

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

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ARTICLE I.

PROFESSOR W. ROBERTSON SMITH.

The Old Testament in the Jewish Church. Twelve Lectures on Biblical Criticism. By W. ROBERTSON SMITH, M. A., New York, D. Appleton & Co. 1 Vol., 12mo., pp. 300.

Four years ago the author, an Assembly's Professor in the Free Church Theological College at Aberdeen, startled us by contributing to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* an article on the "The Bible," which attacked the validity of the Old Testament canon, as held by the standards of his own Church. Discipline was attempted; but legal quibbles delayed it for three years; until, in May, 1880, the charges against him came to be issued by his General Assembly, through reference from his Presbytery and Synod. Instead of trying the charges judicially, the Assembly, in its forbearance, patched up a compromise with him and his numerous supporters, in which it condoned his past offence, continuing him in his professorship over its candidates for the ministry, and in its honors and emoluments; and he accepted a public admonition and gave a pledge not again to disturb the faith and peace of the Church by such speculations. It is true that his pledge was given in very diplomatic terms, and was meant in a very "Pickwickian" sense. But it was accepted. The members of the Assembly had,

ARTICLE IV.

DR. MULLALLY'S REPLY TO THE REV. MR.
QUARLES.

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA, October 26th, 1881.

The Reverend the Editors of the Southern Presbyterian Review:

REVEREND SIRs: The last pages of the first article in the October number of your periodical prefer a grave alternative charge against "a well-known divine." The undersigned would certainly never apply this description to himself, did he not happen to remember the comment of the "papers" quoted by the author of "Our Church Policy." The recognition of this as referring to himself compels him to appear as the accused, and to ask leave to present his defence.

Had the language of your contributor been of a courteous character, it would be a pleasant task for his humble brother, differing from him, to give his reason for saying that the present scheme of Foreign Missions had the approbation of Dr. Thornwell, and was perhaps as much the product of his mind as it was of that of any other man, and he would have been glad of an opportunity to disclaim ever having said anything stronger than that, for he well knows that it was not "strictly," if by strictly is implied exclusively, the work of Dr. Thornwell.

But since the accused is not "a well-known divine," but an obscure presbyter, a decent regard for the opinions of his brethren who read the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW compels him, however irksome the duty, to repudiate the foolish position which the language of your contributor in the place referred to insinuates that he has somehow assumed. It is not hereby intended to be said that your contributor *designed* to intimate that the undersigned put himself forward as "the defender of Dr. Thornwell." But certainly that writer's bracketed interrogation point in one place and his quotation marks in another, are suited to make the impression that the member of the Staunton Assembly described, perhaps in irony, as a "well-known divine,"

had odiously claimed to be "the defender of Dr. Thornwell." The truth is, the remarks in question were not made as a defence of Dr. Thornwell at all, but simply were a denial, made necessary by the confident references of the opposition to his opinions that if he were living he would give his support to the extreme measures advocated in the minority report on Retrenchment and Reform. As to the language of the newspapers touching the matter, it was very natural for those who regarded the doctrines of that report as void of wisdom to say in speaking of that denial "he defended the memory of Dr. Thornwell," since the minority had confidently and fully claimed all the influence of his great name in favor of a revolution which would seem to them unworthy of a high grade of prudence. It is hereby humbly submitted that if the effort to deprive the "Reform" of the argument from Dr. Thornwell's opinions was not sustained, or that if it could not be sustained, your readers could have been fully and forcibly apprised of the error in language neither verging on profanity nor conveying the suggestion of insult offered to one who was counted worthy by a Presbytery to be a member of the General Assembly, and so had a very high claim to respect, although very deficient both in gifts and attainments. (See SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, page 625, the sentence begun with the eleventh line from top, and also page 627, the sentence beginning with the sixth line from the top.) It will be remembered that the question now under consideration is not whether the member of the Assembly who denied the right of the "Reform" to strengthen itself by the name of Thornwell was in error or not, but whether the language of your contributor here referred to is such as one gentleman may use towards another, not to say such as one member of our highest Church court may use of one who in that court is his own official peer, however inferior to himself he may be in personal qualifications. Let the judgment of the Church, and of all who acknowledge the law of kindness, taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles, decide.

The character of the attempt at ridicule suggested by the transition of your contributor from the statement of the papers, which is that "he defended the memory of Dr. Thornwell," to the

application of the phrase "the defender of Dr. Thornwell" to his very humble opponent, may be illustrated thus:

The article on our Church Policy is concluded with this paragraph:

"We were in the minority, so was Dr. Thornwell at Rochester. Dr. Breckinridge was in the minority in opposing the reception of Committee men as delegates to the Assembly. We were in the minority in advocating our new Book of Church Order when it was first presented to the Presbyteries. The opposition had the majority of votes; we content ourselves that we had the majority of the truth."

Suppose that some one taking advantage of the unguardedness of this language in reference to the suggestion of self-confidence and conceit in its author, should upon the strength of it intimate that a well-known divine, in an article on "Our Church Policy," in the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW of October, 1881, set himself up on a level of intellectual superiority with Thornwell and Breckinridge, and claimed to be the advocate who secured the adoption of our Book of Church Order, and continuing to use the editorial "we," claimed to know more than the great majority of the Staunton Assembly. Such language as this would be most unjust to the gentleman who furnishes the first article in the October number of the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, albeit the paragraph quoted would bear an interpretation suited to give that representation plausibility. There is no language of the undersigned to warrant any one's ridiculing him as "the defender of Dr. Thornwell," but your contributor would place him in that false position on the strength merely of the view which a newspaper correspondent took of what he said in refutation of an argument in favor of Retrenchment and Reform drawn from Dr. Thornwell's history. The gentleman's language therefore in making your replicant odious by intimating that he either ever assumed or accepted the position of the defender of Dr. Thornwell, although in itself perhaps not so injurious, is certainly as unfounded, and as unkind in its nature, as the supposed misrepresentation would be. Besides the undersigned feels the more aggrieved, because he is not aware of having ever done anything towards the learned Professor from Missouri, to provoke any, not to say such, marked unkindness at his hands.

Will you, Messrs. Editors, permit an humble brother, without charging him with any spirit of self-righteousness or pretence of superiority to say, that, whatever latitude may be necessary to the freedom of debate, when men meet face to face, and must often speak, not in the language they would prefer, but in that which they are compelled to use, or leave thought unuttered, and so action to be uninfluenced, yet it is most highly desirable that our religious organs carefully exclude the appearance of unkindness from their columns or their pages? However much aggrieved your humble servant might have felt by the assault made upon him in your pages, he would shrink from asking space for any word of personal vindication did he not hope that what he had to say would tend to further this consummation, which all agree is "devoutly to be wished."

The issue between the author of "Our Church Policy" and the present writer is very simple. He says it was Dr. Thornwell's view that our Foreign Missionary work should be conducted "directly by the Presbyteries." The undersigned holds that it was Dr. Thornwell's judgment that our Foreign Mission work should be conducted according to the scheme at present in operation in our Church. Your contributor from Missouri quotes in proof of his position only what Dr. Thornwell said in his efforts to abolish the "Boards," which it is believed no one claiming to be a Presbyterian would now defend. That great man wrote and spoke much and well against the Executive Committee of the *Presbyterian Board* of Foreign Missions, but never uttered or penned one syllable against the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions of the *Presbyterian Church* in the Confederate States of America. Does it follow that because he taught direct Presbyterian action as preferable to "Board" committee action, therefore he taught directly Presbyterian action as contrary to the action of the General Assembly itself through its own communion? It appears that Dr. Thornwell saw no conflict between anything that he had said against the "Boards" and in favor of Presbyterian action, and the scheme of Foreign Mission work adopted by the Augusta Assembly.

The conclusive proof of this is that Dr. Thornwell himself

moved the adoption of that scheme on the floor of our first General Assembly which met in Augusta, Georgia, December 4th, 1861. On page 15 of the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, we find this record: "On motion of Dr. Thornwell, the first resolution of the report was adopted." Turning to the next page, it is seen that the "first resolution" thus spoken of covers the creation and constitution of our Executive Committee of Foreign Missions as it now exists.

Add to this that Dr. Thornwell was a member of the Provisional Committee of Foreign Missions, with Dr. J. Leighton Wilson as Secretary, previous to the meeting of the Augusta Assembly, and from its initiation; and will any one say there is not good reason for the opinion that our present scheme of Foreign Mission work is as much the product of Dr. Thornwell's mind as it is that of any other man's?

But why was your contributor so eager to prove that Dr. Thornwell would favor remanding our foreign missionary work to the Presbyteries directly? No sooner has he seemed to himself to have proved this than he tells us that Dr. Thornwell in so doing would err. What becomes then of the force of the gentleman's *a fortiori* argument, that if Dr. Thornwell thought the Presbyteries ought to conduct Foreign Missions, he must have believed in remitting the rest of the evangelistic work to them? For the inference is obvious that if he would err in doing the first, he would err in doing the second. So the conclusion would be that Dr. Thornwell's opinion ought to weigh very little in settling the great question debated at Staunton. Verily, such dealing as this does cause many who revere his memory to wish that controversialists would cease to invoke Dr. Thornwell for the settlement of practical matters which must be settled upon their own merits in the light of existing circumstances, and which involve no radical question of doctrine, but only questions of prudence and choice lying within the scope of the governing principles which all concerned accept. We can find, in the writings of those who are gone to glory, what are the principles of Presbyterianism, but not what are the best methods for their application under present circum-

stances, within the bounds assigned by the word. However, the undersigned does approve of Dr. Thornwell's opposition to the Boards, and sees no error whatever in the quotations made from his works by the author of the article on "Our Church Policy." On the contrary, he would argue that if that wise man found our present scheme of Foreign Missions, by which this work is placed in the hands of the Assembly, consistent with all he had ever said of the nature and demands of true Presbyterianism, it is probable he would also find the same consistency as regards "the rest of the evangelistic work" of our beloved Church, and would deny that the value of this argument is impaired by any such blunder as your contributor attributes to him on the soundness of whose judgment it depends.

Your replicant never expressed the opinion that every detail in our present methods of conducting the enterprises of the Church would receive Dr. Thornwell's approbation; but he reiterates his belief that the minority report on Retrenchment and Reform would receive his emphatic veto. It is simply impossible for one man to say what in reference to specific changes of policy another may think under ordinary circumstances, and when only one or two such changes is proposed. But it seems to me plain enough on which side Dr. Thornwell would stand, had the Lord spared him to be at Staunton last May, and had the issue there joined been the same, notwithstanding his continued abode in the flesh. After the passage of the Spring resolutions he wrote as follows: "There should be no time lost in the permanent organisation of the Confederate Church. She should be getting ready for embarking fully in the work of her Master. She should have, as speedily as possible, her Committees of Missions, Foreign and Domestic, of Education, and if need be of Publication and Church Extension. A great work is before her. Let her gird up her loins and set resolutely about it." See *Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell*, D. D., LL.D., by B. M. Palmer, D. D., LL.D., page 495.

But the only point at issue between your Missouri contributor and this defendant relates to Foreign Missions. Surely it has been made plain enough that Dr. Thornwell could not favor the change of our present scheme for the conduct of that work with-

out changing what he himself had established. It would not be prudent, in dealing with an opponent whose language is not governed by the obligations of refined and honorable controversy, to adduce personal knowledge of Dr. Thornwell's opinions received in the enjoyment of his generous, unstinted friendship during at least half a decade of years. But if anything more than has been said seems necessary in order to show that our Executive Committee of Foreign Missions was the product of Dr. Thornwell's mind and the delight of his heart, it will be found in the fourth volume of "Thornwell's Collected Writings," under the heading "Debate Touching Church Boards." Here it may be seen that before the division of the Church the very scheme adopted at Augusta was fully and clearly in the mind of the great man, and powerfully and earnestly advocated by him. The following joint testimony of John B. Adger, D. D., and John L. Girardeau, D. D., shows of itself that your learned contributor was imprudent in alleging that he who says Dr. Thornwell approved the present scheme of Foreign Missions is guilty of shameful ignorance or something worse. It is found on page 144, 4th Vol. Col. Writings. The liberty is taken of italicising except in the word *direct* which is thus emphasised by the editors themselves: "As to the conduct of missions, while insisting on the competency of the Presbyteries and preferring their control to that of *Boards*, he (Dr. Thornwell) did not object on principle to the Assembly's undertaking the management of that work, provided that its control was DIRECT through a mere Executive Committee. *No man had more to do than he with the organisation of our present Executive Committees.* In fact his principles regarding *Boards* have been fully and cordially adopted by our Church."

Any one who may be at all puzzled by the proposition that Dr. Thornwell's advocating at one time direct Presbyterial control of the Foreign Mission work, and at another time joining cordially in originating and organising a permanent central agency for conducting the same, will find the key of the paradox in Chapter XVI. of the Biography by Dr. Palmer.

In introducing the history of Dr. Thornwell's relation to the

great Board controversy on page 222, Dr. Palmer says: "It is not the business of the biographer to discuss his views, but only to afford him the opportunity of presenting them. It may be remarked, however, that he was not opposed to combined or united action on the part of the Church, but only insisted that the central agency should be simply executive; the mere instrument by which the Assembly acts, and not an agent standing in the place of the Assembly, and acting for it." Turning to pp. 227 and 228, the inquirer will find Dr. Breckinridge, in a letter to Dr. Thornwell dated Nov. 12, 1841, speaking of a central agency or a commission of the Assembly itself as what he advocates in opposition to the Boards. Now let him be pleased to look at the next page near the bottom margin, and there he may read in a letter from him whose opinions are under investigation, to his admired friend, the author of the Act and Testimony, dated Feb. 23rd, 1842 (just the time when the article from which "Our Church Policy" quotes was in the printer's hands) the following words: "In regard to a central agency, I have expressed no opinion, because my object has chiefly been to awaken our Presbyteries to a proper sense of their own responsibilities. Whenever they shall undertake, in good earnest, the work of the Lord in conformity with the spirit of our system, the details of their plans will not be found, I apprehend, very hard to settle. On the present plan, our churches are not reached; the whole body is not, and cannot be engaged as one man: the principles of our polity, by which we are bound together and united into one body, are set aside; and we are evidently proceeding in a method suited only to the lame and crippled constitution of the Independents. This clumsy method I wish to see abandoned; I want our distinctive principles clearly brought out; and I am very indifferent as to the details by which this may be done, so that it is effectually done. If a central agency can be suggested which shall give us a proper security against error and abuse, and interfere with the regular operations of no part of our system, I shall have not a word to say against it."

Evidently Dr. Thornwell thought that central agency was found in the scheme adopted at Augusta in 1861. It was not for

direct Presbyterian action as against combined action he contended, but for the Church as against the Boards, and in the present scheme he recognised the Church itself operating under and in obedience to the demands of her divine charter as fully as if the Presbyteries were acting directly in sending and supporting our missionaries. The difference between the two plans appeared to him as having reference only to the details by which our distinctive principles may be clearly brought out, a difference which involves no question of principle, but only one of expediency, and as to which he declared himself very indifferent. He did not believe that the Church has absolutely no discretion at all. On the contrary he held, to use his own language, that "whatever executive agency is requisite in order to do her appointed work, she can, of course, employ; but she may not go outside of this necessity and transfer her work to another body to be performed by them—in the sphere of commanded things she has a discretion—a discretion determined by the nature of the actions, and by the divine principle that all things be done decently, in order."

I am, reverend editors, with profound respect,

Your humble servant,

FRANCIS P. MULLALLY.

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