

**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. VIII. PP. 1-217**

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I.

A DISCOURSE OF THE TRANSIENT AND PERMANENT
IN CHRISTIANITY.—PREACHED AT THE ORDINA-
TION OF MR. CHARLES C. SHACKFORD, IN THE
HAWES PLACE CHURCH, IN BOSTON, MAY 19,
1841.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."—LUKE XXI. 33.

IN this sentence we have a very clear indication that Jesus of Nazareth believed the religion he taught would be eternal, that the substance of it would last for ever. Yet there are some who are affrighted by the faintest rustle which a heretic makes among the dry leaves of theology; they tremble lest Christianity itself should perish without hope. Ever and anon the cry is raised, "The Philistines be upon us, and Christianity is in danger." The least doubt respecting the popular theology, or the existing machinery of the church; the least sign of distrust in the religion of the pulpit, or the religion of the street, is by some good men supposed to be at enmity with faith in Christ, and capable of shaking Christianity itself. On the other hand, a few bad men, and a few pious men, it is said, on both sides of the water, tell us the day of Christianity is past. The latter—it is alleged—would persuade us that, hereafter, Piety must take a new form; the teachings of Jesus are to be passed by; that Religion is to wing her way sublime, above the flight of Christianity, far away, toward heaven, as the fledged eagle leaves for ever the nest which sheltered his callow youth. Let us, therefore, devote a few moments to this subject, and consider what is *transient* in Christianity, and what is *permanent* therein. The topic

seems not inappropriate to the times in which we live, or the occasion that calls us together.

Christ says, his Word shall never pass away. Yet, at first sight, nothing seems more fleeting than a word. It is an evanescent impulse of the most fickle element. It leaves no track where it went through the air. Yet to this, and this only, did Jesus intrust the truth wherewith he came laden to the earth; truth for the salvation of the world. He took no pains to perpetuate his thoughts: they were poured forth where occasion found him an audience—by the side of the lake, or a well; in a cottage, or the temple; in a fisher's boat, or the synagogue of the Jews. He founds no institution as a monument of his words. He appoints no order of men to preserve his bright and glad relations. He only bids his friends give freely the truth they had freely received. He did not even write his words in a book. With a noble confidence, the result of his abiding faith, he scattered them broadcast on the world, leaving the seed to its own vitality. He knew that what is of God cannot fail, for God keeps his own. He sowed his seed in the heart, and left it there, to be watered and warmed by the dew and the sun which heaven sends. He felt his words were for eternity. So he trusted them to the uncertain air; and for eighteen hundred years that faithful element has held them good—distinct as when first warm from his lips. Now they are translated into every human speech, and murmured in all earth's thousand tongues, from the pine forests of the North to the palm groves of eastern Ind. They mingle, as it were, with the roar of a populous city, and join the chime of the desert sea. Of a Sabbath morn they are repeated from church to church, from isle to isle, and land to land, till their music goes round the world. These words have become the breath of the good, the hope of the wise, the joy of the pious, and that for many millions of hearts. They are the prayers of our churches; our better devotion by fireside and fieldside; the enchantment of our hearts. It is these words that still work wonders, to which the first recorded miracles were nothing in grandeur and utility. It is these which build our temples and beautify our homes. They raise our thoughts of sublimity; they purify our ideal of