

**THEODORE
PARKER. A LECTURE**

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Theodore Parker. A Lecture by Samuel Johnson

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SAMUEL JOHNSON

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BY

SAMUEL JOHNSON

EDITED BY

JOHN H. CLIFFORD AND HORACE L. TRAUDEL.

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NOTE OF EDITING

Those who know Mr. Johnson's great work, *Oriental Religions*, need not to be told of the thorough reach of his studies. *India, China, Persia*, a triad of Universal Religion, attest his spiritual genius. Their general title fails to indicate the scope of critical research which deals not only with the religion, but likewise with the history and civilization of great races.

The men and women who enjoyed Mr. Johnson's personal ministrations as a teacher of Religion in the widest range of thought and in the tenderest of private relations cherish his large discourse and his strengthening applications of spiritual philosophy to the common needs of life. Such a man was well fitted to be the interpreter of Theodore Parker. This little book is made up from four several writings of the Lecture, by careful collating of the manuscripts for their best result. Alterations and transpositions for full consecutive treatment do not, it is believed, in any case, violate Mr. Johnson's meaning.

This editing has been a glad labor of love. The editors have been much assisted by Mrs. Nora R. Baldwin and Miss Anne Montgomerie.

That which is placed as "Introductory Address" appears to have been a spontaneous ut-

terance upon the death of Theodore Parker in 1860. The Lecture was written from time to time, and delivered in different places, between that date and Mr. Johnson's own decease in 1882.

Here is the estimate of Theodore Parker left by a fellow worker in religion and life qualified to speak of that still unmeasured Prophet of the soul and of social reformation, for whom remains increasing reverence, as both gift and guide of America's noblest spirit, and permanence among the great teachers and friends of man.

There seems a timeliness in publishing this Lecture to-day, when "issues" among religious Liberals of various schools are much debated—"issues" which Parker anticipated with a reformer's foresight and courage, which Johnson likewise faced with equal candor and independence.

J. H. C.

GERMANTOWN, Philadelphia, Pa.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

I feel that in the presence of such a public sorrow, and before the thought of what Theodore Parker has been and is yet to be to the cause of learning and piety and social progress and universal brotherhood, silence, for me at least, is best. In that special relation in which his peculiar genius placed him to his time, and the breaking of its bread of truth among the people, he has not left behind him the man competent to measure or to trace the currents of his influence. The work that was in his mind, and ready almost in his hand, to do,—the ripe fruit of his great harvesting, all ready to be poured into the longing souls of a whole generation—is not transmissible to any living man. It has passed with him into the invisible, how to be at last returned into these channels of our day we do not comprehend. We know only that it is not lost: that what the great brain and greater heart, with hard and holy pains, gathered for the people and the age he loved, cannot fail to be theirs. But who shall measure now this great bequest, or the great overflows from the same rich fountain for these years past? Not in any man's words can this history be told. It must

write itself through the coming conflicts and the coming victories of truth and liberty and love.

Theodore Parker stood alone: not for lack of personal friends—for every man who will make his mark in the great work of the age was his lover, and hosts of generous and earnest men and women on both continents were his disciples and fed on every word that fell from him as the divinest manna of the times; not for lack of an appreciation more than that of a disciple—few have enjoyed so richly as he that high conversation of kindred and equal minds which compensates the men in advance of their age for persecution, obloquy and all injustice. But in the special function which he assumed, as the popularizer of thought, as the reducer of all wisdom to that simplicity and clearness which is the seizing of it with the whole soul, and the giving of it with the whole heart, and the beholding of it in every possible relation of practical and universal good, and the analyzing of it into every minutest element with the reverent wonder and joy of a child who has found a strange piece of Nature's work, and the recombining them according to the rational processes of the common mind in the attainment of knowledge, so that every living mind should share his joy, and believe itself also the discoverer, and last of all the charging it with the mighty yearning earnestness of a conscience to

which there was no greater sin than to leave the sinner unconvinced, or to let the fearful penalty of injustice and crime fall on the man or the nation for lack of plainness and persistency in the delivery of God's great messages of warning; in this special function he walked alone—no man abreast of him, no man to comprehend all the glory and all the pain which such a function brings. It disparages none of those heroic reformers who have directed themselves more thoroughly than he to special reformatory movements, and who seem to me in some respects to have seen more clearly than he to the root of these questions, to say that Theodore Parker's work, as teacher of truth, covered a broader immediate ground than theirs. Wherever error or vice raised its head through the vast field of theology, literature, political and social economy, or practical life, here was the man to confront it, with a learning, a thoroughness of treatment, a clearness of demonstration, a power of communication to the masses, which no other could wield in so many directions, against all comers. His style was unique in literary history—his own—made for this special work, suited to it as no other ever was outside of that New Testament speech it most resembled. In the whole range of pulpit or platform eloquence there was none like it when it discoursed of the Transient and Permanent in

Christianity, sounding the earliest note of our great Theological Revolution which the people could clearly understand.

Yes, be it pronounced now, clearly and decisively: the function of this great Luther of the age—this more than Luther, because wiser, broader, healthfuller, more trustful towards God, more hopeful of man, about whose life the whole battle of the past with the present and future has raged; this iconoclast so unsparing, this critic so terrible, this thunderer in the ears of guilt in high places, this excommunicated, hated, outlawed revolutionist who has marched to the triumphant place this great assembly accords him at his death through such opposition as has been met in preaching righteousness and truth in this generation—was *mediatorial*. It was to take the bread of God and break it to the multitude—the bread in old religion and in new researches—the bread disguised by hard creeds and tyrannous traditions and mythologies, crusted into stiff framework for an authoritative faith—the bread hidden behind veils of frowning mystery, covered over with anathemas against the reason and the heart and the whole sacred constitution of the soul—the bread of a theology sublime and sweet, bringing home the God, fatherly and motherly, to the heart, and lifting human nature to recognize in its own familiar laws and needs his in-