

## THE PREACHER.

We next turn to view Dr. Thornwell in THE PULPIT: the ambassador of God to sinful men. From all that has been said of his logical proclivity and scholastic training, it may be rightly inferred that his preaching was addressed predominantly, though not exclusively, to the understanding. Looking upon man as a being of intelligence, and upon the truth as the instrument of sanctification, he caused that truth to knock at the door of the understanding until she was admitted and entertained. He had a sublime faith in God's ordained method of reaching the affections through the proclamation of His Word. Eschewing all effort to work upon the superficial emotions, or to play upon natural sympathies, he addressed himself in earnest to present the whole truth of God, and to discuss its fundamental principles before men. His analytic power was fully displayed in the pulpit. The clear statement of a case is often one-half of the argument. Stripping his subject of all that was adventitious, he laid bare to the eye the single principle upon which it turned; so single and so bare, that the most untrained were compelled to see precisely what was to be elucidated. Then followed a course of argument, close, logical, clear, profound, bending forward to one conclusion, towards which the hearer was carried, with his will or against it, led captive in chains of logic that could nowhere be broken. When the truth had won its way, and the mind was brought into a state of complete submission, the argument was gathered up in its weighty and practical conclusions, and hurled upon the conscience, compelling either the confession of guilt upon the one hand, or a complete stultification of reason upon the other. These appeals to the heart were often fearful in their solemnity; all the more because based upon the previous assent of the understanding. They were not mere exhortation, but a judicial finding in the court of the hearer's own conscience. The preacher stood there as an attorney from

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heaven, to indict and prosecute the sinner. The pleading has been heard; the argument for his conviction has been concluded; and the sinner only hears the sentence of condemnation from its throne of judgment, echoing through all the chambers of the soul. It was upon this plan most of the discourses of this matchless preacher were formed. It mattered little whether the exposition was of law or grace; there was the same enforcement of eternal and immutable principles, and the same judicial finding of guilt and shame, whether the offence was against the one or the other. But though argumentative, he was not polemic. Indeed, the current of his thought was too rapid and vehement to pause and deal with impugners and their objections. It was like the Nile, swollen with its mountain tributaries, and bursting through the sedge which impedes its flow. He rightly judged, that to build up truth in its positive form was the better way to remove difficulties, which, in its light, soon appear as mere impertinences.

But he was not thus exclusively argumentative. He excelled in the exposition of Scripture; and had he not been the first of logicians, he might have been the first of commentators. His analytical talent had room here for all its play. It dealt little in dry, verbal criticism; but after a sufficient elucidation of the text, it seized the great truths involved, and marshalled them in their due subordination: a form of exposition particularly useful, as presenting the Scriptures in their logical connexion before the mind. His relations, too, as preacher to young men, led him into much practical discourse upon the common duties of life; with the same exhibition of final principles, which, either as determining the nature of morality, or as affording specific rules for the conduct, revealed the strong thinker and the practical moralist.

The feature most remarkable in this prince of pulpit orators, was the rare union of rigorous 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 fructifies. 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 ground 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 mummery," 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 power. 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