



truly yours
Thos. Parker

LESSONS
FROM
THE WORLD OF MATTER
AND
THE WORLD OF MAN.

BY
THEODORE PARKER.

SELECTED FROM NOTES OF UNPUBLISHED SERMONS,
BY RUFUS LEIGHTON.

Third Edition.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., 60, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1872.

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The Honble G. K. Gokhale,
In memory of the days spent
here in March 1903.

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Calcutta }
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THE
COLLECTED WORKS
OF
THEODORE PARKER,

MINISTER OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGREGATIONAL
SOCIETY AT BOSTON, U. S.

CONTAINING HIS
THEOLOGICAL, POLEMICAL, AND CRITICAL WRITINGS,
SERMONS, SPEECHES, AND ADDRESSES,
AND LITERARY MISCELLANIES.

VOL. XIV.

LESSONS FROM THE WORLD OF MATTER
AND THE WORLD OF MAN.

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“ Skilful alike with tongue and pen,
He preach'd to all men everywhere
The Gospel of the Golden Rule,
The New Commandment given to men,
Thinking the deed, and not the creed,
Would help us in our utmost need.
With reverent feet the earth he trod,
Nor banish'd nature from his plan,
But studied still with deep research
To build the Universal Church,
Lofty as is the love of God
And ample as the wants of man.”—*Longfellow*

TO

HANNAH ELIZABETH STEVENSON,

FOR MANY YEARS THE MUCH-VALUED FRIEND OF

THEODORE PARKER,

AND CO-WORKER WITH HIM IN LETTERS AND IN ALL THE HUMANITIES,

AND WHO NOW IN MANY GOOD WORKS,

WITH THE STRENGTH AND EARNESTNESS OF MAN'S WILL,

AND THE SWEETNESS AND SELF-DENIAL OF WOMAN'S DEVOTION,

SANCTIFIES HIS MEMORY,

AND ILLUSTRATES THE LOFTY VIRTUES

WHICH HE DEMANDED IN HIS TEACHINGS

AND EXEMPLIFIED IN HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER,

IS DEDICATED THIS VOLUME

OF SELECTIONS FROM HIS WORKS,

WITH THE SINCEREST ADMIRATION, AND THE MOST AFFECTIONATE ESTEEM,

BY HER FRIEND,

RUFUS LEIGHTON.

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

THE public are indebted for the present volume to Mr RUFUS LEIGHTON of Washington, whose selection of passages from his own phonographic notes of Mr Parker's discourses it has been my duty to see through the press. In presenting them to English readers I venture to make a few observations on the "Lesson from the World of Man," which may be derived from the phenomenon of such a series of orations as that of which these notes preserve the fragments.

In Mr Félix Pécaut's very admirable book, *l'Avenir du Théisme Chrétien*, he observes: "Truth, especially moral truth, ought to be communicative; whoever has found it ought to feel at once glad and morally bound to share it with his fellows. I distrust any religious idea which men keep to themselves on the pretext that the times are not ripe, and men's minds not prepared for it. If Theism be true, then it answers better than supernaturalism to the wants of every soul, and consequently gives more moral force and more religious happiness." The battle of Theism (he says again) will be won on the day in which one theist lives up to the full measure of his faith; yet can no man learn all that a religion has in it of power, till he shares it with his brother and experiences its influence under the natural conditions of social worship and common sympathies.

The lesson is one we need in England no less than in France, and the result of Theodore Parker's courage in speaking out the truth which was in him and in uniting men in purely theistic religious services is the corroboration of its veracity. It is small marvel that we should hear, as the writer

has done continually, both from New-England and the Western States, "Parker's influence grows daily. It is greater now than it was even while he lived." Such seed as he sowed could not but germinate in the ground of a thousand hearts. Parker's gifts were indeed great, his eloquence and the vast learning which freighted it; but his fearless *honesty* was the true source of his power. He gave to his congregation his own real thought, such as with hard toil he had dug out from the mine; making no attempt to steep it in any solution of old dogmatic phraseology whereby it might be coloured for popular acceptance, but offering it as he found it, in the nature of man. And the hearts of his hearers rejoiced to receive it. Bigots and pedants cried out against him in America, and timid and reverent souls, who are not bigots or pedants, sometimes murmur against his books in England, that he broke too completely with the past, and laid his hand too roughly,—not indeed on the Ark of God,—but on the staves by which it had been upborne so long, on the bells of the priests' vestments, mayhap on some golden calf or teraphim hidden beneath the curtains of the tabernacle. But such charges refute themselves to every one who will study his works, not in the short phrases which may be culled here and there by inimical critics, but in the large aspect of a whole series of sermons, such as those from which these notes are taken,—sermons breathing in every page a reverence for all things *truly* sacred in heaven and earth, which we may seek in vain to parallel among the writings of the most exuberantly deferential of our divines.

The lesson I would draw from this book and the known results of the great discourses it records for us, is briefly this. Theism, when honestly and plainly set forth, finds clear response in the moral and religious consciousness of mankind. No one, I believe, can read these Notes and not feel that one after another strikes a chord deep in our intuitions of the Good and the True, which perhaps had never vibrated before, but which, once struck, proves the most perfect harmony. The great principles of Theism applied to each department of human life, to morals, politics, history, science, nay, even to art and literature, everywhere bring out results which only do not startle us because

they seem as if we must always have known them. This evidence—which Coleridge made the test of the veracity of the Bible, and which applies to the Bible only just so far and no further than the Bible teaches Theism—is of a kind to prevail day by day more in men's minds in proportion as they can find such developments of the absolute religion plainly set forth. We need books which shall deal fearlessly with their various themes from the true stand-point of the writer, and not from the conventional stand-point of semi-orthodoxy which our moralists, politicians, poets, and even men of science perpetually assume, to the partial concealment of their own convictions and the entire loss of that great good they might effect by out-spoken sincerity. - What we want to know in England at this moment is what each man and woman is really thinking, not merely what each is willing to appear to think. The misery of mental and religious solitude which thousands of young hearts are now enduring, would be changed to the happiest encouragement could they know how many have shared all their doubts and passed beyond them to serener faith. The loss of warmth and power which the strongest of us must deplore, would be made up in a day could it be brought home to us how all around us are men and women struggling like ourselves to live a noble and holy life without any of those aids which hitherto have built up human piety.

There are millions in our land who still believe in the old creed under one or other modification, and know not, or refuse to know, that its foundations are undermined by the philosophy, the criticism, and the science of the age. There are thousands more who are aware of the dangers to which their faith is exposed, but who honestly believe that those dangers will sooner or later be repelled, and that traditional Christianity will for ever be the salvation of our race. To neither of these classes of persons does the lesson of Parker's life and work apply. But there is a third class in England, in France, in Germany, and America,—to how many it may amount, the Seer of hearts only knows,—who do not believe in the old traditional creed, and are perfectly persuaded that it cannot survive the attacks which every day multiply against it, and which in

time to come,—be it sooner, be it centuries hence,—must leave it among the systems of the past. Now neither these persons nor any others imagine that Europe (or hardly even Asia now) will ever bow to a new Prophet or new traditional faith. If Christianity be doomed, the choice of the future lies between Theism as a Religion, or such systems of philosophy, Pantheistic or Positive, as cannot merit the name of Religion at all. He who believes in God, must also believe that mankind will never be allowed wholly to turn from His worship; but none may decide that a period of darkness and atheism such as the world has never yet known, may not be possible; may not even now be approaching. What are the human means by which such awful desolation may be avoided, and by which there may be substituted for it an era of light? How is the tendency of thought during the next half-century to be determined towards Faith instead of towards hopeless scepticism? How is the fire of warm religious feelings to be kept alive in the hearts in which it now burns, but which lack all natural fanning breath of human sympathies? How are the children around us to be prepared for the great struggle which, in their day if not in ours, must surely come, and be provided with such shields of invulnerable faith in God and Duty and Immortality, as may withstand the fiery darts of scepticism? To all these questions there is but one reply. The way by which the tendency of thought can be directed God-wards and not earth-wards,—the way in which piety can be nourished in our own hearts,—the way in which our children may be armed for the future, is the same. On every man and woman it lies to follow it. *If* we have ceased to believe in the traditional faith, and ceased to hope that it can be permanently retained by mankind, then our plain and simple duty is to *acknowledge* that we do so—to acknowledge it to God and our souls first, to our friends and our little world ere long. It may be our influence is great, it may be that it is so small that it seems to us utterly of no account. But, great or small, our solemn responsibility is to use it in perfect honesty and simplicity of word and deed for the support of what we believe to be true. The trial is severe, for it involves the loosening (if not the breach) of the most

precious ties of affection with those who hold by the old creed, and who too often will pardon the most grievous unfaithfulness to what they know to be our convictions, and resent only our sincerity in acting up to them according to our light. But such trials, great as they are, bring with them their reward, a reward worth the loss even of the best of friends. If it be true, as the philosophic writer whom I quoted above avers, that no man can experience all the power of a religion till he shares it with his fellows in social worship and natural human sympathy, it is also true that neither does any man know the full meaning of his faith, or its power to support and bless, till he has borne his witness to it—perchance with some sacrifice—before God and the world.

F. P. C.

North Wales, Nov. 1864.

PREFACE.

THE last time that I saw Mr Parker, just previous to his leaving Boston for the West Indies, in the latter part of January, 1859, while he was making his final arrangements, not only for the immediate voyage, but with a view to the possibility of his never returning, I said to him that I should be glad to publish a volume of selections from my phonographic notes of his sermons,—taken down from Sunday to Sunday, as they were delivered during several years previous. He gave his cordial assent to the proposal, and afterwards alluded to it several times in his correspondence with me and with others, during the year that followed, while vainly seeking the restoration of his health in foreign lands.

Shortly before I made this suggestion he had written to me thus: "It has been a great comfort to me often to think that after I have passed away some of my best things might still be collected from my rough notes and your nice photograph of the winged words. The things I value most are not always such as get printed."

The book was commenced long since, but, from various considerations, its completion has been delayed until this time. Since whatever of truth or instruction it may contain is as applicable at this day as at any other, it is believed that this postponement has not impaired its value.

The selections have been made from the sermons of ten years, extending from 1849 to 1859, and embrace a wide range of topics. A few of them have before appeared in print, having been copied out for the newspapers of the day, at the time of

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