, but as soon as may be, organic union.

As reference has been made by Dr. Stanton, in the April number of this REVIEW, to a private statement of Dr. Thornwell on the African slave-trade, we think it right to quote his last public statement known to us on the subject.

"The great mass of the Southern people were content with the law (prohibiting the African slave-trade) as it stood. They were and are opposed to the trade, not because the traffic in slaves is immoral—but because the traffic with Africa is *not* a traffic in slaves, it is a system of kidnapping and man-stealing, which is as abhorrent to the South as it is to the North."—p. 595.

But we must stop. We earnestly hope that this volume may have a wide circulation in all parts of the country, and especially among Presbyterians, not only on account of those attractive features of it which we have noticed; but no less that they may have a true view of the thinking and policy of leading men of the South in regard to those matters, political and ecclesiastical, in which they differ from us. It is only as the two sections of the country thus know each other through the expositions of their respective leaders in church and state, that they can know how to deal with mutual differences wisely and well.—L. H. A.