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ARTICLE I.

THEODORE PARKER.

THERE is an underlying character in men, and in their acts, of which they are themselves often unconscious, but which may prove, in the end, of momentous import. So, there is an underlying character in sects and parties, often of more consequence than anything that they profess or do. The creed and the reasoning of a philosophical or theological school, frequently presupposes principles not announced, but, on the contrary, disowned and scorned, which are yet, in reality, adopted and enthroned, and are sure to work their way forth into public acts and into acknowledged authority.

The Unitarians of Massachusetts separated from their Orthodox brethren, on the doctrines of Christ's divinity and atonement and of human depravity and need of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. But, inasmuch as these doctrines are taught in the Bible, the Unitarian position *involved* theories of inspiration and of interpretation, with a general scheme of divine and human relations, which were not at first acknowledged, and which, perhaps, all the earlier adherents of the system would have summarily rejected. But the principles were really presupposed in the conclusions which Unitarians had reached; and, accordingly, there was, from

the first, a logical necessity that they should work themselves out into an open acknowledgment; and that, when thus publicly avowed, their further conclusions, also, should be owned and pushed. For a long time the process went on slowly and even timidly; for it was a loosening of the foundations of our Christianity, and involved the overthrow of its whole fabric. Men instinctively shrank from the conclusions of their own system and denied them. But the hour and the man came at last. On the 19th of May, 1841, at the ordination of a young minister over the Hawes Place Unitarian Church, in Boston, another Unitarian minister, then the pastor of a small church at West Roxbury, himself not yet thirty-one years of age, preached a sermon from Luke 21 : 33 : "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away ;*" which sermon, at a stroke, made Unitarian premises consistent with Unitarian conclusions, and logically developed from those premises further results of a startling tenor. The preacher's subject was, "*The Transient and Permanent in Christianity ;*" and he claimed that the most vital doctrines of Christianity had been as changeable as its forms of worship ; while there is a "pure Religion which exists eternal in the constitution of the soul and the mind of God," and "is always the same." In this discourse, Christianity, stripped of the rags and tatters of beggarly superstitions, stands forth at last, in the words of the author, "a very simple thing," — "absolute, pure morality ; absolute, pure religion ; the love of man ; the love of God, without let or hindrance ;" its "only creed," "the great truth," "*there is a God !*" "its watch-word, be perfect as your Father in heaven ; the only form it demands, a divine life — doing the best thing, in the best way, from the highest motives — perfect obedience to the great law of God." These principles were affirmed to constitute the real, the permanent Christianity, while all else was declared to be ephemeral.

The discourse sent a violent shock through the religious community of eastern Massachusetts, and its views met with scarcely more favor from the public organs of the

Unitarian, than from those of evangelical denominations. It at once gave its author notoriety, made him the leader of a party, and opened to him a position of influence which he continued to fill for some nineteen years, with marked ability and no inconsiderable appearance of success. He has now finished his labors; and the present seems an appropriate occasion for inquiring, what he has accomplished for theology and religion.

There is something very attractive, especially to youthful and sanguine temperaments, in the idea with which Mr. Parker set out. Here is an old religion, he says, which has grains of the purest gold mingled with much dross; seeds of truly Promethean fire buried under masses of lifeless ashes. I have sifted out the gold; I have rescued the seed of divine life, and here I give them to the world! Surely, if this be so, every heart shall call him Blessed!

What, then, is this new system, which has eliminated all that is permanent from the crudeness of our perishable Christianity, so as to present it pure and entire, for the world's use in all coming time? The question is both easy and difficult to answer: easy, because the works before us are frank and bold; difficult, because they are uniformly lacking in systematic arrangement and thoroughness, not seldom presenting us with statements too vague to do justice to the subject or credit to the author.

The reader at once falls upon an illustration of this looseness, in Mr. Parker's definitions and statements respecting "Religion," contained in his earliest work, entitled, "A Discourse on Matters Pertaining to Religion." On the 44th page of the third edition of this book, "Absolute Religion" is defined as "*voluntary obedience to the laws of God, inward and outward obedience to the law he has written on our nature;*" and on the 227th page, the further explanation is added, that it is "perfect love towards God and man, exhibited in a life," etc.; and, in harmony with these, we again read: "There can be but one religion which is absolutely true." To these statements, no one would make objection.

But, on the 7th page, we are told : " There is but one religion, as but one ocean, though we call it faith in our church, and Infidelity out of our church." Here we have quite a different proposition ; viz., that the religion of the Infidel and the Christian is *the same*. Expressions of similar tenor seem to be favorites with our author, of which the following may be taken as specimens : " Religion, like love, is always the same thing in kind " (p. 223). " Religion itself must be the same thing in each man ; not a similar thing, but just the same thing, differing only in *degree*, not in kind, and in its direction towards one or many objects." " The religious element must appear under various forms, . . . as to the number and nature of its objects, the Deities " (p. 46). " Though religion itself is always the same in all," its doctrines and rites vary. " The phenomena of Religion, — like those of Science and Art, — must vary from land to land, and age to age, with the varying civilization of mankind ; must be one thing in New Zealand and the first century, and something quite different in New England and the fifty-ninth century " (p. 48). " Piety, or love of God, is the substance of religion ; morality, or love of man, its form " (p. 46). " There is no monopoly of religion, by any nation or any age. Religion itself is one and the same. He that worships God truly, in whatever form, worships the only God " (p. 104). " The great doctrines of Christianity were known long before Christ " (p. 226). " Christianity really differs specifically from all other forms of religion in this respect : it is *Absolute Religion* and *Absolute Morality* " (p. 269). " Jesus taught *Absolute Religion*, *Absolute Morality*, nothing less, nothing more " (p. 240). There might be some interest in inquiring here, how much " love of God," and how much " love of man," Mr. Parker really believed to be contained in the religion of cannibals and pirates ; but this, with other questions that vigorously thrust themselves forward, would be aside from our present purpose. The above quotations, which we believe are fairly made, the reader will readily condense into the following statements : Religion is always the same, in each man, and is possessed by all

men; differing merely in degree and in form of outward manifestation. It consists in that love toward God and man, which is obedience to God's law; and absolute religion is neither more nor less than Christianity itself; by which is meant, simply, the piety and morality which made up the doctrine of Jesus. In all ages, and all nations, among all sects of believers and of infidels, there is but this one religion, though we call it Heathenism here, and Moham-medanism there; Polytheism in Athens, and Fetichism in Sockatoo; in Henry Martyn, Christianity, and in Tom Paine, Infidelity.

Now, it avails not to say, that the author *means* that the religions (or irreligions) of all these times, places, and persons, are the same *so far* as they partake of "perfect love towards God and man;" or that he affirms such *love* to be the same, wherever found. Nothing can justify him in so confounding Christ with Belial, as he does in these sentences; and the kindest criticism can not acquit him from the charge of an inaccuracy and carelessness which should not be found in a reformer of creeds and a leader in theological progress. For, what does he, in effect, teach the masses who flocked to hear him, on this momentous theme? He instructs them that they are to cast away their preconceived notions respecting the enormities of heathenism, and the vastness of the difference between gross idol-worship and Christianity; and are hereafter to believe that these are *fundamentally* one. What difference exists, is merely a matter of form and of degree. He gives his congregation, in substance, to understand, that Infidels and Christians are alike Christians, in that they all possess religion, which is always one, always, of course, the true religion, always, we fairly infer, "love towards God and man," "obedience to the law of God," the teachings of Jesus Christ, and "nothing less, nothing more." And so, Celsus and Augustine walk hand in hand, owning, for substance, the same religious faith; Paul and Tiberius Caesar are seen taking sweet counsel together; Jesus and Judas have kissed each other; while all the modern representatives and embod-

iments of these most violent contrasts, souls that abide in delighted communion with the Saviour, and souls that abhor the very syllables of his name, the purest and gentlest spirits who, through much tribulation and baptisms of fire and of the Holy Ghost, have been made white and clean (the pure in heart, who see God), and the grossest and vilest in wilful and obstinate iniquity — cannibals of New Zealand, pirates on the high seas, seducers, men-stealers, and betrayers — must be esteemed not only as having some religion, but as all having the same religion, essentially the same, however the “forms” may vary, “piety” being “its substance,” and “morality its form.” These several examples of religion differ simply in degree and manifestation. Mr. Parker’s system would be without consistency and without meaning, if it should refuse to speak as kindly of any man. It tells all men that they are good ; and that whatever their belief or their life may be, their character and their religion are both *substantially* identical with the religion and the character of Christ. They may not have as much as he ; and they may have a different way of showing what they possess ; but they possess the reality. Now, the truth which lies buried and lost under Mr. Parker’s statements, is this : There is but one true and absolute religion ; that of Jesus, and its vital essence is, the *supreme love* of God, and a love of man therewith agreeing. Whoever has this supreme love of God, possesses the substance of true religion ; who-so hath it not, has not the substance of true religion. And if he professes any other religion, in professing that, he clings to what is false, to a sham, a corruption, and deceit. But whoso, under the outward form merely of another worship, really worships God in spirit and in truth, *i. e.*, with a *supreme* devotion to him, he worships God, let the form in which he syllables his name be what it may. But whoso, under the name of God, does not worship him thus, in spirit and in truth, he does not worship him at all. There may be a Brahmin bowing in an Indian temple in true worship ; and there may be a minister lifting his hands in prayer amid a Christian congregation, who, in the eye of God, is but using vain repetitions as the heathen do.

Furthermore: Although all men are not possessed of the reality of true religion, all men possess the natural faculties whereby they are capable of true religion; all have hearts and consciences. There is a sacred place within every human soul, a house for God, wherein his law is set up; and when God has been welcomed and enthroned there, and his law is acknowledged and obeyed, then the soul has become his temple and the man is truly religious. But is he religious while hating the thought of God, and wilfully trampling on his law? Simple and charming as Mr. Parker's theory is, it is not to be taken, for its simplicity and its liberality, in place of the truth.

But we must examine Mr. Parker's exhibition of some of the more important religious truths. First in order, stands the Doctrine concerning God. This he has more thoroughly elaborated than any other; and his statements here are less open to objection, than on most of the topics of theology. The views given in his works are substantially those which have long been known as "Deism," modified, however, by a more modern philosophy and warmed by a more earnest philanthropy than has ordinarily characterized adherents of this system, though, perhaps, himself surpassed in this, by French Deists of the time of the Revolution. He calls his doctrine, *Theism*. The knowledge of God is declared an intuition of Reason. The "idea" is alike in all men, true and changeless; the "conception," ever inadequate and ever changing. God is *personal*, in the sense that he has not "the limitations of unconscious matter" (p. 150); but is *not* "personal and conscious as Joseph and Peter, or unconscious and impersonal as the moss or the celestial ether" (p. 151). "He is the ground of nature, what is permanent in the passing, what is real in the apparent." "The powers of nature — gravitation, electricity, growth — are but modes of God's action." "All Nature is but an exhibition of God to the senses; the veil of smoke on which his shadow falls; the dew-drop in which the heaven of his magnificence is poorly imaged." The law of nature "is but the will of

God ; a mode of divine action." " All the natural action of the material world is God's action." " There is no point of spirit, and no atom of soul, but God is there." He is " immanent in all matter and all spirit." " Is not truth as much a phenomenon of God, as motion of matter ?" Such expressions would seem to indicate a Pantheistic philosophy as their ground ; but Pantheists are, in the same connection, controverted by name, both those who " resolve all into matter," and those who say, " the sum total of finite spirit, that is, God." We read : " God transcends matter and spirit, and is different in kind from the finite universe." God is " Being, Cause, Knowledge, Love, each with no conceivable limitation." To express it in one word, a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. All kinds of perfection of being are attributed to him ; and, " as the result of these," " the perfection of Will, absolute freedom." And yet, the relation between man and God is described as though it were a merely natural relation, like that " between light and the eye, sound and the ear, food and the palate." " We have direct access to him through Reason, Conscience, and the Religious Sentiment, just as we have direct access to nature through the eye, the ear, or the hand." " Through these channels, and by means of a law, certain, regular, and universal as gravitation, God inspires men." " Inspiration is coëxtensive with the race." " There is nothing in God to fear." " You cannot fear infinite justice."

Not a few of the foregoing statements must strike any thoughtful reader as ill-considered and infelicitous. The truth is, that, notwithstanding the contemptuous tone of these works toward the evangelical theology, their most elaborate philosophico-theological discussion is far inferior in point of comprehensiveness, precision, and completeness, to similar treatises of orthodox divines ; and, judged by any high, scholastic standard, must be set down as fragmentary, crude, and not free from confusion and seeming contradiction. The aim of these " Discourses" may not have permitted their author to discuss his topics in scholastic form, or even with the nicety of phrase appropriate to a highly

cultivated, thoughtful, cautious, discriminating audience ; and yet, it is not unreasonable to claim, that he should at least have used a scholarly accuracy. The fact that they for whom, in the main, he may be supposed to have written, were by no means likely to supply any lack of definiteness or completeness on his part, but, on the contrary, to hold what they got, more vaguely and fragmentarily than it had been given them, was but an additional reason for the most conscientious exactness and the most studious thoroughness of treatment. That a book or a sermon is intended for the benefit of those who have not the time or the disposition to follow out the steps of a nice and profound investigation, is surely no excuse for vagueness ; but a most imperative reason for making the truth bold and strong, and for constructing with the greatest care, that underlying philosophy which determines the choice of terms and the shapings of phrase ; to the end that, if important distinctions fail to be seen, they may yet be felt, in a healthful and balanced final impression. But here Mr. Parker cannot be said to have succeeded. In some of his statements, God stands before us in the distinctness of a glorious personality ; in others, a natural element ; and we no sooner fasten our eyes upon the apparition of his presence, than it subtly fades and evaporates, hiding itself under the all-manifoldness of the universe.

Serious as are the theoretical defects in Mr. Parker's treatment of this high theme, they are less grave than those of a practical nature. In these discussions, we are not made to look upon God as the high *Moral Governor* of the Universe, to whom all are accountable, stainless from everlasting ; whose love of holiness is also hatred of sin, and of our sin ; but we continually find ourselves in the presence of a certain large, diffuse, ineffable glory, — whether personal or elemental we cannot always tell, — but certainly an omnipresence that, do what we will, *is sure to be on our side*.

In the Bible, there is heard, as it were, the voice of a solemn angel, saying, " Who shall ascend thy holy hill ? " and a sovereign voice replies : " He that hath clean hands and a

pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity;” and, “a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.” The elder, in the Apocalyptic Vision, answered unto the apostle, and said: “These are they which have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” No such voices are echoed from Mr. Parker’s theology; but there, all distinctions are drowned in a jubilant chorus of good and bad, who sing together in the same breath, in praise of the goodness which has not been too hard upon their sins, and of the inexorable justice which has exacted the uttermost farthing. This, at last, *paid*, they enter into their joy, having worked their own way thither, by their long struggle and endurance. There is no grace; all is of works. There is no place for faith, but only for sight and sense. God is *all* love; and yet his justice knows not the quality of mercy, — and the love is not holiness.

While, therefore, in words affirming the holiness of God, in effect Mr. Parker may be said to have left out this attribute. No prominence is given to it in his system; no emphasis is laid on it in his rhetoric; its nature and its working in the sphere of the divine government are not unfolded. The divine holiness is not recognized as having a permanent influence in the affairs of the universe, clothed with the dignity of an eternal fact and law. The reader is not made to feel that God’s conscience is of infinite and enduring strictness; and there is afforded us no foundation for *law* other than natural necessity. With Mr. Parker, “*law*” was but another name for the necessary nature of things; nor is there any basis in God, as he has presented him, upon which a moral law could rest; we see no principle in the divine mind from which it could be born, — and God is shorn of his majesty. The heavens are tremulous above us, indeed, with roseate glory, and are shedding sweet influences, from everlasting; but they have lost their eternal stars and their solemn depths, the awe and the lesson of their mystery, and their infinite voice of authority. Yes, and they have also lost the glory of their true, pure light, and their healthful consolations. That despised God, of the Old Testa-

ment, whom Mr. Parker names with Zeus and Odin, Baal and Osiris, but who "is of purer eyes than to *behold* evil," and who "cannot *look* upon iniquity," is not found in his book. "Zeus," we are told, "is licentious; Hermes will steal," and "Jehovah is narrow." Alas! had this prophet no vision!

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of God lies at the basis of all true knowledge of man, alike in his individual character and destiny, and in his social, civil, and universal relations. The idea of God is the one greatest and most essential truth; and any error here will be sure to repeat, and is likely to magnify, itself, in our notion of man and of his position in the divine order. It is the grand seed-thought of our minds; and any vice in that, affects the whole outgrowth. Accordingly, as Mr. Parker fails of presenting a comprehensive and adequate statement, either theoretical or practical, of the truth concerning God, his failure is almost necessarily worse when he treats of man and of man's relations with God. His general doctrine may be gathered from the following extracts:

"Men . . . are still born as pure (qu. as impure?) as Adam" (Crit. and Misc. Works, p. 4). "The hypothesis . . . of a garden of Eden, a perfect condition of man on earth in ancient times, is purely gratuitous." "All Pagan antiquity offers nothing akin to our lives of pious men." "The popular view of sin and holiness was then low" (do. p. 80). "The character of the gods, as it was painted by the popular mythology of Egypt, Greece, and India, like some of the legends of the Old Testament, served to confound moral distinctions and encourage crime." But "there was no devil, no pandemonium in ancient Polytheism as in the modern Church. Antiquity has no such disgrace to bear." The "mythological tales," however, were "blasphemies against the gods." "But goodness never dies out of man's heart. Mankind pass slowly from stage to stage;

"Slowly as spreads the green of earth
O'er the receding ocean's bed,
Dim as the distant stars come forth,
Uncertain as a vision fled,"

seems the gradual progress of the race. But in the midst of the absurd doctrines of the priests, . . . pure hearts beat, and lofty minds rose above the grovelling ideas of the temple and the market-place."

In these quotations, the writer's doctrine of "Original Sin" is given, together with hints of his doctrine of Human Redemption. He seems to teach, in substance, as follows: Man was originally created as bad as he is now, — in fact, worse; for, although in some respects the present day is behind the past, the world has been slowly growing better since the beginning. The ancients had no devil or pandemonium, indeed, — which are to be understood as a figment of modern superstition, — but, on the other hand, no proper conception of sin and holiness. Goodness, however, never dying out of man's heart, has been continually working off his native iniquity; and, as a crude planet, just out of its fire-bath, through long geologic eras cools and grows green, coming up, little by little, through deliberately revolving aeons, to be a realm of life and beauty and order, and moving ever toward a higher life and a more perfect beauty and a more complete order, so has it been with mankind; and, like some emerging continent, borne slowly upward by internal fires or crystallizations, so the race is still rising, sublimely, by inherent, occult forces, from the salt ooze of a contentious, frothy, monster-breeding barbarism (breeding none, however, so bad as the *two* of our own day), and clothing itself with garments of light and of beauty. This, we are left to suppose, comes about by the operation of *natural causes*, in contradistinction from that working of God, as an intelligent and voluntary *personal cause*, in which Christians believe.

But we shall better appreciate our author's treatment of this subject after looking into his views of human freedom, and his account of the difference between man and all inferior orders of existence. The following statements will show us what he has taught upon this important theme:

Upon the 163d page of his "Discourse," we are told that the law of nature is the will of God, immanent in matter,

and owes its uniformity to the Divine immutability; and that the things of nature "obey this law from necessity." "From this view," our author adds, "it does not follow that animals are *mere machines*, with no consciousness, only that they have not free will. However, in some of the superior animals there is some small degree of freedom apparent. The dog and the elephant seem sometimes to exercise a mind, and to become in some measure emancipated from their instincts." In another place, however, he affirms that animals have no "consciousness, so far as we know," "at least nothing which is the same with our self-consciousness. They have no moral will; no power in general to do otherwise than as they do" (p. 164). "They do what they cannot help doing. Their obedience, therefore, is not their merit, but their necessity." "There is, therefore, no room for caprice in this the 'inorganic, vegetable and animal' department." God is "immanent" in the animal, as in the vegetable and mineral creation, his "influence" being "modified by the capacities of the objects in Nature." Again, we read (Serm. on Theism, etc., p. 189): "In nature there is only one force, the direct statical and dynamical action of matter," and so it is easy to calculate the result of her "mechanical, vegetable, electrical, and vital forces. But in the world of man, there is a certain amount of freedom, and that seems to make the question difficult. In that part of the world of nature, not endowed with animal life, there is no margin of oscillation." "In the world of animals, there is a small margin of oscillation, but you are pretty sure to know what the animals will do." "But man has a certain amount of freedom; a larger margin of oscillation, wherein he vibrates from side to side." He then proceeds to argue, that, although this "greater complexity" makes the calculation of human action more difficult, for man, it can offer no difficulties at all to God; inasmuch as (p. 192) "God, as the cause of man's freedom of will, must have perfectly understood the powers of that freedom," with all the action of these powers; and, hence "the quantity of human oscillation with all the consequences thereof must

be perfectly known to God." "Though human caprice and freedom be a contingent force, yet God knows human caprice when he makes it; knows exactly the amount of that contingent force and what it will bring about." "To God, contingents of caprice and consequents of necessity must be equally dear, both before and after the event." Again (p. 197), he reasons as follows: "The evil the suffering must come either from my nature—my human nature—as man, my individual nature as the son of John and Hannah; or from my circumstances; or from the joint action of these two;—God must have known all these elements of the problem, and so, known the result." Once more (p. 295), he says: "This freedom has its limitations, and is not absolute." In comparison with a shadow, Socrates has a good deal of freedom, and is not so much subordinate to his organization or his circumstances as they; but in comparison with the infinite freedom of God his volativeness is little. To speak figuratively, it seems as if man was tied by two tethers,—the one of historic circumstance, the other of his physical organization; the cord is elastic and may be lengthened by use, or shortened by abuse and neglect; and within the variable limit of his tether man has freedom, but cannot go beyond it." Thus "there are other agents beside God using the power derived from him, to work after their own caprice."

Now, let us see what intelligible doctrine is here taught, concerning that essential nature of man, which distinguishes him from brutes and from still lower forms of being. In the first place, our author clearly declares the whole realm of mineral and vegetable nature to be under the law of necessity. Secondly, most animals are under the same law. Thirdly, some animals have "a small degree of freedom,"—this freedom consisting in the "exercise of a mind" and "emancipation from their instincts." Fourthly, animals have "no power in general to do otherwise than as they do—no moral will." Fifthly, in animals the "caprice," "the margin of oscillation," is very small. Sixthly, in man this

is larger; offering great difficulties to human calculations, though none to God, since he knows all the factors accurately, to wit, human nature, individual nature and circumstances,—in all which it seems to be implied that the nature of the connection between motives and actions is precisely the same with that between physical cause and effect; necessity ruling both alike, and the complexity being the only difficulty in the case. Seventhly, our author uses caprice and freedom as interchangeable terms, and recognizes no specific difference between them. Beings, therefore, capable of caprice are free. But, eighthly, he seems in other connections to understand by freedom, an exemption from limits of “organization and circumstance,”—God, the Absolute Being, possessing, therefore, perfect freedom, and his creatures different degrees of freedom proportionate to their several degrees of exemption. According to which definition, strictly interpreted, no created being is free; since no created being is exempt from limits of structure and condition. But our author explicitly teaches, that man and some animals are free agents; and his language implies that the “shad-fish,” with his short “tether,” has a certain measure of freedom, as Socrates, by his longer one, is enabled to enjoy a larger liberty. But, on this conception, not only animals, but all plants, and all elements, have *some* freedom; for there is not an atom of matter tied up so tight to its stake, as to be utterly unable in any case to act. It becomes, therefore, a pertinent inquiry: What is, by definition, the particular length of tether that constitutes the freedom of intelligent souls and of God? And, how large a “margin of oscillation” will suffice for a “moral will,” and to make a being responsible? And, how much “caprice” does it take, to be equivalent to that liberty which is the consummate flower and crown of our being’s powers, making us sons of God? And, as God is infinite in freedom, is he infinite in caprice? And is it, indeed, in stormy gusts of passion, in changeful moods of fancy, in varying tremblings of sensitive nerves, in hap-hazard leaps of mere impulsive “nature,” jerks of some blind, occult,

reasonless energy, that the freedom consists, whereby we are personal and responsible beings, in the image of God!

We think the reader must concede that Mr. Parker's philosophy gives no intelligible answer to the question: What distinguishes man from the lower realm of nature? And it will be found that no well-digested views upon this important topic, underlie his rhetoric, mould his phrases or give form and consistency to his general scheme. In short, it is impossible to believe that Mr. Parker had *thought out* this subject.

But any serious confusion here would seem to necessitate confusion upon the whole matter of *sin and holiness, the moral law and its penalty*,—in brief, upon the whole position of man as a moral and accountable being. A wise inconsistency alone could have saved our author from further error in all the outgrowths of theory or of precept from this stock. What do we find?

On the 368th page of his "Sermon on Theism, Atheism, and The Popular Theology," a formal definition and description of *sin* is given in the following terms: "A sin is a conscious, and voluntary, or wilful, violation of a known law of God. To do wickedly is a sin. This does not come from lack of intellectual perception, nor from lack of moral perception; but from an unwillingness to do the known right, and a willingness to do the known wrong. It comes from some other deficiency, a compound deficiency,—from a lack of affectional power, or of religious power, or from a perverse will." Again, on p. 369, "Sin is a violation of the rule of right; and so, is distinguished from a mistake. It is conscious and voluntary; and so is distinguished from an error. It is a violation of a Natural Law of God; and is thus distinguished from a crime." "A subjective sin is a violation of what is thought to be a natural law, but is not; and an objective sin, a conscious violation of what is a natural law. In each case the integrity of consciousness is disturbed,—so much for definition of terms."

He is elsewhere careful, in like manner, to distinguish between an "error" and a "sin." "An error" (p. 365), "is

the unconscious and involuntary violation of some rule of right, of the Moral Law of God. It is to the conscience what a mistake is to the intellect,—it is a moral mistake, as a mistake is an intellectual error.”

He argues (pp. 369–373) against the Pantheist’s denial of sin; affirming that, upon this theory, you must deny all “difference between right and wrong; or else that man has any power of free will to choose between them.” But of this difference and this power, he considers all men conscious.

On the 402d page, he still further elucidates his doctrine of sin. “A man knows the moral law of God.” Conscience says, “‘Thou oughtest.’ There it stops and leaves us free to obey or disobey.” “I know the right; I have the power to do or to refuse to do it.” He then goes on to show, that, if conscience or the affections were really to compel his soul to acts of holiness, he would only “gravitate” thereto; and should “cease to be a free, spiritual, individuality.” “It is not I, but the force.” The exposition here given is clear, full, and beautiful. “If I do not obey my sense of right,” adds our author, “straightway there comes remorse; I gnaw upon myself.” “Remorse, the pain of sin,—that is my work. This comes obviously to warn us of the ruin which lies before us; for as the violation of the natural material conditions of bodily life leads to dissolution of the body, so the wilful constant violation of the natural conditions of spiritual well-being leads to the destruction thereof.” This last statement is stronger than Mr. Parker’s doctrine really justifies. It must be taken as a slip of his conscience and reason. But, again, we read (p. 405): “Sin is a wrong choice: a preference of the wrong way to the right one,” not “for its own sake, as an end; but as a means for some actual good it is thought to lead to. It is one of the incidents of our attempt to get command over all our faculties. In learning to walk, how often we stumble!” “Sin is a corresponding incident,—we learn self-command by experiments, experiments which fail. I think this evil rather underrated.” Our author here proceeds

to warn young men against "conscious violations of their integrity," "the experience of which," he says, "will torment you long, till sorrow has washed the maiming brand out of your memory, and long years of goodness have filled up the smarting scar." But is it not a little consoling to be told, on the next page, the 206th, that, "As we get command over the body only by experiment, learning to run, to walk, to swim, only by trial; so by experiments are we to learn the proper uses of the will, to keep the law of God when known." And again (p. 208): "Sin is said to be a 'fall,' yea, as the child's attempt to walk is a stumble. But the child through stumbling learns to walk erect; every fall is a fall upward." In the same tone, on p. 409, he remarks: "Nay my own blunders in babyhood, manhood,—blunders of the body, of the spirit,—do they disturb me now? They are outgrown and half forgot. I learned something by each one. So is it with sin." Adding (p. 414): "Men often exaggerate the amount of sin,—its quantitative evil, not its qualitative. Much that passes by this name is mistake or error." He discusses elaborately the uses of pain, and proves it beneficent, but shuts his eyes, apparently, to the far more difficult question of the uses of sin; reminds us that "man oscillates in his march as the moon nods in her course; pain marks the limit of the vibration" (p. 410); that "the pain of sin is the pain of surgery, nay, the pain of growth (p. 412); that "suffering shames" us "from conscious wrong," and "keeps our wrong in check;" and, with something of courage and even of triumph, exclaims: "In the next life I hope to suffer till I learn the mastery of myself, and keep the conditions of my higher life. Through the Red Sea of pain I will march to the promised land, the divine ideal guiding from before, the Egyptian actual urging from behind." There is, therefore, a clear benefit to be got from pain; but what from sin? Or, is sin a necessity, as the stammerings and stumblings of infancy, as the nutation of the planets, and the aching of young limbs in the season of too rapid growth?

We are willing to leave it with any reader, whatever his

philosophy or his religion, to say, whether the theory of sin, and, what is of even greater importance, the *feeling* of sin, which shaped the concluding quotations given above, does not essentially differ from that which shaped the earlier ones? Mr. Parker's first statements fastened the sin upon the personal will, that is, on the person himself, in his central identity; his latter statements, make it an effect of nature, a necessary phenomenon, one of those transitions of growth, to deplore which, would be as really a mark of simplicity, as to lament that children must be two feet high before they are three feet, or that they take delight in the baubles of infancy, before those of manhood can have any charm for them. But it would be unfair to charge this naturalistic theory upon Mr. Parker. If he held it, we must suppose it to have been somehow qualified, in his mind, by the other. No; the charge against him is, that his statements are confused, vague, and fundamentally inconsistent with one another; and that, owing to these defects, together with the audacity and incorrectness of many of his views, the final impression of much that he has written must be unfavorable to religion and morals. It is the sure instinct of the human heart, to hug, with utmost tenacity, those comforting assurances which soothe the agitated conscience, and those delusive theories which explain away the guilt of sin. Whatever Mr. Parker's own belief might have been respecting sin, guilt, and punishment, he *teaches* naturalism, pantheism. If a writer offers two theories to his readers, they may be expected to select the one which best agrees with their own passions and desires.

We come next to a consideration of Mr. Parker's doctrine concerning Deliverance from Sin. This includes the subjects of Inspiration, Revelation, A Mediator, Miracles, Spiritual Regeneration, and Growth in Holiness.

In order to do this portion of Mr. Parker's system full justice, the reader should, in the beginning, conceive of himself as at a loss to know what sin is, and how he feels, or ought to feel, in regard to it. Let him imagine himself, at

one time, oppressed with a crushing sense of guilt, at another, accounting for all his transgressions, and benignantly contemplating them, as a parent contemplates the first efforts of his child to walk; let him invite the justice of God to work its work upon him, and rejoice that "through the Red Sea of pain," he is to "march to the promised land;" first, let him inveigh against the wickedness of the wicked, — men-stealers, and betrayers, and false teachers, — and then let him excuse them, on the ground of original imperfections not yet rooted out and infelicities of circumstance impossible to be overcome; thus, blaming and not blaming, remorseful and not remorseful, with confused notions of moral freedom, and feeble views of the Divine holiness; with this preparation, let him enter upon the question of human redemption and sanctification, and the discussion of God's dealings with his creature, through inspiration and revelation, and a mediator, for effecting a new birth and an eternal spiritual growth. Should he succeed ever so perfectly in this, he will still inadequately represent to himself the condition of a disciple of Mr. Parker, at this stage of his religious investigations. But how did our author himself meet these great questions that concern the present relations of the soul with its Maker? Let us commence with his views of Inspiration.

The reader will remember that Mr. Parker lays great stress upon the truth, which he strangely regards as unrecognized in the popular theology, that "God fills each point of spirit as of space." Starting from this basis, he proceeds to affirm, in language already quoted (*sup.* p. 8), that inspiration takes place in accordance with a purely natural law, certain and universal as gravitation. "Inspiration is coëxtensive with the race." "Prayer is a sally into the infinite spiritual world, whence we bring back light and truth." "There is no Mediator between man and God." "There can be but one *mode* of Inspiration," — "the action of the Highest within the soul, the Divine presence imparting light." Newton was not less inspired than Simon Peter; and there are no "different kinds or modes of inspiration in different per-

sons, nations, or ages, in Minos or Moses, in Gentiles or Jews, in the first century or the last." "The *degree* of inspiration must depend on two things, — on the man's Quantity of Being and Quantity of Obedience." "Inspiration is the consequent of a faithful use of our faculties." "The poet reveals Poetry; the artist, Art; the philosopher, Science; the saint, Religion." The various forms of inspiration are illustrated in the examples of Minos and Moses, David, Pindar, John the Baptist, Gerson, Luther, Böhme, Fenelon, Fox, Plato, Newton, Milton, Isaiah, Leibnitz, Paul, Mozart, Raphael, Phidias, Praxiteles, Orpheus (we give these names in Mr. Parker's order; see "Discourse," p. 208), who all "receive into their various forms, the one spirit from God most high." Inspiration "is coëxtensive with the faithful use of man's natural powers. Men call it miraculous, but nothing is more natural."

The above passages give a clear view of our author's notion of inspiration. It is that which properly forms a part of the theory of Pantheism; and the remainder of that theory is needed, to give it a logical foundation, consistency, and completeness. If you start with assuming, that the only real God is a natural element; the Original, whence all existing things have arisen, and which still holds them, through all their changes, in its all-embracing bosom; the one First Energy, of which all particular forces are but parts; the one Substance, of which all substances are modifications; the Fountain of power, attribute, and faculty, whence alone fresh *incrementa* can be had, for aught that lives, and whereby living things become more full of life, and strength, and beauty, — start with this hypothesis, and Mr. Parker's theory of inspiration is a perfectly logical consequence. In-spiration is but the in-breathing of the original and universal element. He has the most of it who has the most being. Strictly, the phrase, "quantity of obedience," is one which, in this philosophy, can have no meaning, since it presupposes a moral law, while here there is only a natural law; and implies a proper freedom, while here there is naught but necessity. The amount of obedience,

under such a system, is a strict measure of the amount of being. There is a similar inconsistency in representing inspiration as being "coëxtensive with the *faithful* use of man's natural powers." The word "faithful," is out of place here; for it is only in a figurative sense, or by way of accommodation to popular usage or prejudice, that Pantheism can charge unfaithfulness upon any existence. The presence of these terms is readily explained; for no one imagines that Mr. Parker was really a Pantheist. And yet, it is not a little extraordinary, that, while distinctly and emphatically disclaiming and refuting Pantheism, he should have fallen into a theory of inspiration so obviously and baldly Pantheistic, not in certain forms and phrases merely, but in its very essence and in all its leading statements. The only satisfactory clue to this enigma, seems to be found in the inconsistencies which have characterized our author's treatment of other subjects.

But, change now the basis from which you start. Instead of Brahma, begin with God, and at once a different theory springs into form. Jehovah "fills each point of spirit as of space;" not, however, as a natural element, but as a personal Omnipotence. He is our Maker, and our Preserver. His is all the substance of which we consist, and all the energy wherewith it is endowed. All our springs are in him. He sustains us while we endure as we are, and from him come all fresh inflowings whereby his creatures grow, in strength, beauty, or goodness. But he is no merely elemental spring, no unconscious giver, like soil, air, and light; he is a spirit. "We have direct access to him through Reason, Conscience, and the Religious Sentiment;" and, indeed, through our whole nature, physical as well as spiritual, — for "in him do we live, move, and have our being." But much of this union is too deep for consciousness, and we only know that it exists, because we see its logical necessity, and because it is revealed. A conscious access we also have — a communing of our spirits with the Spirit, of the child with his eternal Father. Prayer is a going forth from that state wherein we are clouded with selfish

desire and passion, shut up within our own private world, into the clearness, the largeness, and the glory of God's own holy and blissful presence; a most genuine, real, and conscious intercourse of the finite soul with the Infinite Soul; the communion of a personal being with that mysterious, awful, sacred, beloved ONE, who is all that we can understand by "person" or "spirit," and infinitely more, nearer, and dearer to us than our very selves. There may be various modes of inspiration; as, *e. g.*, that whereby God works within us so as to promote our steady growth in the direction in which our nature points, but beyond the measure of our original endowment. Though not ordinarily called inspiration, this would certainly be an in-breathing of God. Then, there is that divine operation, whereby for a limited season our faculties are refined or heightened in their action, so as to reach results otherwise unattainable. Again, there is the special and immediate communication of truths or facts, as between man and man. These, and possibly other modes of inspiration, are admissible under the theory of which we speak. God has "direct access" to his children at all times, and at all times his children have direct access to him; and this, "according to a law," *more certain than that of gravitation* (for heaven and earth shall pass away), the law contained in the eternal Reason, wherein God shapes his eternal decree and act. There are subordinate laws, however, whereby God, in part, regulates this blessed action within our souls; and in a modified and limited sense it is true, that a certain kind of the divine in-breathing varies as "the quantity of being and obedience," and depends upon our own fidelity. Whoso opens the door shall find that the Father enters in and sups with him. Some inspiration, again, is miraculous, and some may be viewed as natural; the former, being an action of God *other* than that which he was pleased to include within the known laws of our being; the latter (which is only figuratively named inspiration), a divine action within the strict limits of those laws.

Such is the Christian theory. Mr. Parker's differs from

it in being both intellectually and spiritually poorer, less clear, less discriminating, and less satisfying to mind and heart. All in it of any value is included in the scriptural view, and is only a refraction of its glory.

Our author's general doctrine concerning a revelation, grows out of his theory of inspiration and his conception of God. "Inspiration" being regarded as "the light of *all* our being, the background of *all* our faculties," it follows that Dorcas was as really inspired in her making of coats as Moses in giving the law; and that the two tables engraved on Sinai were no more really a revelation from God, than were the Twelve Tables of Rome or the laws of Numa. In a word, the only revelation known to Mr. Parker's philosophy, was that communication of light and power from God, whereby men daily live, and move, and have their being, — the working of a natural law, just as purely natural as any of the laws of matter. He affirms that God's immutability shuts out the possibility of any other kind of communication from him. All truth that is known, is properly said to be known by revelation, and is but the necessary result of natural causes — varying with the quantity of our being and (our author illogically adds) obedience.

Mr. Parker, therefore, very consistently found all the truth accessible to man wrapped up in man's "Reason and the Religious Sentiment." "No teacher can be superior" to these. No being of higher spiritual scope, and of broader and riper experience, not even God himself, — we must infer, — can claim an authority higher, for us, than that of these faculties; for, God is *in* man, being present in his "Reason and Religious Sentiment," and working in the action of these faculties as in the attraction of material molecules and in the orderly revolutions of the heavens. There "is no Mediator between God and man."

The utter folly of this manner of talk — for it is worthy of no higher name — comes out into full relief, under the first steady look. For, even in the case of matter itself, the

action of God is not in accordance with "a regular, *natural law*." What is creation, but a working of God by a moral law, that is, for an intelligible end and with a moral purpose? Is there a natural law whereby he originates natural law?

Again: Is it a satisfying view of God, which represents him as having so buried and lost himself in his creation, that there is nothing left of Deity now, save the necessary thousand-fold activity of the universe? But this must be, if God is tied to a regular, *natural law*, in all his actions.

Furthermore: There are, doubtless, some *facts* within the circumference of the universe and of eternity, of which a given man is, at a given moment, ignorant; but which, nevertheless, are, in their nature, apprehensible by his mind and heart, so that the knowledge of their existence is communicable to him; and God, if personal, as Mr. Parker avers, can communicate such facts; which communication would clearly be a "revelation" of a kind which Mr. Parker's theory denies. These facts may nearly concern us, since our life is not shut up to earth; the knowledge of them might throw great light upon difficulties, and free us from thraldoms, since the truth maketh free; and, therefore, a teacher bringing this revelation might have an authority which Reason and Sentiment could not claim for themselves, since, through him, God would be telling us what he does not tell us through them, — truths and realities beyond the reach of their intuition. It is *possible*, therefore, that a teacher should be sent from God, who should be a mediator between God and his infant children, erring here, as they are, from the right way, and miserably stumbling upon dark mountains. An angel, or an archangel, or, at least, the Divine Word himself, impersonation of the Eternal Life and Love and Wisdom, may speak to me; and, with such authority, that I freely give up my "Reason and Religious Sentiment," to be taught and led of him. All this is reasonable; and if also real, then it is most blessed and glorious and full of thanksgiving.

But again: Mr. Parker concedes that all men have the

revelation of God, although no man attains to a perfect conception of him; while most men, especially those who lived in the earlier ages, have rested in conceptions exceedingly gross and false. Now why could not Mr. Parker have said: 1. That, even in the earliest ages, it was permitted to a few favored minds, to compass a worthy conception of God. 2. That God's Spirit was working in these loftiest souls,—and, indeed, in all souls,—a Light lighting every man, and especially lighting these chosen men, wisely chosen of God, for reasons which we cannot know, and can but partially guess. 3. That thus, under a perpetual and universal, in connection with such particular, Divine supervision, this spiritual knowledge was handed down from generation to generation, till, at last, it was found that God, in the exercise of that wisdom and love which embrace all being and all duration, had communicated and put on record a conception of himself, a revelation of his glorious majesty, a knowledge of his mighty acts, and a history of his dealings with man, so high, and pure, and true, that this RECORD was worthy ever to remain a sacred Authority for the race, and to be revered as a revelation of God from God. 4. That while, in this great achievement, men must needs rejoice, they, nevertheless, often forget the mighty process of its completion, as it toiled through the slow centuries of an experience divinely ordered and divinely attended — an ever growing record of God's presence and of the truth that he had inwrought and revealed. Men are charmed with these blossoms of heavenly odor, but do not always meditate, as they ought, upon the divine life-principle which produced the flowers, and fail to discern the sacred roots, trailing far in darkness, or even the Light which touched this beauty and healing virtue into being.

What objection can reasonably be urged to such a theory? But if so much as this be true, if the Bible really gives us a Revelation from God, then we do well in looking to it for instruction, in making it our guide and owning it "the Master of the soul."

Mr. Parker tells us, as though it were the end of contro-

versy, that "a verbal revelation can never communicate a simple idea, like that of God, Justice, Love, Religion." But he does *not* say, that no verbal revelation can stir into action a dormant faculty, and stimulate it with so vital an awakening that a new thought of God shall be born, like an angel, within the soul, and a new impulse of love shall be given, transforming the character and making a new man. For this would have been, to deny the very work which was his own fond ambition and his solace. Nor, again, does our author affirm, that no verbal revelation *accompanied* by the powerful working of the Spirit of God, can impart a simple idea, — which is the true Christian doctrine; for this would be to deny creation as well as progress, the existence of simple ideas and their possibility. For, if this be impossible now, it has always been impossible; and no simple ideas exist in any minds, except they have eternally existed there.

It is clear, then, as the sunlight, that if we believe in a personal God, we must also believe in the possible truth of the Christian doctrines of Inspiration and Revelation, and in their high intrinsic probability. If we go further, and believe in the Christian's God, we must accept his doctrine of Revelation as the statement of a blessed reality. God speaks, and we devoutly listen; he instructs and commands, and we trustfully and humbly obey; he breathes the love of his boundless heart, and not even

"That undisturbed song of pure concert,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colored throne,"

can speak the adoration of our gratitude.

We have not room to follow our author through the details of his statement and attempted refutation of the Christian doctrine of the sacred scriptures, but can merely present the outline. The views denounced in Mr. Parker's works are summed up in the following words: "*The Bible is master to the soul; superior to Reason; truer than Conscience; greater and more trustworthy than the Religious Sentiment*" (Disc. p. 305). We understand these

books to teach the reverse of all this : that the soul is master of the Bible ; that Reason is superior to it ; the Conscience more true ; and the Religious Sentiment greater and more trustworthy. We are instructed, that the Bible contains two grand divisions essentially contradictory of each other, the Old and the New Testaments ; the one setting forth a religion of fear, and the other of love ; one resting on a special revelation to Moses, the other based simply on the revelation given to all men. " One half of the Bible repeals the other half." The God of the Old Testament is " a man of war, cruel, capricious, revengeful, hateful, and not to be trusted." He " eats and drinks, makes contracts with his favorites, is angry, resentful, sudden and quick in quarrel, and changes his plans at the advice of a cool man." At first, he is but a " local deity ;" but at last, we have " the only living and true God," and in the New Testament, " a Father full of love." Such representations manifest as little candor as reverence ; and fail of meriting a respectful consideration. To tell us that the Being who " in the beginning created the heavens and the earth" is merely " a local deity," and to affirm that neither Moses nor David knew anything of a God, long-suffering, merciful and gracious, full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy, who, like as a father pitieth his children, pitieth them that fear him, crowning them with loving kindness and tender mercies, forgiving all their iniquities, and healing all their diseases, and redeeming their life from destruction, — to say such things, is to confess a headstrong and virulent prejudice and to court commiseration and neglect.

As the reader would expect, the works now under review bring forward the familiar objections against the Bible and its several parts. The book of Genesis, the history of the patriarchs and of the captivity, the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, are by turn saluted with stale assaults. Our author insists upon interpreting literally all phraseology applied to Jehovah, and strives to hold that " Moses had foul ideas of God." Of the laws, he says : " They contain a mingling of good and bad, wise and absurd, and if men

will maintain that God is their author, we must still apply to them the words which Ezekiel puts into his mouth (20 : 25): "I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;" or say, with Jeremiah (7 : 22): "I spake not unto your fathers in the day that I brought them out of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices." Thus he quotes their own God against them, and flings his infallible Word in their faces — *in a joke!* For it is impossible to suppose that Mr. Parker really understood Ezekiel to have owned, in the name and by the authority of God, that the Divine statutes were not fit to live by; or that Jeremiah intended to represent Jehovah as denying that he spake unto the fathers!

We are not aware that any of Mr. Parker's objections to the scriptures are new, or in any important respect original. Nor, if they were, could it be necessary to wade through *all* the shallows and swamps of an author who affords such examples as have been quoted, or to devour the whole of an apple of Sodom, after proving its hollowness and tasting its ashes. There is little danger that the common sense of the people will accept, in opposition to the word of our Saviour himself, the declaration, that Jesus rejected "the chaff of Moses and the husk of Ezekiel, with their 'Thus saith the Lord,' leaving" them "to go to their own place, where the wind might carry them." The voice of the Lord himself rises serenely above all this loud irreverence, and proclaims, of these same prophets, in words that will be audible and authoritative to the latest hour of time: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

In concluding this topic, we have only to call attention to the contrast between the laudations which Mr. Parker has, in various places, bestowed upon the Bible, and the hideous charges with which he seeks to blacken it. It is but another example of his inconsistency and carelessness.

The doctrine of Miracles is disposed of in the manner that would be expected from our author's treatment of Revelation, and from the inaccuracy that has hitherto pervaded

his discussions. He prepares the way for what he has to say, by some observations upon the proper criterion of certainty, applicable to the matter in hand. The matter in hand is, Christianity. Christianity he limits to certain "eternal truths," which are "matters of reflection," or "of intuition," and so, to be made plain to those who possess these two faculties by the simple process of using them. If the question be raised: "How do I know that Christianity is true?" Mr. Parker seems to think it a fair reply, to inquire, in return: "How do I know . . . that half is less than the whole; that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be?" questions which every student of intellectual philosophy recognizes as specifically different, so as to furnish no answer at all.

But, having laid down the definition, that Christianity is merely a system of abstract truths or intuitions, it is very easy to follow that with the statement, that no *wonders* can make these truths either more clear or more certain.

But, taking Mr. Parker's own premises, his conclusion is not legitimate. There may be truths of reflection which surpass the reach of man's present reflective power; and intuitions, high and grand, of which he has not the faintest beholding. And it is, therefore, in the nature of things possible, — nor does it seem essentially improbable, — that a being of superior order should furnish to men the results attained by his own loftier faculties; which results men might, at first, hesitate to receive; but the exhibition of certain wonders, of certain *facts*, hidden, hitherto, behind the veil of the universe, might make some of these truths more clear; and the performance of certain other wonders, might be so recognized as agreeing with this Being's claim to superiority, and might so clothe him with a sacred authority and personal glory, as to make other truths more sure, and even make them certain, resting as they do upon his mere testimony.

But is Mr. Parker right in his definition? Does the law: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself, *constitute* Christianity? Surely, if

Christ was what the apostles believed him to be, and what the Church throughout the world with joy has ever recognized and confessed, then there is a great historical truth, a *glorious fact*, which constitutes the distinguishing peculiarity of Christianity. Moreover, whether the belief of the Church be true or false, the usage of centuries has limited the name "Christianity" to the religion which acknowledges that fact. If Mr. Parker denies the reality of the fact, he need not also deny the dictionary, and take this appropriated word to designate his alien and hostile system. If the meaning of a word may thus be changed, at any one's caprice, the boundaries of truth and falsehood are confused, reasoning is but idle play, and Reason is dethroned. Whether Mr. Parker's views, therefore, be right or wrong, Christianity stands as a system of *combined truths and facts*. This materially alters the aspect of the case. For, obviously, even if it were granted, that miracles could be of no use in proving truths of reflection and intuition, the concession no longer holds, when the inquiry respects historical realities. Now, we are not anxious to use the miracles of Christ for the purpose of convincing men that the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is a good law; but we would use them for the purpose of more fully satisfying the world of Christ's own divine nature and mission. His miracles constitute one of the stones of the immutable arch upon which this great doctrine rests.

Christians claim, that Christ was more than man, that he was a union of the divine and human natures in one person. They assert this as a *fact*; and, certainly, if it be a fact, it is one of mighty import. The advocates of Mr. Parker's views would, unquestionably, themselves concede that weighty deductions follow, if this thesis stands. Does it stand?

If Christ was more than man, there must have been some particulars in which he was more; some of his powers must have been superior to human powers; and this superiority must have appeared; must have appeared in certain particulars; and these particulars must have been wonders — mir-

acles. If, in Christ, the Eternal Word was really present, then, in him, a really superhuman power was present, able to do, and naturally doing, things obviously superhuman; and such things he *must* do, or remain, at best, but vaguely and indecisively manifested. And if God visited the world in the person of Christ, for the very purpose (in part) of manifesting himself, and illustrating his love, then miracles are a necessity; for no merely human act could indicate, much less demonstrate to dull minds, and impress upon reluctant hearts, the reality of God's very presence.

On the supposition, therefore, that the Christian claim is true, miracles are not only to be regarded as natural and probable, but as morally necessary; and the Christian scheme would be essentially self-contradictory if it did not include them. To claim that a certain being is human, and yet concede that he exhibits and that he possesses the powers of an animal only, is to say and straight unsay. In like manner, if we affirm that Christ was Divine, and also grant that he owned no superhuman faculties, and wrought no miraculous deeds, we do but utter jargon. In short, it is just as natural, and just as necessary (upon the Christian theory), that *Christ* should work miracles, as that a *man* should reason; that the one should manifest a divine power, as that the other should manifest a human power.

Then, again: Christ came into the world a mighty force, turning its current. He must, therefore, take strong hold upon men, and must *impress* them profoundly. Do we not see what an *important use* miracles had in making that impression? so that, in three short years, a greater work was done, than any wrought by any other human being in a long life? Who can say that this would have been possible without miracles? And Christ's miracles are of use still. They preserve the consistency of the Gospel story, and render it credible. They impress us — when we duly accept them, as in reason bound — with a sense and realization of the very presence of God in Christ, which we could not possibly have had, if we beheld in Jesus only the gentle traits of wisdom and goodness, and none of the signs of God-like might.

To sum it all up, as we contemplate that wonderful history contained in the gospels, so simple, so human, and yet so transcendent and divine, we are forced to own, that miracles are *in place* in that life of our Lord; that there was a sufficient moral end for their introduction, identical with the end of Christ's own coming; that they did their work at the time when they were wrought; that they continue their work now; that it is most reasonable and satisfying, to mind and heart, to believe in them; that they stand, and shall ever stand, bright witnesses, testifying — God!

Thus does it become very clear, that the Christian doctrines of a Mediator and of Miracles are in harmony, and that they strengthen one another; each appears reasonable when viewed in the other's light. And, indeed, as to the question of a Mediator, it seems neither unreasonable nor unkind to say, that the world will be better prepared to listen to denials of the existence and of the need of a mediator between God and man, when it no longer sees *men trying to mediate* between that Infinite Light and its own darkness. But so long as philosophers confess the "idea" of God to be incomprehensible by man (see Discourse, B. I. ch. ii.), and that they themselves partake of the life-giving glory of this unattainable truth only through a mediating "conception;" and so long as philosophers offer *themselves* to men as high-priests of the ineffable mysteries inspired with an afflatus as genuine as any that the race has known, we shall not find it easy to believe, that the idea of mediation contains in it anything repulsive to human instincts or reason. And until these our neighbors who are so anxious to be the bringers-in of a new religion, shall exhibit a nobler mediation than we learn of in scripture, we shall cling to that. To a Christian mind, it is delightful to think of Jesus Christ as a *Mediator*, a true revealer of God, taking the things in the heavens, eternal and unseen, and showing them unto us; as a blending of God and man, in such a way that we can *see* God, — so far as human boundaries will contain him and human powers can present him; and as a shadowing forth, also, of that glory of the Father which

passeth understanding, but which we can yet recognize and adore — the ineffable divineness of Deity. If our minds are of limited scope, we see no absurdity in our receiving instruction from a mind of broader vision; if our souls are weak, we feel no impropriety in their being made strong by communion with a nobler soul; if our hearts are corrupt, it does not hurt our pride to hope that they may become pure through union with God in Christ; if we are but men, and sinful men, we adore that divine love which gives us a Mediator whom we can know and love and trust, and who will cause us to be owned of God, and will make us to be partakers of the divine nature. True, we rejoice in a direct communion with the Father; but we find this communion much nearer, in that we have known Christ and come through Christ.

But it is impossible to treat of these important themes in full. We must now hasten to a brief comparison of Mr. Parker's doctrine of Progress, with the Christian doctrines of Regeneration and Sanctification. We understand our author to teach, that man is ever rising, like a submerged continent, by a *natural law*, to wit, the continually increasing influx of a divine energy. Thus we may imagine the globe to blossom in favored spots with civilization, just as on sunny and sheltered slopes are seen the earliest green and gold of spring. The Christian idea is different; namely, that man rises from his ignorance and baseness, not in accordance with laws of mere nature, but by a moral law, — regnant over all natural laws, and using them, — by none other, in fact, than the eternal dictate and decree of perfect Reason and infinite Love. We hold, that God intelligently and lovingly gives his Spirit in the fullest measure which this absolute reason and goodness allow; ever wisely and benignly ministering this divine gift to his children, in accordance with a plan which comprehends the two-fold infinity of all existence and his own glory — whereof existence is only a ray. No natural law necessitates God in this; but he acts in and by a moral law, a method of his own

mind and free will. Thus, we hold that the world is moving on, because we believe in God, and that he is moving it; which, indeed, we think that we can see; but if we saw it not, we should believe it all the same, believing in God. The new progress of the individual soul commences, according to this view, when, upon some fresh influx of divine energy, the selfish and blinded heart is so filled with the light and power of the truth as to be "persuaded and enabled" to love God supremely, and voluntarily gives itself to this love and its service forever. And the new progress of the soul continues as it began, in the co-working of man's free will with the Spirit of God, and the filling the soul with the fulness of God, ordinarily through the instrumentality of means specially appointed of God, as the way of this pleasantness and peace.

Mr. Parker's view makes the progress of the soul but a part of the general cosmic change, whereby the existing universe is slowly *cycling* upward, and present forms of being are becoming higher forms. The Christian view makes the regeneration of each soul a personal working together of God and man; wherein each loves the other, and the weakness of the creature is helped out of its hopeless difficulty by divine strength, and the great want of the finite is filled by the incoming of the Infinite, — earth's sinful and sorrowful child (sorrowing now with a godly sorrow) being taken back into the Father's arms and blessed with the measureless bounty of his grace. The Christian view is most reasonable, noble, comforting, and inspiring; and has been instrumental in convincing the world of sin and bringing it to God. The Pantheistic theory agrees neither with reason nor with experience, and is powerless to turn men from their iniquities. Through the one, the Spirit of the Lord endows the soul with a divine and permanent energy; the other gives but pleasing illusions and a passing intoxication of fancy, sure to be followed by a heaviness, a weariness, and a pang. "Follow the body's laws and be in health of body, — the spirit's laws and secure health of soul and happiness," is very old and very sound advice. But

the nothingness of these prudential maxims when confronted with the madness and anguish of the world, has been only too thoroughly tested. Yet such is the remedy which modern *Deism*, striving to make itself something new by changing the smoother consonant to an aspirate, still presumes to offer for the world's sin and sorrow. Obey the laws of your being, says Mr. Parker; "Mens sana in corpore sano!" Seneca and Aristotle have done better than that; and Socrates and Plato, much better. How unspeakably inferior all this, to that wisdom and power of God revealed in scripture and made familiar to the experience of so many thousands of hearts; that effectual calling, which, in bringing the soul to Christ, shows it its own sin and God's holiness, and puts it in living communion with the Holy Ghost, who instructs the heart in the ways of heavenly love, transforms it with eternal influences, comforts it with Christ's own peace, and binds it in endless union with God. How new, and fresh, and beautiful comes this Christian revelation to hearts weary with the forceless droning of a superannuated philosophy. It is pleasant as fruits of paradise, to prodigals starving on "the husks."

We have not room to pursue further our investigation into the *positive* teachings of Mr. Parker, in theology, but must hasten briefly to call attention to the position he assumes towards Christianity, and to the *scope of his denials*. As was remarked near the beginning of this Article, Mr. Parker reduces Christianity to the "two great commandments;" and, strange to say, finds its "essential peculiarity" in that which he defines as the essence of all and every religion, the element whereby they are all one. In this, and *not* in the "miraculous birth, the incarnation, the God-man, the miracles, . . . the atonement, the resurrection," "the ascension," and the other doctrines of scripture and the creeds, he finds the distinctive characteristic of the Christian religion. All besides, — doctrine or fact, — is but the husk, having but a temporary use, or else a morbid growth, of no use whatever. "The notions men form about the scriptures,

and the nature and authority of Christ, have nothing to do with Christianity," says our author, "except as its aids or its adversaries." "Their connection with Christianity appears accidental; for if Jesus had taught at Athens, and not at Jerusalem; if he had wrought no miracle, and none but the human nature had ever been ascribed to him; if the Old Testament had forever perished at his birth, — Christianity would still have been the word of God; it would have lost none of its truths." And yet, Mr. Parker seems to have doubted whether *Strauss* is justified in calling himself a Christian, — though so far as respects his life he abides the test, — because of the peculiar theologic dogmas advocated in his "Leben Jesu" (Crit. and Misc. Writ., p. 295). It is but just to add, however, that, in another passage, our author speaks with more care and discrimination; when, after remarking that "all religions have this common point, *an acknowledged sense of dependence on God*, and each religion has some special peculiarity of its own which distinguishes it from all others," he goes on to say that, while "the essential peculiarity of Christianity is indeed its absolute character," its "formal and theoretic peculiarity" is contained in the doctrine "*that God has made the highest revelation of himself to man through Jesus of Nazareth.*"¹ In this inconsistency, he is still *self-consistent*, and exemplifies a leading trait of his works. But to return.

"Real Christianity," that is to say, the "two great commandments," Mr. Parker says, is permanent; all else is transitory — "fleeting as the leaves upon the trees," which

"Fall successive and successive rise."

To illustrate this transitoriness, he selects two doctrines, the one respecting the origin and authority of scripture, and the other relating to "the nature and authority of Christ." But the former, which he describes as originally "a presumption of bigoted Jews," he also declares "has been for

¹ We have grossly misunderstood Mr. Parker, if he did not think, and if he does not teach, that he himself has given a higher one. Mr. Parker had the same reason for accusing our Saviour of teaching the selfishness and malignity of the Father, as for charging this upon Christians. (See below.)

centuries the general opinion of the Christian church, both Catholic and Protestant ;” and, “still worse, it is now the general opinion of religious sects at this day” (Crit. and Misc. Writ., p. 147). Mr. Parker says this, *while in the act* of showing wherein “this transitoriness of doctrines appears.” The foremost doctrine, therefore, which he is at pains to select as remarkable for the briefness of its ephemeral existence, originated, by his own showing, at least as early as the era of Moses ; and the same doctrine, after having for ages formed a centre of union for the *whole church*, is still generally held, he sorrowfully assures us, by the religious denominations into which the world is at the present hour divided ! After reading this, no one will be very greatly surprised to find Mr. Parker inquiring, with every appearance of utmost simplicity and seriousness, “Did Christ ever demand that man should assent to the doctrines of the Old Testament ?”

Mr. Parker was no more fortunate in the second doctrine which he chose as an illustration of “the transient” in Christianity, or in his exposition of its changes. For he testifies that, “almost every sect that has ever been known makes Christianity rest on the personal authority of Jesus.” And this, notwithstanding,—to use his own words again,—“it seems difficult to conceive any reason, why moral and religious truths should rest for their support on the personal authority of their revealer.” Upon his own representations, then, the two doctrines whose transitoriness he offers as the most striking illustrations of the obvious truth of his charge, have undergone no essential change since the beginning.

His attempt to prove the vacillation of Christian faith in regard to Christ’s divine nature is no more successful ; and, as though some power were ever working within the depths of his mind, and counter-working its conscious aim and striving, he at once launches forth into a stirring and rhythmic eulogy of the Bible and its wondrous, perennial beneficence ; in the midst of which he felicitously illustrates the unity of its two main divisions (elsewhere represented by him as mutually contradictory), reminding us that “as the first

book of the Old Testament tells man he is made in the image of God, the first of the New Testament gives us the motto, *Be perfect as your Father in heaven.*"

But not only does our author attempt to fix the charge of transitoriness upon many of the details of Christian doctrine, he attacks Christianity itself. The teachings of Jesus, indeed, or, more properly, a portion of them, call forth his loudest laudations; and he affirms that "the wisest son of man has not measured their height;" that "this Galilean youth strode before the world whole thousands of years,—so much of Divinity was in him. His words solve the questions of the present age. In him, the Godlike and the human met and embraced." But these eulogies of Christ, which so pointedly contradict the fundamental assumption of Mr. Parker's works, are followed by a sweeping and fierce denunciation of the Christianity since Christ. Nor is it the author's aim in this, merely to show that believers have always failed of reaching the full height and scope of their Lord's doctrine. His shafts are launched against Christianity itself. The first page of the Introduction to his "Discourse," declares that "what is popularly taught and accepted as religion is not fitted to make the world purer." (And yet, it should be remarked, in passing, that he afterwards devotes eight pages to an enumeration of the "merits" of Romanism, in which he goes into a rhapsody over the wondrous benefits it has wrought; and gives one page to the "merit" of Protestantism, and several more to the good fruits of its various denominations.) "Our theology," he affirms, "is mainly based on the superficial and transient element. It stands by the forbearance of the sceptic." Again: "In respect of doctrines as well as forms, we see all is transitory. Everywhere is instability and insecurity. Opinions have changed most on points deemed most vital" (*Crit. and Misc. Writ.*, p. 158). Still again: "The Christianity of the sects, of the pulpit, of society, is ephemeral,—a transitory fly." In these, and in multitudes of similar expressions, it is beyond all question that Mr. Parker refers, not to minor matters about which existing

evangelical denominations differ, but to the main substance of Christian theology; to that body of truth which has ever been the medium of conveying the living substance of the truth into human hearts, and the chief instrument of the Spirit of God in the conversion of souls. Thus it is against *Christianity itself*, as it now exists, and as it has in all ages existed, and against nearly all that is in it except the two grand principles of the law, that Mr. Parker has waged this merciless, reckless, and most absurd war. It will be instructive to follow him a little further in this assault, and to note more particularly the mode and spirit of his attack. We will look, in the first place, at some of his representations of *Christian doctrines*.

In the seventh chapter of the second book of his "*Discourse*," our author tells us that "Supernaturalism," as he calls the theology of the churches, "denies the ability of man to discover, of himself, the existence of God, or find out that it is better to love his brother than to hate him, to subject the passions to reason, desire to duty, rather than subject reason to passion, duty to desire." "Men know there is a God, and distinction between right and wrong, only by hearsay, as they know there was a flood in the time of Noah or Deucalion." [This, of men who believe with Paul, that "the invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made."] "It [Supernaturalism] denies that God is present and active in all spirit as in all space." [A denial exemplified in the doctrines of "Omnipresence," "Preservation," "Providence," and of the "Holy Spirit."] "The God of Supernaturalism is a God afar off." [In whom we live, move, and have our being.] He "was but transiently present with our race, and has now left it altogether." [Although, "not a sparrow falls to the ground" without our Father.] So, too, in the Introduction, "For all theological purposes, God might have been buried after the ascension of Jesus." "Instead of the Father of All for our God, we have two idols, the Bible and Jesus of Nazareth" [As though Christ had dethroned God; and his disciples no longer prayed "*Our Father*."]]

In his sermon upon "The Popular Theology," Mr. Parker indicates his *own sense* of the gulf between himself and the believers of his day, as follows: "I mean to say distinctly that between the ideas of the foremost religious men of this age and the popular theology of the churches, there is a greater chasm, a wider and deeper gulf, than there was between the ideas of St. Paul or Tertullian and those of the Jews and pagans who were around them." The "theology" even of Jesus "seems to have had many Jewish notions in it, wholly untenable in our day;" and yet, "if Jesus were to come back and preach his ideas of theology as he set them forth in Judea, they would not be accepted as Christianity." "In the popular theology God is represented as a finite and imperfect God. It is not said so in words; the contrary is often said; nevertheless it is so." "The popular theology regards God as eminently malignant, though it does not say so in plain words." It acknowledges "three persons in the godhead, first, God the Father, made to appear remarkable for three things,—first, for great power to will and do; second, for great selfishness; third, for great destructiveness,"—"the grimmest object in the universe, not loving and not lovely." "It is no doctrine of the popular theology that Christ actually loves transgressors, and as little that God loves them." "The Holy Ghost is not represented as loving wicked men, that is, men who lack conventional faith, or who are deficient in conventional righteousness." "All this" (the above and more of the same sort) "is acknowledged and writ down in the creeds of Catholic and Protestant, and in this they do not differ." "There is really a fourth person in the popular idea of God, in the Christian theology, to wit, the Devil." "The power assigned to the Devil, and the influence over men, commonly attributed to him, is much greater, since the creation, than that of all the three other persons put together." "There is no mistake in this reasoning" (in proof of the last quoted statement), "strange as it may seem. It takes all these four persons to make up and represent the popular theological notion of God."

The doctrine concerning man is travestied and held up to mockery in similar style; and coming next to that of the relation between God and man, he writes as follows: "Jesus calls God 'THE FATHER.'" "But by the popular theology God is king,"—"three elements" being "conspicuous in his character," "power," "selfishness," and "destructiveness." "He cares little for the welfare of his creatures, though he pretends to care much. Men must fear their king; this is the highest thing you can do. You must pray to God by attorney. Your prayer will make him alter his mind and change his purpose, if you employ the right attorney in the right way." "The classic mythology represents the ancient heathen gods as selfish in their ruling propensity; and the popular theology represents God as selfish in his love of power, of glory, and terribly selfish in his wrath. Accordingly, such actions are ascribed to the Deity in the popular theology as in almost any country of Christendom would send a man to the gallows."

The doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement, and of Decrees, are equally misrepresented; and Mr. Parker concludes his account of the theology of Christendom with a crazy tirade against the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost," he tells his hearers, "is represented as going about seeking to inspire men with the will to be saved. He does not come into assemblies of men of science, who are seeking to learn the laws of God." "He does not come into assemblies of men trying to make the world better off, and men better." "He attends camp-meetings, is present at 'revivals,' frequents tract societies and the like." "The Holy Ghost of theology has nothing to do with schemes for making the world better, or men better." "Such my friends," he says in conclusion, "is the popular theology as a theory of the universe. This is the theology which lies at the basis of all the prevailing sects." "Man is a worm, and God is represented as a mighty heel to crush him down to hell." "God is not represented as a friend, but the worst foe to man." "Which is the worst, to believe there is no God who is mind, cause, and providence , or to

believe there is a God who is almighty, yet omnipotently malignant, who consciously aims the forces of the universe at the wretched head of his own child." "Which, I say, is the worst,—to declare with the atheist, 'There is no God, , or to paint the cause, the mind, the providence of the world as a hideous devil?'"

Now, it is impossible to suppose that Mr. Parker was incompetent to attain a more correct understanding of Christian theology than the above quotations indicate; and it is difficult to realize that these grossly abusive and perverse utterances were made in entire simplicity of godly sincerity. We find it difficult to persuade ourselves that Mr. Parker did not know better when dispensing this stuff to his congregations; and that there was not something of malignity in effusions reeking and glistening with such scorn. It is melancholy to think, that an audience of intelligent and respectable men and women were persuaded to swallow this concoction, and count it as the bread and the wine of heaven.

We might proceed further with quotations, and show that Mr. Parker, in many passages, charges the Christian religion of his day with being "separated from life," hostile to science and to philanthropy, degrading to mind and heart. "Religion," he says, "is no restraint in business, no restraint in politics, and in literature is not felt. It dares not speak against drunkenness and prostitution; it is a dumb religion, and dares not even oppose the stealing of men out of their houses in this town." "When," he exclaims, "did the Christianity of the church ever denounce a popular sin; the desolation of intemperance; the butchery of Indians; the soul-destroying traffic in the flesh and blood of men 'for whom Christ died'?" (Disc. p. 471.) But we have not room for more of these things, except to acknowledge that Mr. Parker had discovered, at the time when he published his Sermon on "Practical Theism," p. 245, that in the "*Albany Convention*," in 1852, orthodox ministers had, at last, ventured to "protest against the sin of slavery." "This," he

says, "is the first time; and it marks the turning of the tide which ere long will leave this old theology all high and dry upon the sand, a Tadmor in the desert."

We should have believed it impossible, had not the fact thus thrust itself into our faces, that an intelligent gentleman could have lived for forty years in the city of Boston and its vicinity, busying himself from early youth with questions of religion and public morals, and yet remain so ignorant of facts of public notoriety, upon subjects which most engaged his own attention, as the above extract shows Mr. Parker to have been: of such facts, *e. g.* as the following:—That thirty years before he was born,¹ the Methodist Episcopal Church had pronounced (in 1780) with unmistakable meaning upon the *sinfulness* of slavery, and had taken measures to clear itself wholly from connection there-

¹ The action of the Conference in 1780, "four years before the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church," was as follows: *Question.* Ought not those travelling preachers who hold slaves, to give promises to set them free? *Answer.* Yes.

Question. Does this Conference acknowledge that slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society; contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours? Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom? *Answer.* Yes.

At the next Conference in 1783, they voted, in regard to their "local preachers who held Slaves," etc., to "try them another year," . . . "It may then be necessary to suspend them."

In 1784, the matter of buying and selling slaves was taken hold of in a similar spirit; the question concerning the local preachers received further attention; and vigorous measures were planned, with much minute detail, as a practical answer to the inquiry: "What methods can we take to extirpate Slavery?" The subject came up before the Conferences of 1785, 1789, 1792, 1796, 1800, 1804, 1808, 1812, 1816, 1820; during all which time the Conference was evidently *not forgetful* of its duty toward the enslaved, whether it rightly understood it or not.

In the year 1787, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, — at that time the highest judicatory in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, — commended the "general principles in favor of universal liberty," and counselled particular measures for the procurement of "the final abolition of Slavery in America." In 1818, the Assembly took more decided action; a part of which was in the following words: "We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, as utterly inconsistent with the law of God" — the paper adopted occupying from three to four pages in the Minutes, and being characterized throughout by great vigor, distinctness, and fulness of expression.

with, and looking toward a general emancipation; which endeavor was vigorously continued for many years, and, indeed, has never been given up;—that when he was hardly eight years old (1818), the Presbyterian church had denounced slavery in the most emphatic terms; that before as well as after the revolution, Congregational ministers had preached against it; while two years previous to that “Albany Convention,” which protested for “the first time,”—and so, turned that rising tide which in its ebb was soon to leave the Christian theology a “Tadmor in the desert,”—the Presbyterian church (N.S.) concluded a series of annual and triennial “protests” against slaveholding, by pronouncing it “an offence,” in the proper import of that term as used in the “Book of Discipline,” except when justified by circumstances making it, for the time being, an act of necessity or mercy;—that the Temperance movement originated with Orthodox ministers, and has ever received its best support from such ministers and their churches; that the same men, in connection with the Quakers, were prominent founders and advocates of the Peace societies; while Orthodox missionaries again were the only men who have suffered imprisonment in behalf of the Indian; and, in general, that the great accusation against the *Puritans*, clergy and laity alike, has been, from the beginning, is now, and is likely to be, for some time to come, that they insist upon applying the precepts of the Gospel to all details of public and of private life, and obstinately preach the omnipresent force of the “higher law.” We cannot think Mr. Parker dishonest in these extraordinary mistakes; but we stand in dumb amazement before the might of that prejudice which could have kept such a man so imperfectly informed.

But Mr. Parker went further yet, and published to the world his opinion, that the two and thirty thousand Christian ministers in the United States “scarce lessen any vice of the State, the press, or the market.” That is to say: Governments here would be scarcely more corrupt, good publications would be about as numerous, and about as good, and bad publications but little more numerous and

little worse, and the morals of our trade would be about the same as now, if the American clergy were stricken out of existence. This was Mr. Parker's judgment. So, too, of the missions to "the heathens," he says: "Small good comes of it; but did they teach industry, thrift, letters, honesty, temperance, justice, mercy, with rational ideas of God and man, what a conversion would there be of the Gentiles!"—a passage indicative, again, of imperfect information. Had Mr. Parker known the facts familiar to nearly all intelligent members of Orthodox churches, he would never have penned such a sentence as that. Where can the church member be found, who does not know, that the missionaries *are* at pains to promote "industry," "honesty," and "thrift;" and that, while laying their hand at the root of the tree, and seeking to get the *heart* right,—whence the issues of life proceed,—they are watchful, also, over the whole outgoing of the life, and encourage, with the greatest zeal, those personal habits and those social usages which tend to refine and elevate the character, and such employments as are promotive of comfort and of the triumph of man over nature. The very scholars in the Sunday schools could have taught our author as much as this. Mr. Parker, however, seems to have been as little acquainted with the real condition of the heathen themselves, as with the efforts of his neighbors in their behalf, asking, whether Christian nations have a superiority over the South Asiatics, and the Chinese, in temperance, chastity, honesty, justice and mercy, equal to their mental superiority? and answering, that "it is notorious they have not." A recent traveller,¹ however, of the most extensive observation and not amenable to the charge of an extreme orthodoxy, expresses himself concerning one of these nations as follows: "It is my deliberate opinion, that the Chinese are, morally, the most debased people on the face of the earth. Forms of vice which in other countries are barely named, are in China so common that they excite no comment among the natives. They

¹ See Bayard Taylor's "India, China and Japan."

constitute the surface level, and below them there are deeps on deeps of depravity so shocking and horrible that their character can not even be hinted!"

We fear that it will be impossible to speak the truth concerning Mr. Parker, without saying what will be very displeasing to his friends. But let not these friends suppose that any contempt is cherished for their leader and champion, or any unkind feeling entertained towards those who agree with him. We understand too well the force of the currents on which he was borne astray, and have too much respect for whatsoever was noble or lovely in his character and life, as well as too much sympathy with the trouble that comes of doubt and denial, to harbor bitterness toward him or his followers.

THEODORE PARKER was a man of remarkable powers. Endowed with a physical constitution of rare energy, which, but for one inherited defect, would probably have borne up, even under his fierce taxation, to a good old age, he was able to do an amount of intellectual and *passional* work that few men equal. His intellect was capacious and strong, not lacking in powers of analysis, remarkable for imaginative vigor and a faculty of effective expression, insatiate after all sorts of knowledge, but not conscientiously exact, either in research or in statement; voracious rather than veracious; often rude and careless; often false, always unreliable. In denunciative eloquence, sarcasm and scorn and abhorrence, he was certainly among the first of men. Nor was he wanting in that nobler eloquence, which makes the beauties of the natural world its instrument, and stirs the soul with sublime joys; or even in that other, higher yet, which appeals directly to the moral nature, awakens its intuitions and its passions and benevolent desires. But the highest sphere of all seems to have been above his reach; and those tender and solemn views of God and of man and of man's state and destiny, which melt the soul into profound sorrow, love and prayer, which overcome it with awe

unutterable, which fill it and thrill it and empower it with the forces of a new life, in an immutable purpose, earnest as death, strong in God, those views which come through the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, imparted by the Holy Ghost, we do not find in Mr. Parker's writings. His attempts upon purely spiritual themes, so far as we have observed, may be set down as failures; and the reader is made to feel that, in them, his author has overstepped the limits of experience, and is drawing mainly upon imagination and desire.

A pretty careful and extended perusal of Mr. Parker's works has deeply impressed us with the conviction, that the amount of his *accurate* and *reliable* knowledge was by no means remarkable. We do not recall a single important topic which he has treated in a manner indicative of thorough scholarship. Haste, incorrectness, confusion, misconception and misrepresentation are well nigh omnipresent. We confess to a profound suspicion respecting even that wonderful facility in the acquisition of languages, of which his admirers tell us. The only important translation from his hand, made from the language with which, among all foreign tongues, he may fairly be presumed to have been most familiar, was so faulty, that its author was pronounced by a prominent British Quarterly,¹ to be "grossly ignorant of German," and was held up to ridicule as "a conceited and ignorant translator." And it is indeed very difficult to conceive, that a person of such headlong temper, whose mental habit was so obviously loose and void of scholarly conscientiousness, could have been thorough in his mastery of languages.

Mr. Parker cherished many generous and benevolent impulses. He was a lover of liberty and a hater of oppression; and advocated with strong earnestness whatever he believed to be the cause of freedom, justice, or humanity. He pitied the poor and the unfortunate, and sought to comfort and help them; and was, we are most ready to believe, a true friend, faithful and loving. His prejudices were vehement,

¹ North Brit. Rev. VII., pp. 357, 358.

and sometimes blinded him to facts that even thrust themselves upon his attention. He was sadly lacking in reverence, as also in that subtle sympathy which so appreciates the attitude of other minds as, in a measure, to compensate for the lack of an instinct of respect. His works are disfigured with phraseology of a justly offensive kind, audacious and contemptuous. His later style is ordinarily inferior to his earlier, and marks the degeneracy of an intellect that breaks away from *laws*, being characterized by a license that is not liberty, and made weak by over-much strength.

This vigorous and independent writer was by no means an original thinker. His arguments against Christianity are put in his own dress, indeed, and with rare audacity and eloquence; they are fairly his own, and yet are not new. We do not recollect a single original contribution, on his part, to the munitions of the adversaries. Abounding in forcible popular appeals and in telling paragraphs for popular use, his books contain little careful reasoning; and it may be said with utmost exactness, that *he has proved nothing*. Indeed, it was not his nature to prove, but to assert. He was a dogmatist, and of the most truculent sort. He puts forth slight claim upon our reverence as a philosopher, still less as a theologian; but stands strongly forth a popular orator and declaimer; a rhapsodist, with skill to open the fountains of wrath, and to stir the multitude to mutiny; but as a spiritual teacher, a guide and shepherd of souls, untrustworthy, and, from the very habit of his mind, incompetent.

Mr. Parker gives us, in his letter to the members of his society, an enumeration of the projects entering into his plan of life; from which, as also from his published works, it appears that, while assuming for his main task the subversion of Christian ideas and the establishment of a theology more widely diverse from the popular system, as he says, than Christianity from Judaism or from Paganism, he intended to take in hand the questions of poverty, drunkenness, prostitution, and crime (prison discipline and the refor-

mation of criminals), the "education and guidance of the poorer Irish," and slavery:—a plan redolent of youthful enthusiasm and ambition, but more extensive than a man of sound discretion would have undertaken, and in its most important departments too lofty for his powers. The reformer of philosophy needs, himself, to be a profound and exhaustive thinker; the creator of a new and better theology must be a divine; the bringer in of a higher phase of religion must be a man of profound reverence, piety, and devotion, comprehending and presenting the results of religious speculation and life in practical forms, and whose rational instinct is superior to other men's reasoning, and whose spiritual intuition so far supersedes experience, that he begins where many others, after long toil, are happy to end. But Mr. Parker was none of these. Nor does he appear to have taken in the greatness of these several tasks sufficiently for the due comprehension of their difficulty. Had he appreciated the full grandeur of such enterprises, and reflected upon what the achievement of any one of them involved, he would have thought the easiest too difficult for one man's strength and life. As it was, with his lack of method and of carefulness, and with his haste and passion and unfairness, he accomplished little,—less than at first seems, far less than his followers think, or himself thought, infinitely less than his desire and expectation. Especially is this true of his negative work, his assaults upon religious belief. Here, rose the massive walls of the Christian theology, built with honest and careful hands, toiling in pious seriousness through eighteen centuries, its plans wrought over by able and conscientious architects, its several parts fitted and cemented together with devout painstaking, and its whole the expression of the Christian experience of the truth. Up comes our errant knight, with beating drum and clanging trumpet, and thinks, seemingly, that by one brave rush, these ancient walls, so deeply founded and so strongly cemented, will be made to disappear; and that, directly, he will have others reared in their place, loftier, and stronger, and fairer to look upon; while at the same time he is taking in hand such

playthings as the institution which holds four millions of men in hereditary bondage, and is throttling the several hydras and gorgons dire which infest society and the state.

Let us thank him for his benevolent wishes ; and let us not smile unkindly at their extravagance, or at the folly of his no-methods ; nor of the wrong that he did, let us speak too harshly, for he has, in reality, wrought much less harm than most have been wont to suppose. It is not by such attacks as these that the Christian Doctrine is to be subverted. It will stand until a better can be put in its place. Mr. Parker has not diminished the strength of evangelic Christendom ; and the force of his wild assault has mainly spent itself upon the outlying border-sects that verge upon the broad waste of Infidelity. The howling storm has passed by ; and only rotten or rootless trees have been levelled in its path. Our author's admirers seem to think of him as of some great headland pushing loftily out into the stream of time and turning the current of events ; whereas he may rather be likened to a sunken and still sinking rock, around which, once, the waves stormed, but over which the steady tide is flowing, with a ripple and a murmur still, but these each year diminishing, so that at last, nothing more than a feeble eddy shall remind us of the transitoriness of denial.

Theodore Parker has gone, and his influence has mainly departed with him. Personal friends will still cherish the memory of his noble qualities and his pleasant companionship ; those already committed to his errors, or strongly inclined to them, will be confirmed in their misbelief ; and a few youthful minds will, for some time yet, be led astray by reading his books ; but these books are not such as will bear a careful study, are not of permanent value, are not destined to be accepted as sound authority, to be consulted as monitors of the soul in its eternal interests, or as oracles of political or of social philosophy. They are essentially ephemeral. Mr. Parker *spoke for the hour*. While he was speaking, he was powerful ; but his speech lacked the wisdom that makes language immortal.

There remains, indeed, a last act in this tragedy of thought; for there are deductions from Mr. Parker's theories, which he has, himself, been at pains elaborately to refute, but which have already been made by some of those who have accepted his teachings, and will certainly be made by others. One depth more opens at the feet of them that have wound their way down into the enchanted hollow whither he so boldly beckons; and a denial of a personal God and of immortality, must break at last the thin crust, and let his venturesome disciples down into gulfs of Atheism.

We have but one life here, and that is very precious to us. Nor to us alone; a human life is in itself a precious thing, and no soul in which the sense of humanity dwells can see a life thrown away, without a deep, uprising sorrow. Here was a man who thought that he was doing a great work, for the welfare of his kind and for the glory of God; he meant to do it, he had the strength to do it, he labored hard to do it; he bore contumely, he was stung with the grief of separation from those whom he honored, and of whom he had hoped honor in return; he was wounded in the house of them that he had been wont to esteem his friends, he died before his time, worn down with over much work, and the chafing of his spirit,—all this, and yet the final result of his life, so far as recognizable now, is, an injury done to religion and little good to the cause of either liberty or morality.

Had this man, gifted with the rare faculty of making the people hear him, risen to an appreciation of the vastness and the sacredness of the dread themes that he discussed, so as to have been led to treat them with the tenderness, the sobriety, and the carefulness which they justly claim; had he duly measured the value of past labors, rightly estimated the difficulty and peril of attempts at improvements, felt less acutely the necessity of doing a great work, *himself*, and been penetrated so profoundly with faith in the divine sovereignty, as to participate, as a man may, in the divine patience; had he lived and labored in such a

spirit and method, a far nobler work would he have wrought, and a more honorable record would he have left in the annals of his country and of the church. But his natural tendencies and his whole education were so against him, that he failed of the spiritual *insight* which is essential to the true "divine," and which would have put him in possession of the central meaning of the Christian system, and have shown him that it is all that he understood by "the absolute religion" and more, to wit: the absolute religion in a shape to be vitally apprehended and appropriated by mankind, so as to be the means of transforming the marred nature of our sinful race back into the image of the glory of its first estate, of God's eternal archetype. These causes of error were greatly aggravated, also, by that antagonism into which his opinions and the spirit of his advocacy brought him, and which irresistibly intensified his faults. Let the mantle of charity be thrown over all; and after fitly recognizing what it is our duty to see and to declare, let every soul cherish thoughts of tenderness. Well did the Apostle pray without ceasing, for his brethren, that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. God grant it to us all.

ARTICLE II.

THE THEOLOGY OF SOPHOCLES.

BY REV. WILLIAM S. TYLER, D. D., PROFESSOR IN AMHERST COLLEGE.

[Concluded from Vol. XVII., p. 619.]

Antigone.

In its leading characters, the *Antigone* bears a strong resemblance to the *Electra*. The central figure in each, on whom all eyes are fastened, and who gives name to the piece, is a young woman, who stands up for the right, in opposi-