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ART. I.—THE GENERAL SYNOD OF PROTESTANTS IN
FRANCE.

From the French of Ed. de Pressensé in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, by
Prof. JOHN W. MEARS, of Hamilton College.

A FEW years ago the meeting of the Protestant Synod in Paris would have been an unnoticed event. The spirit of the time was that of Gallio, the Roman consul, who cared for none of these things. It is different now; the age is curious for all sorts of knowledge. It turns over all ideas, even at the risk of a superficial acquaintance. M. de Pressensé, in an article in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, leaves the news-loving Parisians without excuse for a superficial knowledge of the late Protestant Synod.

The last preceding official Synod had been held at Loudun, as long ago as the year 1659. It was assembled for the purpose of hearing from the mouth of the king's representative the decree of dissolution, closely followed by the *Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*. Thus, after two centuries and more, the Reformed Church of France found herself again in possession of her rights. It was an occasion of profound interest, and when the same Psalms were sung which used to be heard in those dark and bloody days of the Church, and when the eloquent pastor, M. Babut of Nismes, alluded to those glorious and sorrowful memories, many eyes were bathed in tears.

The French Protestants formed the chivalry of the Reformation. Their grand characters, as Coligny and du Plessis Mor-nay, were true Christian gentlemen. The high-toned sentiments and ardent convictions generated by the Reformation, and expressed by such writers as Calvin and Beza, did more to clear the French language of its dross, and to form and render flexible

that was revealed to their faith. In their seasons of rapt and holy communion with God, there were visions of glory floating before their mind's eye not less real and entrancing, if less miraculous, than those which met the Apostle's gaze when caught up to the Paradise of God. Human language failed to convey their impressions. They were such as could not be transferred to the consciousness of others.

“Thought is deeper than all speech,
Vision is deeper than all thought ;
Mind to mind can never teach
What unto itself is taught.”

LETTER TO THE EDITORS FROM REV. JOHN B. ADGER, D.D.

PREFATORY NOTE.

[We very cordially insert the subjoined letter from Dr. Adger. We would not willingly do any injustice to Dr. Thornwell's memory, and those who know our animus in preparing the brief notice of his works, which would have been more extended had they been received earlier, know that it was our desire to do him the fullest justice. We will therefore say a word to preclude misconception on each of the two points in our notice to which Dr. Adger objects.

1. Dr. Thornwell did certainly say, in substance to the writer, at Rochester, what we have heard others speak of his having said to them also, that he was “especially earnest and anxious that the view of the Boards he was advocating should be adopted by the Church, because he expected the disruption of the nation, and he desired to have the Church organized on such a basis that it could remain unbroken after the country should be divided.” We do not now pretend to remember the *ipsissima verba*. Undeniably, we and others so understood him. But neither we nor others understood him as acting “any indirect part on that occasion.” Quite otherwise. We understood the views he so eloquently advocated to have been his solemn and long-settled convictions. This, however, was quite consistent with his pressing them with unusual earnestness at that time, in the hope their adoption might avert a great impending calamity. What he regarded as the logical connection between different theories of the mutual relation of the Church and the Boards, and the continued unity or disruption of the Church we are not sure of, nor are we bound to show. We supposed, however, that in destroying the centralization of power which he saw and disliked in Church Boards, and leaving it more with the Church Judicatories he felt that in case of a dis-

solution of the Union, the Church might retain its unity intact by leaving the missionary and like concerns of the Church in each section of the country to the management of its own church courts. What we referred to as an "exceptional manifestation," was not the doctrines advocated, but the temper betrayed in some stages of this discussion, especially that part of it now published in Vol. IV, p. 242, *et seq.* We cannot believe that some things said here about Dr. Hodge were a normal, and not "an exceptional manifestation due to an accidental cause;" they seem to us unlike Dr. Thornwell.

2. In regard to the second passage to which Dr. Adger objects, we simply ask our readers to note precisely what our language, as quoted by him, is. He objects to the "implication that Dr. Thornwell was a political leader of the South, in particular the statement that he led the State into secession." This is not our statement. We said that "more even than the great statesman (Calhoun), he wrought out the ethical and religious platform on which slavery and secession planted themselves." This we certainly believe to be true. Certainly, more than Calhoun or any one else, he wrought out "the ethical and religious platform" on which the conscience and Christianity of the South planted themselves in regard to slavery. This resulted in the judgment of the South, ultimately developed by the logic of events, concerning secession.

We mean only what Dr. Thornwell himself said in the following language: "The antagonism of Northern and Southern sentiment on the subject of slavery lies at the root of all the difficulties which have resulted in the dismemberment of the Federal Union, and involved us in the horrors of an unnatural war." (Vol. IV, p. 154.) We do not see that the facts stated by Dr. Adger materially modify what we actually said. If they do, we are only the more glad to place his statement before our readers that they may on no account take an injurious impression from us. Our only object in making the statement here controverted was: 1. to point out the proofs of Dr. Thornwell's mighty intellect and vast power and influence; 2. to direct attention to his works by Northern Christians, in order that they may duly understand, appreciate and do justice to the attitude of our Southern brethren in the premises.—L. H. A.]

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, COLUMBIA, S. C., }
May 8th, 1873. }

To the Editors Pres. Quarterly and Princeton Review.

GENTLEMEN: Will you kindly allow me a little space in your issue for July to take notice of two points in your critique, in the April Review, upon Dr. Thornwell's writings?

The first one is your statement that the part which Dr. Thornwell bore in the famous debate on Church Boards, in the Rochester Assembly, where North and South last met together,

was only an "exceptional manifestation due to an accidental cause." You state that the edifice where they met was shaken by the booming of cannon in salute of the nomination of Mr. Lincoln for the presidency; that Dr. Thornwell said a rupture of the nation was at hand; and that he declared his object in the discussion of the Church theories under debate was to put the Church on such a footing as that it could remain unbroken after the country should be divided—a noble aim, you add, but not likely in the surroundings to bring out his most "genial or judicious side." Whether Dr. Thornwell manifested any want of the "genial" or the "judicious" in that debate is a question upon which those present, or those who have read what he said, might be expected to differ according to circumstances. Those who disagreed with what he said may have discovered such defects, those who held the same opinions with him on the matters debated probably saw nothing of the sort. I have not a word to say on that question, but the point on which I wish to dwell is the statement that he declared his object in that debate to have any reference to the coming rupture of the country. My objection to the statement is that it represents Dr. Thornwell as acting a part, and an *indirect* part, on that occasion. This, I feel bound to say, was not his character. It seems to me impossible that he can have been correctly apprehended by the party to whom he is supposed to have made this acknowledgment. Indeed, I cannot understand how the organic changes in the Boards, which Dr. Thornwell was urging, could have helped to keep the Church unbroken though the country had been divided. What he wanted was the simplest and directest ecclesiastical action possible, as against action by intervening Boards. What he condemned was additions by men to the government which our Lord has given to his Church. He opposed the appointment by the Assembly of another organized body to do the work of missions, etc., and he wanted the Assembly to constitute the only Board of Missions with its Executive Committee acting directly under it. These were the views he urged on the Assembly at Rochester, and I am totally unable to see what these purely ecclesiastical ideas had to do with any political issue or any political events. And certainly it does not consist with the well-known *directness* of Dr. Thornwell's character that his object in the debate should have been any thing

except just what appeared at the time on the very surface of things. In his exordium he says, "We are met to discuss great questions that concern the Redeemer's glory and the interests of his kingdom. . . . I am no party man, but I am thoroughly a Presbyterian, and having come here to deliberate and vote for the good of the Church, I wish to state the grounds upon which my vote shall be cast." After these opening remarks it is not conceivable, he being an honest man, that he should have had any such end in view as is ascribed to him without declaring it. No, indeed! He was not acting with any reference to questions of "the nation" or of the states, but in singleness of heart was urging again those views of Church polity he had long before and often before zealously put forth. It was but recently he had argued the same questions with the same earnestness and power at the Nashville Assembly, but many years previously he had published the same opinions through the press.

The other statement on which you will please allow me a word or two is that on the "ethical, civil and religious aspects" of "slavery and some cognate subjects," Dr. Thornwell, "beyond any other man after Calhoun, at once voiced and shaped the Southern mind. More even than the great statesman he wrought out the ethical and religious platform on which Southern slavery and Secession planted themselves." I am not concerned to rid Dr. Thornwell of responsibility for anything he ever said or wrote on Slavery or Secession. I am much too well persuaded of the justice of perhaps all he ever uttered on those topics, as I am also of this, that "truth crushed to earth shall rise again." But my object is simply to aid the future historian. The statement made is certainly not correct, as I think can easily be shown. The point I especially except to is what is said about secession. In the general I object to the implication that Dr. Thornwell was a political leader of the South—in particular I dispute the statement that he led the state into Secession. The truth unquestionably is that the governing class in South Carolina had always been intelligent students of history and of politics and that they saw with their own eyes. As early as 1831–3 they had accepted very generally though not unanimously Mr. Calhoun's doctrine of nullification as the rightful remedy for what they felt to be their wrongs. The youthful Thornwell,

then under twenty and a mere college boy, rejected Mr. Calhoun's theory and always was opposed to his views. In 1851, Mr. Calhoun being dead, the question of Secession arose, the ground taken by the South was that the Federal Government should not take sides either for or against slavery. South Carolina was agitated, not on the question of remaining in the Union and nullifying the laws of Congress as in 1831, but of going out of the Union on the ground that a compact violated by one side was not binding on the other. Dr. Thornwell then so far departed from the rule of his ministerial life which forbade his touching politics as to publish through the press his hostility to Secession as not being justified by the circumstances of the case. [See Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. IV. pp. 443, 450.] It was always well known that he differed with Mr. Calhoun, and how then could they both have been leaders in Secession? The truth is that neither of them was. It was also well known that Dr. Thornwell was against Secession, and how then could he be in any sense author of the platform on which it planted itself?

But at length, in 1861, it was almost universally considered amongst us that in the election of Mr. Lincoln for President, as the candidate of the Anti-Slavery party, the Federal Government had been put into absolute antagonism to the safety of the South. The voice of South Carolina, almost without dissent amongst intelligent men, declared that the time had come to sever the bonds of the Union. Then Dr. Thornwell did not stand aloof from the well-nigh universal conviction. He did not lead the State but he went with her into Secession. I have before me a private letter written by him Dec. 31, 1860, in which he employs this language: "Our affairs of State look threatening, but I believe that we have done right. I do not see any other course that was left to us. I am heart and hand with the State in her move. But it is a time for the people of God to abound in prayer. The Lord alone can guide us into a haven of safety. He can bring light out of darkness and good out of evil."

I think you will admit that these facts do not comport with the representations made concerning Dr. Thornwell's politics, (so far as he had any), and his political influence in South Carolina. He might, no doubt, have been a great statesman had not

the Lord Jesus called him into the ministry. Being a minister he was no politician, although he was a patriot who cheerfully gave his eldest son to die for his country, and who did, on some few very great occasions of peril to the state he loved, utter his political opinions, usually however against and not in favor of the current ideas.

I am well persuaded, gentlemen, that you held the distinguished subject of this latter in high esteem, however you may have differed with him on some points, and I do not doubt that you will cordially allow me to put forth my demurrer to the statements respecting him which I have pointed out.

Very respectfully yours,

JNO. B. ADGER.

ART. VIII.—NOTES ON CURRENT TOPICS.

By LYMAN H. ATWATER, D.D.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, met in the Central Church in Baltimore on the 15th day of May, 1873. The Rev. Howard Crosby, D.D., LL.D., of New York, was chosen Moderator, and evinced rare qualifications for the office. The body owed much of its harmony and efficiency to his dignified and courteous bearing, and his prompt and just rulings, in guiding its deliberations. It found a hearty welcome, and a refined hospitality in the Christian homes of the Monumental City, which will long be warmly and gratefully remembered.

We cannot undertake any full narrative or even brief summation of its proceedings. We wish simply to signalize some of the more momentous matters with which it had to deal, as filling the place we are wont to assign to "Current Topics," which in this number will be confined to some of those disposed of in the Assembly. To an unusual extent these seem to us to have been issued wisely and well. In all cases in which the way was not clear for present definitive action, the subjects were referred