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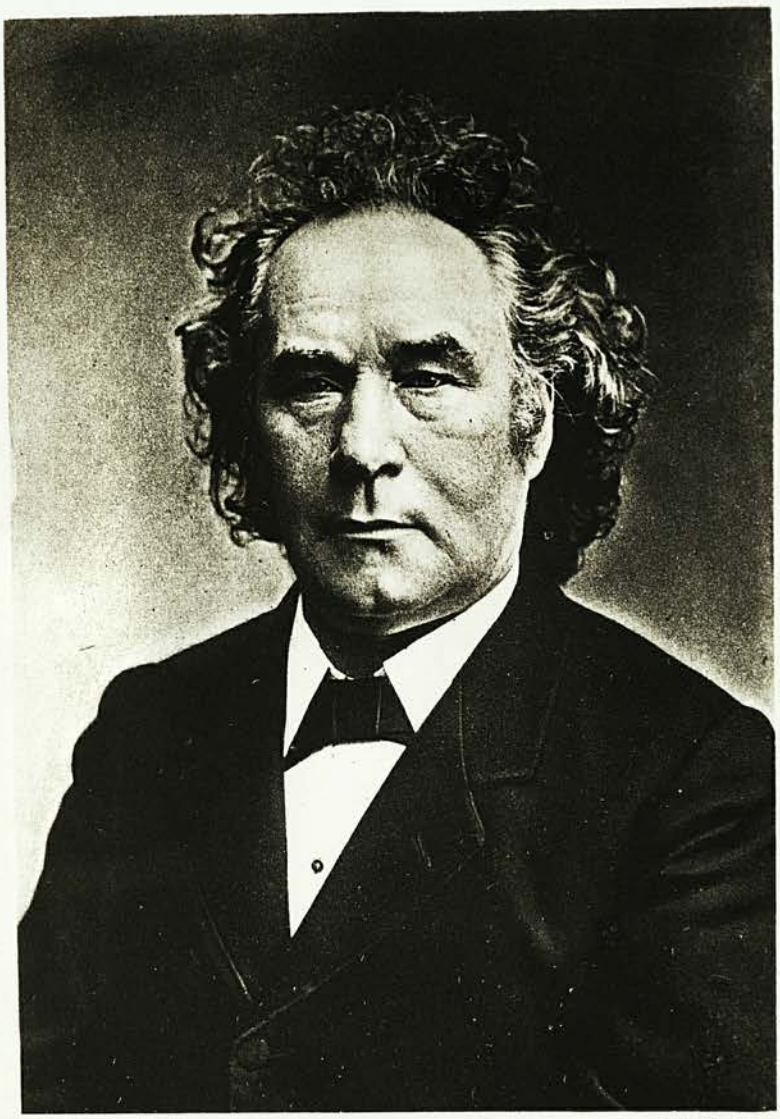

Joseph Clark

JOSEPH PARKER:
A STUDY OF HIS PREACHING
AND HIS RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Divinity

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Ellsworth Erskine Jackson, Jr.

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TO

MY MOTHER

AND

FATHER

FOREWORD

This paper represents an investigation of the preaching and religious thought of Joseph Parker. It is limited in its scope by the bounds set upon it in the Subject as stated on the Title Page. The purpose of this work is to answer the following questions: What type of preacher was Joseph Parker, what were his methods of preparation and delivery, and what position did he hold as a pulpit-orator in nineteenth century England? What was the nature and substance of Parker's religious thought? Our answer to the first question involves the various phases of his life as a preacher, an examination of his pulpit preparations and delivery, and the impact of his preaching upon his generation. As to his religious thought, Dr. Parker has been allowed to express himself wherever possible and practicable in his own words, and in proportion to what he said, or failed to say, on any particular subject.

Out of sincere appreciation and gratitude for their kindly aid and generous assistance, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our indebtedness to the following friends: the Rev. Principal C.S. Duthie, D.D., of the Congregational College, Edinburgh, and the Post-Graduate School of Theology, New College, and the Rev. Professor W.S. Tindal, O.B.E., D.D., professorial advisers; the Rev. John A. Lamb, B.D., Ph.D., librarian of New College; Miss Erna R. Leslie, M.A., B.Com., Assistant-librarian and Principal's Secretary; librarians and staff of the Edinburgh Public Library, the British Museum, London, the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and the National

Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. Here, in particular, I would like to express appreciation to Miss Eunice Souter for the great assistance she gave in matters of research. We owe, too, most sincere thanks to Canon R.J. Campbell, Sussex; the Rev. Ebenezer Rees, Middlesex; the Rev. W.B.J. Martin, Edinburgh, and to Mr. Bertram Hammond, the Honorary Curator of the City Temple, London. Most especially, I wish to thank the Rev. Principal C.S. Duthie, D.D., who stimulated and encouraged me in this work and who, with patience and liberality directed the composition of this thesis from first to last.

Edinburgh,
May, 1953. E.E.J.

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He was that rare thing - a voice not an echo!

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CHAPTER I

THE PREACHER'S LIFE

> ". . . . When you can understand my story call it daylight. . . . When you can only half make it out or not make it out at all call it limelight. . . . You may see how a man has had to fight and suffer, and sometimes has had to wait in weariness and sleep until the ravens came from God."[1]

In the spring-time of 1941 the City Temple Church, standing close by the walls of St. Paul's Cathedral, on Holborn Viaduct, was set on fire by incendiary bombs dropped from German airplanes and, except for the facade, the tower, and the lower part of the walls, totally destroyed.[2] The City Temple was no ordinary place of worship; it represented the life, teaching and preaching of one man, Joseph Parker, the sturdy Northumbrian who had come to England's capital to build a church at the heart of the city.

It is our purpose in this initial chapter to set forth the life of Joseph Parker; but only in such a way as to familiarise the reader with the general flow of his life and activities. It is to be regretted, however, that there is no adequate or complete biography of Dr. Parker in existence. While it is true several lives of Parker are extant, nevertheless, not only were they written prior to his

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1. Parker, Tyne Chylde: My Life and Teaching (Lond., 1883), preface, p. i.
2. Leslie D. Weatherhead, The Significance of Silence and other sermons (New York, 1945), preface, p. vii

death and therefore necessarily incomplete, but they give the impression of having been written more to encourage Parker in his lonely last moments than to present an objective treatment of the facts at hand. Furthermore, the facts concerning his early life and private affairs are few and slight. Indeed, it would appear that Joseph Parker deliberately obscured, even left un-mentioned, not a few details pertaining to his early life. Also, throughout he made it his business to destroy much of the material which concerned his personal and private affairs. In the preface to his autobiography he stated: "I have studiously suppressed much of the sorrowful, the almost tragic, but not, therefore, the less spiritual and educational side of my experience. . . . 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness . . . '"[1]

Hexham, 1830 - 1852

Joseph Parker was born on April 9th, 1830, at Hexham, Northumberland, and here, on the banks of the Tyne, in the shade of the ancient Abbey, he spent the first twenty-two years of his life. He was born just prior to the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne, a time distinguished by the absence of war and in a period noted for its interest in religious questions. The puritan spirit still prevailed, deeply influencing the common life of England, most especially the outlying country districts; this influence showed itself in the serious nature of contemporary life and thought and in

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life: an Autobiography and an Album (Lond., 1899), p. viii. On another occasion he said: "Other men, I suppose, have also their family troubles, to which all expression is forbidden; they will know how to sympathise with my struggles, my silence, and my resolution." (Ibid., p. 150.)

the self-discipline of character.[1] In 1830, William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was one year old; C.H. Spurgeon was born four years later.

Hexham is an ancient town, rich in historical associations and surrounded by scenes of natural beauty. Abutting on the picturesque market-place is the magnificent Priory Church of St. Andrew, the "text-book of early English architecture, and larger than some cathedrals."[2] Wilfrid, the distinguished Bishop of York, founded a church here in the latter half of the seventeenth century, masons from Rome being employed in its erection. By his influence it became a Sanctuary, possessing a Seat of Peace, or Fridstool, which secured protection from the penal consequences of his evil deeds for any criminal who came within a mile of the church.[3]

This northern town exerted no little influence over Joseph Parker and he remembered the place all his days. Late in life he looked back on Hexham and wrote:

> "I see it all now with closed eyes; its famed old Abbey, its old-world market-place, its ever-flowing pant, the ancient town hall of its own bishops and priors, its narrow streets, its environs of green undulations and sweet villages."[4]

Even the atmosphere of the place left its indelible mark upon his mind and nature. The wide spaces, the loneliness and the mystery of the moorlands became part of his being.[5]

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1. G.M. Trevelyan, English Social History: a survey of six centuries (Lond., 1944), Chaucer to Queen Victoria, p. 509.
2. L. Russell Muirhead, The Blue Guides (Lond., 1950), England, p. 546.
3. William Adamson, The Life of the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D. (Glasgow & Lond., 1902), p. 2.
4. Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 2.
5. R.S. Forman, editor, Great Christians (Lond., 1933), p. 395.

Fact and fancy are inextricably bound up together in the varied accounts of Parker's home. Joseph Parker himself chose to leave his own and future generations relatively ignorant as to the real nature of his home. There are various hints and suggestions throughout his writings as to poverty and drink, but in the final analysis, the only picture we possess is that which Parker presents in one or two books. Parker describes Teasdale Parker, his father in the following terms:[1]

> "A strange figure that old stone-squarer, both as man and master; with the strength of two men and the will of ten; fierce and gentle, with passionateness burning to madness, yet with deepest love of prayer; no namby-pamby speaker weighing words in Troy scales and mincing syllables as if afraid of them; hating lies as he hated hell itself - with him every known man was an angel or a fiend - a lie was no slip of the tongue, it was notorious, scandalous, diabolical, . . . A terrible man to people who lived in another zone and spoke a soft and milky language; but a very Hercules and hero to those who could play with tigers and hunt with wolves. I see him now, with sloe-black eyes, fist of iron, chest that needed no smith-made mail, and with a gait that might have suggested the proprietorship of the entire solar system."[2]

His mother was cast in a different mould from that of the robust and forceful father. She was a character of extraordinary depth and religiousness, and very reverent and filial are her son's references to her:

> "Sweet mother! A sort of superstitious woman withal, and not indisposed to believe in ghosts. She was never quite comfortable without a twig of rowan tree in the house, and could never comfortably begin anything new on Friday."[3]

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1. Sir Sidney Lee, editor, Dictionary of National Biography (Lond., 1912), Second Supplement, Vol. III, pp. 71-72.
2. Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 3. It is believed that this picture represents what Parker's father had become after a radical conversion.
3. Ibid., p. 4.

This element of superstition passed in some measure from mother to son for in late life he says,

> "I like a little superstition; I have a good deal of it, I owe a good deal to it. I got it all from my mother . . . it was no use sending a whole academy down to talk to her; she would admit every word the Academy said, and then go to see that the rowan tree was still in the edge of the clock - to keep the bogies away."[1]

Parker refers to his mother in the main as his spiritual instructor and guide. When in special perplexity the two of them would take a Bible, pray briefly, open it, and according to the passage next her right hand thumb, she would interpret the word of God to the youth. It was enough for him to know that this was "the habit of the good John Wesley, and what John Wesley did was right!"

Joseph used to like to sit near his mother with paper and pencil in hand, and beg her to make one line of a hymn that he might try and add three lines to it. The memory of his mother seemed for him to invest all motherhood and womanhood with added sanctity.[2] Thus many years after her death, we find him uttering from the pulpit of the City Temple a scathing protest against the House of Commons for laughing at a Member who had announced his intention to vote for the Woman Suffrage Bill because his mother wished him to do so. "God's curse," said the preacher, "lies over any House of Parliament that would laugh at such a man."[3]

In ancient, historic Hexham the Parkers lived, first in the market-place, then in Priestpopple,[4] and next on the higher part of

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1. Albert Dawson, Joseph Parker, D.D., His Life and Ministry (Lond., 1901), p. 18.
2. Nicoll, W.R., British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 24.
3. Dawson, op. cit., p. 19.
4. Today, the ~~old~~ Parker home can still be seen on this narrow, cobbled street.

Battle Hill. Under the eye of the stern father and anxious mother, the boy grew, and soon developed traits which exhibited an individuality far from ordinary. Without being unduly precocious, he was of an inquisitive disposition, eager to understand whatever came before him to the minutest detail. Moreover he played with his companions in the narrow, irregular street, and amused himself much after the fashion of boys the world over. One speaks of him as attracting attention by his large head, by his expressive features, and queer ways, and as being "fond," a local term used to express cleverness in boyish pranks. Some of these frolics took the form of asking his playmates puzzling questions, and "when they were confounded or mistaken, with a twinkle in his eye, he would walk away and leave them in their bewilderment!"[1] Again, he enjoyed the "coloured bubbles thrown from the pipe of fun," played at "tig-tag" or "touch" with the other boys and girls. But his favourite game was marbles, and his prowess here earned him the title of "champion."[2] Once he tried fishing in the nearby Tyne, but the experiment was not a success.

> "I had leggings on," said Parker, "that would have protected me from the ravages of the Atlantic, and I had a rod and line . . . long enough to reach from Northumberland to Newfoundland, and strong enough to make havoc amongst the cod of the Trans-Atlantic waters. Unfortunately, my foot slipped; I fell into the river, was withdrawn half alive from the stream, and from that day to this I do not remember to have touched a rod!"[3]

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 6.
2. Late in life, he exclaimed, "It is enough to cast a gloom on the whole camp of Dissent to know that the minister of the City Temple does even now like to take a hand at marbles, though he who . . . was the champion hitter has for many years unhappily been the champion misser." (Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 30.)
3. Dawson, op.cit., p. 20.

From his earliest years Joseph Parker was under a distinctly religious influence which permeated his whole experience. His father and mother were members of the Independent Church, and regular attendance at its public service was the custom of the family. The Bible was the book most read in his father's house, with Pilgrim's Progress as the other mainstay of domestic literature. His natural bent towards the serious and solemn side of life was doubtless strengthened and accentuated by the rigour with which the Sabbath was observed. The only books permitted to be read on Sunday were the Bible, Watt's Psalms and Hymns, and such works as Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs. The day was divided between Sunday-school and chapel, school beginning at nine o'clock, the preaching at ten, school again at two, and preaching again at six![1]

Having from boyhood "felt after" God, it would probably not be correct to say that Joseph Parker passed through any great spiritual crisis that could be described as conversion. But he has himself recorded that one summer Sunday night, while walking with his father and Sunday-school teacher, he definitely declared his love to Christ.[2] Early in his teens he was presented with a copy of "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," and he spent many hours oppressed by the fear that he could not repent in the right way, because his sin had not been so vile and detestable. "I stood outside the gate," he remarked, "crying bitter tears, because I had not sinned according to the magnitude and quality of another man's transgressions."[3]

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 21.
2. Adamson, op.cit., p. 13.
3. Dawson, op.cit., p. 22.

The first half of the nineteenth century was a pregnant period in the history of England. Political, social, and industrial reforms were being undertaken and all was coloured by the religious interest. The leading Conservatives in each town were usually the keenest church men; while their most active opponents, Whig and Liberal, were Dissenters or Anti-Clericals. The lower and middle and working classes attended the same chapels and usually took part in the same religious activities. Politics in the nineteenth century were as much a matter of denomination as of class.[1] The current excitement brought about by political, social, and religious factors came to focus in Parker's home. "Feudal England," as Parker said, "hearing a pistol shot in the air woke up and looked around sleepily and wonderingly. The night was past, and a white light glimmered on the eastern hills."[2]

As a lad he listened to the disputations on religion with lay preachers who were entertained in his home, and who discussed with his father the politics and the religious beliefs that were the topics of the day. Chartism[3] had flamed up in the agricultural district

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1. Trevelyan, op.cit., p. 514.
2. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 5.
3. Parker showed more than average interest in Chartism: in his autobiography he recalls the occasion of Thomas Cooper's visit to Hexham. He said, "And I, at a safe distance, quivered with doubtful pride as I walked behind Thomas Cooper, . . . the man who had been long imprisoned in Leicester jail on account of his politico-socio-religious aberrations. As a Sunday-school teacher I felt that my momentary relation to this man cast some doubt upon my integrity, yet I was proud to walk alone behind the ex-prisoner, the quondam shoemaker, the genuine poet, the effective orator. So much of a hero-worshipper was I that I endeavoured to put my feet into his footprints, and to catch the swing of his noble walk." (Ibid., p. 56.)

round about Hexham, and a fierce secularist spirit, born of the restless times, was in constant warfare with the message that the little country chapels offered to the scattered population. Speaking about the gatherings in his kitchen, Parker observed:

> "There was no little intelligence in that kitchen ecclesia, for the men of my native town in that day were readers and thinkers, and above all restless and eager disputants. To live was to argue, not to argue was to die. The subject was generally theological, and raged most fiercely around the ninth chapter of Romans. . . . The smoking president was a strong Calvinist, - and all the stronger for knowing nothing about Calvinism, - whilst some of the smoking visitors were confirmed Arminians - not the less confirmed for not knowing whether Arminius was a shoemaker or a hymn-book. . . . The chief care . . . was to prove that very few people could be saved, and that those who were not saved would wallow in fire and brimstone eternally."[1]

With this unconscious education, constantly absorbed by the eager youth, was the more or less formal one of the village school. Parker's school life was varied and not altogether happy. His first teacher he described as a "fiend" and the counterpart of "Mr. Squeers." Many a thrashing Joseph, in common with the other boys, endured at the hands of this tyrant, and it is evident that he never forgot.

> "Long days," averred Parker, "were passed in terror of the rod, a truant after hare and hounds, or feigning sickness to get to wood and water, and where bird-nesting made the day seem short - a clever cheating of the master, spectacled and wise in look, but sour as if crab-poisoned, and irate with anger never more than half-asleep."[2]

Fortunately for Joseph Parker, subsequent teachers represented a pleasant change. After the "fiend" came one who was a born teacher, a man who loved his work and sought to be a friend as well as a

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1. Parker, Tyne Chylde, pp. 4-5.
2. Ibid., p. 9.

teacher to the boys. The other masters were equally good and Joseph studied the usual subjects, adding later on Greek and Latin. The early gloomy picture of school is relieved by this later description: He said, "A school, forsooth! Partly a play-house. A slate and top, a spelling-book and marbles, a grammar and cherry-stones, geography and football."[1]

However, by the time he was fourteen the much discussed question, "What is Joseph to be?" had reached an acute point. It was "decided" that he should follow his father's trade and so young Parker became apprenticed to his father. But the apprenticeship did not last for long. In short, he renounced manual labour, believing that it was not for this kind of activity he was destined. One day, it is said, when he descended from the scaffold with an empty hod in which he had carried lime up to the builders, he threw it to the ground with the exclamation, "God Almighty never intended Joseph Parker to spend his life in carrying lime and building houses."[2] Within the year he was sent back to school where he served as an usher, receiving payment partly in money and partly in instruction. According to Albert Dawson, there was also some idea of making him an architect, and for a time young Parker was busy with drawing-board and instruments; but this parental plan had also to be abandoned, and Joseph again returned to his books.[3] When Parker was about sixteen years of age, the Rev. Thomas Rogers, being on a visit to Hexham, was consulted about the boy's future. Of this event Parker writes:

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1. Ibid., p. 9.
2. Adamson, op.cit., p. 11.
3. Parker, Well Begun: Notes for those who have to make their way in the world (Lond., 1894), pp. 2-3.

> "I see in my father's house two huge strong men. They were doing something which seemed to require the aid of two long clay pipes. The one man was my own father, the other man was the father of Dr. Guiness Rogers. These two men . . . were discussing the career of a boy who was sitting within listening distance. That boy had composed a verse of a hymn. . . . Mr. Rogers seemed to be somewhat impressed by it."[1]

At the same time as his parents and others were busy discussing his future, Parker himself was actively engaged in preparing himself for the call of destiny. He eagerly devoured all the literature to which he could gain access, borrowing his first books from the Mechanic's Institute. He said,

> "I well remember having a triangular bookcase. . . . The first shelf about thirty inches long, and the second about five-and-twenty, and the third shelf decreasing in proportion; and the green cords tying it all up to a nail in the wall. There was Zimmerman on Solitude [his favourite book], and Borrow's Bible in Spain, and two or three or half-a-dozen more books, more to me than ever the British Museum library was or is likely to be."[2]

He taught himself shorthand, studied the art of speaking, and regularly practised elocution. Long before he had left his teens he bought the speeches of Charles Fox, and committed large portions to memory. He was said to have gone up and down the peaceful roads of Hexham declaiming the great speech on the Westminster Scrutiny, thus alarming some people who were walking in the adjoining fields.[3] Furthermore, during the time of the Irish sedition trials he procured the speeches of Smith O'Brien, Thomas Meagher, and other orators.

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1. Dawson, op.cit., pp. 23-24.
2. Ibid., p. 24.
3. One of the major concerns of Parker's life was with money. He knew its value and in this instance he remembered that the purchase of the Westminster speech, which cost twenty shillings, almost drove him to youthful bankruptcy. As if to make the situation worse he felt that the speech was not worth the price! (Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 65.)

After studying them he pinned the newspaper slips to his bedroom wall-paper and paced the room, vehemently pleading with an imaginary jury.

Equipped with his stock of poetry, his knowledge of speeches and orations, Parker was much sought after as a speaker by community groups. All this was as he had planned and expected. He had committed, so he tells us, all the poetry to memory with the express intention of making capital out of it![1] On one occasion he was invited to supply the entertainment at a fruit soiree in the Independent Chapel. Writing later of this affair he said,

> "For that cool September night I had made many preparations - notably, I had bought a red tie, and had secured a pair of plaid trousers, the order being given on the understanding that Henry Brougham, the future Lord Chancellor of England, betrayed his littleness by sporting that kind of toggery."[2]

All the same, he gave his talents without charge to the growing local Temperance Movement. He recalled that on one occasion, while dragging another boy with him, he played the fife in the town, announcing at intervals that at seven o'clock the same evening he would address a meeting in the hall!

In the course of time, due to a change of preachers at the Independent Chapel, Parker, along with his father and mother, joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church.[3] Joseph was secured for various kinds of work in connection with the Church, and finally had his name placed

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1. Ibid., p. 66.
2. Ibid.
3. With the change of preachers came a change in views on salvation. The new preacher at the Independent Chapel was too liberal for Mr. and Mrs. Parker, but Joseph appears to have been sympathetic to his ideas, which outlawed election in the narrow sense and gave prominence to the love of God. (Adamson, op.cit., p. 15.)

on the Preacher's Plan as a recognised local preacher. Just previous to this he had received what he understood to be his "call" to the Christian ministry. It all happened on one day in the month of June, 1848, after he had reached his eighteenth year. He made his way to an open-air meeting that was to be held on the village green at Wall - about four miles from Hexham. He had no intention whatever to preach a sermon. "The idea of doing so," he claimed, "suddenly and overpoweringly seized me." The text selected "was not a soothing one." Standing bolt upright on the cross-beams of the saw-pit, he read aloud the words: "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you!" He wrote afterwards,

> "This was, perhaps, too hard upon my rustic audience. Not one word of the sermon can I remember. As for ideas, probably there were none to recollect. I do remember . . . the tone of denunciation. I did not spare the iniquities of the age; I loosed all the thunders I could command, and delivered my soul with audacious frankness. . . . I simply knew that the age was corrupt, and taking the hundred rustics as representatives of the total iniquity I hurled upon them the thunderbolts of outraged heaven . . ."[1]

His second sermon also was preached in the country in the open air. The text was, in spirit and general tone, not far removed from the first; it was "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies and

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1. Albert Clare, The City Temple, 1640-1940 (Lond., 1940), pp. 80-81. In another place he said, ". . . . I would be a minister. I must be! Everything within me said, yes. Did I not know something of English, Latin, Greek, and French, and had I not made verses which, at least, were meant to rhyme? But I could not wait, nor could I run in companies, nor could I enter by the appointed stiles. Let me tell the fact at once, then, that wanting in my very soul to preach, I simply went out and preached." (Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 5.)

will reward them that hate me." (Deut. XXXII.41.)

> "With passion and burning words," says Adamson, "he expounded the text, and made the application. The scene was highly dramatic. For while the heavens were smiling, flowers blooming, and the trees clapping their hands for joy on that peaceful summer Sunday afternoon, the young preacher plucked the divine sword from its sheath, and waved it as with fury over the heads of as inoffensive a congregation as ever ploughed the land, or reaped its crops."[1]

Parker's third sermon was delivered in the evening twilight at a wheelwright's door, the pulpit being a large block of old oak. "The sermon went like an equinoctial gale," was his own impression of its effectiveness. Afterwards the villagers crowded round him[2] to come again, and that invitation he regarded as his call to the ministry.

Although Parker's desire to preach had received popular approval and sanction, the way was not yet open for him to enter the regular ministry. In the meantime, he taught in the Sunday-school of the Independent Church[3] in Hexham and also upon turning nineteen he took over the day-school from which one of his former masters had retired. He called the school Ebenezer Seminary, and issued a prospectus in which he announced his succession to the post of principal and offered to teach grammar, algebra, Latin, Greek, and book-keeping. The circular closed with the audacious words, "The conductor of Ebenezer Seminary does not undertake to supply his pupils with

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1. Adamson, op.cit., pp. 24-25.
2. On this occasion one of his youthful admirers addressed a poem to him: "Ardent, enthusiastic youth,
   Fit herald of the glorious truth,
   That God for man has died."
   (Dawson, op.cit., p. 27.)
3. The preacher of the Liberal views had been called to another chapel; therefore, the Parkers returned to the Independent Church.

brains!"[1]

Still, he continued to prepare himself for the ministry. We are told that he studied his Greek Testament, rose at six o'clock in the morning to read theology with a minister and underwent periodical examinations.[2] Also, he maintained his lay preaching duties in the surrounding area of Tyne-side. In the course of his week-end preaching, Parker made many friends and stayed in countless homes, where he was usually given the hospitality reserved for local preachers at this time. One family came to have special significance for Joseph Parker. Through his preaching in the neighbourhood of Horsely - about ten miles from Hexham, he became acquainted with Ann Nesbitt, daughter of William Nesbitt, a farmer in the area. On Sunday nights Joseph brought them all the news of the town, and slept in a "snug little chamber" in the old farmhouse.[3] Mrs. Nesbitt was a kindly, cheerful soul, who looked with an indulgent eye on Joseph when he "went a-wooing to her sweet Annie." He said, "She called us both very silly, and wondered how we could go on so, and, putting a corner of her apron to her . . . eyes, she hoped we would always be happy."[4] Joseph Parker married Ann Nesbitt on November 15th, 1851, in Hexham Congregational Church. He was then a little more than twenty-one-and-a-half years of age and his future was still uncertain; but he never had occasion to regret the step he took.

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1. Clare, op.cit., p. 79.
2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 29.
3. In view of the slight references which Joseph Parker made to his Hexham home, this comment is of interest: He said of the Nesbitt household, "In many a day-dream, I go back to that old farmhouse and think of it as home!" (Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 9.)

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The Student Ministry in London, 1852 - 1853

Restlessness and perplexity marked the life of Joseph Parker as he approached the close of his twenty-first year. All was in readiness for him to take some course into the Christian ministry. As with many another young man on reaching the critical point in his career, he longed for the appearance of an index-finger that would point out the right path. It became evident to him that this direction was not to be found in Hexham.

So it was that in May, 1852, Joseph did a very bold thing. He wrote a letter to the Rev. Dr. John Campbell, the famous Congregational preacher of Whitefield's Tabernacle, London,[1] requesting his counsel and advice. Doubtless, Dr. Campbell, being a shrewd man and having himself risen from the blacksmith's forge to the pulpit and editorial chair, discerned in the letter, evidence of which the writer was probably unconscious, of the strength of his character, and the speciality of his gifts; for he took the remarkable course of inviting young Parker to come at once to London, and to occupy his pulpit for three Sundays.[2]

That the "Denominational god" had answered his letter, and had offered him preaching in the Tabernacle, plus three guineas a week towards his expenses was too wonderful to be true, thought Joseph Parker. He records his reaction:

"For the moment I felt as if I had committed some

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1. Unfortunately, this letter has been destroyed. How much one would like to see it.
2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 34.

> inexplicable crime. I had asked a question, I had expected an answer, yet, so strange is human nature, no sooner was the great man's letter in my hand than I felt that all things were going round and round, and that I was being sucked down into the unfathomable by a swirling maelstrom. Here was destiny!"[1]

The thought of what the other youths would think and what the minister would say gave Parker much delight. "I no longer moved through the town in the ordinary manner," he says, "but as it were by levitation, skimming the air about three inches from the pavement, and going through crowds without touching them!"[2]

Quite naturally, the letter met with mixed feelings of joy and sadness at the Parker home. While proud of the great honour bestowed by a great man upon their son, the father and mother were, nevertheless, much disturbed at the thought of losing their only son. However, on his twenty-second birthday, young Parker found himself face to face with the redoubtable minister of Whitefield's Tabernacle. In recalling the exciting moment, he wrote,

> "To my rustic simplicity the second great fact in creation was Dr. Campbell. . . . A youth who had been born within hearing of Bow bells would probably have felt a contemptuous pity for such backwardness, for what could he know of life among the hills, where the proportions of supposed greatness were exaggerated partly by distance and partly by denominational pride?"[3]

The initial meeting with the formidable Dr. Campbell was less frightening than Parker had expected. After the minister had inquired as to his age and about his texts for the first Sunday, the interview was over and the apprenticeship begun. It would appear

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 3.
2. Ibid., p.71.
3. Parker, Ad Clerum: Advices to a Young Preacher (Lond., 1873) p. 169.

that Dr. Campbell was not only a very powerful man in the Congregational Church, but that his features added considerable significance to his position. In any case, Parker's description is memorable:

> "I thought that I had never looked upon a more intensely masculine and powerful face. There was not one weak line in it, one soft and plastic spot to which a young man from 'the kentry' might trust in the event of failure; all was solidity, massiveness, force; . . . the eye was small, deep-set, not piercing, but calmly observant. . . . The nose was of the boldest Roman type, extremely large and most clearly outlined, the nostrils being particularly well curved and expressive. . . . And such lips, - lips enough and to spare! They overhung, they revelled in strength, they shut like iron doors! As for the mouth, it was not a mere mouth, it was nothing short of a cavern; and when a laugh came out of it the sound was not the most refined which has ever been heard among men. . . . And, his port evidently meant war to anyone who might have come in his way!"[1]

The period in London was to mark the second stage of Parker's life. It was to be short from the stand-point of time but nonetheless significant in its effects upon his future.[2] This nine month apprenticeship under Dr. Campbell was to be vitally educational and was to mark the beginning of Joseph Parker's life ministry. For the first time he found himself among men who were capable of estimating his abilities and directing his future course. At the very outset, some distinguished London preachers listened to Parker's preaching and decided that there was no necessity for him to under-go the usual

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1. Ibid., pp. 173-174.
2. Even his extreme Republican views were modified by an unexpected glimpse of Queen Victoria. In recalling how he had been a "stern and sullen Republican" he also remembered the day of his "political conversion": "Then came the Queen," he said, "and where at that moment was my Republicanism? Gone! Evaporated! No man of my size and years shouted more lustily. To hear about Her Majesty was one thing; to see her, and to see that sweetest of all smiles, was another." (Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 37.)

divinity school training. They advised young Parker to remain with Dr. Campbell and to pursue an abbreviated course of study at University College.

Parker's debut in London was a success. The services of that Easter Sunday met with more than ordinary reception and interest. The people marvelled at the mature thoughts which came from so young a preacher. His senior minister was delighted, and was heard to exclaim - "What a prodigy!" To the father, on a subsequent occasion, he expressed the estimate he had formed of his assistant by saying - "You may be proud of your son. Give him ten years and he will put his enemies to the gate,"[1] an utterance which was later fulfilled.

There is little doubt that Parker's time in London was a period filled with extreme industry and solid discipline.[2] Each week saw him busily employed in preparing and preaching sermons, in paying pastoral visits, and studying at University College. Besides, he wrote a series of articles, entitled Chapters for Young Thinkers, dealing with the careers of men who had made their way in the world. He has humorously described the manner in which he disposed of them.

> "I was just a raw youth. I went with them in my hand to Cassell's office, but I hadn't the courage to take them in myself, so I paid a boy, who was standing outside, two-pence to take them for me. When I saw him coming out of the shop without them I took to my heels and fled, expecting

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1. Adamson, op. cit., p. 37.
2. "My London senior was a man of peculiar mental capacity, and he certainly gave me the benefit of his varied and ample experience. He prescribed my theological reading; he heard in advance all my pulpit preparations; and he statedly commended me and my work, in rich and tender prayer, to the blessing of heaven. My senior was one of the most industrious men I ever knew, and I am thankful to believe that I caught somewhat of the spirit of his constancy and devotion." (Parker, Studies in Texts: for Family, Church, and School (Lond., 1898), Vol. I, p. xi.

that the editor and all the staff would be after me for my impertinence. But when John Cassell sent me six guineas, and I read my sketches in the Popular Educator, I felt that my fortune was made. I had my carriage and pair and all the rest of the fine things - in imagination."[1]

Finally, however, at the age of twenty-two, his happy London apprenticeship came to an end through "a call," which he received to a little Congregational Chapel in the town of Banbury. While on the whole, Parker's ministerial apprenticeship was a happy one, it is not unlikely that with two men of such kindred convictions and temperaments, there had been some trying moments.[2]

Banbury, 1853 - 1858

While assisting John Campbell in London, Joseph Parker became known as a preacher of no ordinary powers, who had a manner of delivering his sermons all his own. Vacant churches desired to hear him preach, and as far as possible he acceded to their requests. For a time he supplied the pulpit of the old Barbican Chapel, since demolished, and there was some thought of inviting him to the pastorate.[3] However, the Congregational Church at Banbury, Oxfordshire, acted more promptly, and he was ordained as its minister on November 8th, 1853. Here he remained with his young wife for four years and eight months.

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1. Dawson, op.cit., pp. 36-37.
2. Still, Parker realised his indebtedness to Dr. Campbell and he expressed the same in his autobiography: He said, "As to Dr. Campbell's large intellectual capacity there could be no manner of doubt, and as to his deep evangelical convictions I have no shadow of misgiving; and for my own part, it would be unpardonable to forget that he directed my opening ministry and comforted me in my first endeavours by many a generous benediction." (Parker, A Preacher's Life, pp. 78-79.)
3. Dawson, op.cit., p. 38.

From the first, Parker's ministry here met with unusual success, and probably at no time had he more solid satisfaction and enjoyment in his work than in his Banbury days. Everything about the place seemed to meet his fancy and pleasure. The stipend promised was £130 per annum. "I told the deacons," said Parker, "that I did not know what I could do with so much money."[1] They succeeded, however, in inducing him to try, and he thereupon proceeded to search for a suitable place to live. Writing of his tastes and possessions, he confessed:

> "My clothes did not require many wardrobes for their accommodation. When I asked my draper-deacon how much he would want for a black suit, he said if I did not object to a certain quality of cloth he could let me have a suit at a very moderate price. Whereupon I answered: 'Now remember black, shiny and cheap; but the greatest of these is cheap.' I got the suit - I wore it - I remember it![2]

At another time, after commenting on his twenty-two years, he described his general appearance:

> "I was very thin, with a large head thickly covered with the darkest brown hair, and wearing a collar as high as Mr. Gladstone's, and a white neckerchief that lacked nothing of amplitude or display. Put upon all this a tall silk hat and you will see what a figure I cut in the early 'fifties."[3]

In the above "garb and fashion," Parker went about his pastoral duties in Banbury, flinging himself into his work with amazing vigour and determination. The rural population consisted largely of working class folk who were, for the most part uneducated. Since it was not until twenty years later that education became compulsory, Parker himself began to conduct classes for those who were eager to learn.

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1. Clare, op.cit., p. 89.
2. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 134.
3. Clare op.cit., p. 90.

To this end, he established a class which he called a Secular Class, in which he taught the pupils grammar, Latin and history. He was quite elated over the varied achievements of his scholars: one became a solicitor, another secretary to a millionaire, while a third was promoted to a considerable position with the Metropolitan Police Force.[1]

All the same, not every one in Banbury was delighted with the presence and ministry of the new preacher. In fact, those who gathered on the cricket ground every Sunday were most displeased with his preaching. It seems that during the summer months, instead of lecturing in the Corn Exchange, Parker preached every Sunday afternoon at an open-air service on the cricket ground. There the local roughs gathered and did all they could to silence the daring preacher. "Every day," states Clare, "he was liable to be hooted in the streets. Once the roughest of the gang rushed at the cart from which he was preaching and threatened to roll him down the hill."[2] In the end, although the hatred was deep and intense for a time, Parker managed to win the respect of some of his enemies and induced others to hear him preach in his own church.

A notable feature of the Banbury ministry was his three nights' public debate on religion and secularism with George Jacob Holyoake, the famous orator, and leader of the Rationalist Society of Britain. Holyoake had come to the town for a week of meetings, to be held on the cricket field; Parker went along to the public meeting to listen to the noted figure and was soon drawn into a public debate, which

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 140.
2. Clare, op.cit., p. 91.

lasted three nights. This was a bold manoeuvre for the young preacher but he was anxious to answer Holyoake's query as to what "God had done for the martyr Stephen when he was being stoned to death?" Parker has recorded his reply to Holyoake; he considered it one of the most inspired utterances he ever made:

> "The question has been put to me: 'What did Providence do in the case of the Martyr Stephen?' If God takes care of his saints, why did he not take care of Stephen? I think that the Almighty did more than at first sight may appear. He did not visibly appear to the murderers; He was not audibly heard by any man in the crowd. But on these grounds it would be an infinite mistake to suppose that God did nothing for his servant. I tell you that in that moment of suffering and helplessness, God enabled Stephen to say: 'Lord, Lay not this sin to their charge.' THAT was what the Almighty did. And, when the true value of spiritual ministry is known, it will be allowed that, in working this miracle of forgiveness in the spirit of the martyred man, God did more for Stephen than if he had sent a legion of angels to protect him from the ruffianism which wrought his death!"[1]

This debate was a high point in Parker's Banbury ministry and brought him more than ever to the attention of the public. His answer had an electrical effect upon the audience and even caused Holyoake to advise his secularist followers to hear him preach.

Joseph Parker continued to advance the name of his church by inviting eminent preachers to officiate on special occasions at the Banbury Chapel. Such honoured and recognised preachers as Thomas Binney, John Angel James, and James Parsons, came to Banbury at his invitation. Furthermore, he became more than ever convinced of the value of the press as a means of addressing a larger public, and he began to use this medium extensively. He published the substance of his Holyoake debate under the title Six Chapters on Secularism, later

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1. Ibid., p. 94.

expanded into Helps to Truth Seekers; or Christianity and Scepticism. This book was highly commended by the religious press, and George Gilfillan bore emphatic testimony to its excellence.[1]

The name of Joseph Parker grew familiar to many in the north of England through his preaching, his several books, and his contributions[2] to The Homilist under the title "Germs of Thought." Inquiries were made as to who he was, and in answer to one correspondent the editor of The Homilist replied: "I know him well. He is a young man who has more genius and moral stamina than any ten men I know. If he goes on as he has begun, his influence will soon be felt in the denomination!"[3]

With the growing attendance at the church services, the problem of accommodation quickly confronted the pastor and deacons. Soon, a new church was built and opened by the famous R.W. Dale of Birmingham. The old building had accommodation for four hundred. The new church not only accommodated six hundred people, but provided the pastor with the "luxury of a private vestry," and also a commodious school room.[4]

Finally, after six different invitations[5] had been given to him to leave Banbury, Joseph Parker reluctantly left his happy and

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 41.
2. He advanced his own name, too, when he won second prize in an essay competition; Dr. J.A. Wylie of Edinburgh was awarded first prize. In view of the fact that eighty-one essays from all over the United Kingdom had been submitted this was a very high honour for Joseph Parker.
3. Adamson, op.cit., p. 49.
4. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 137.
5. While Parker was at Banbury he was offered a position in the office of a London lawyer; also offered the sum of £1500 a year and his Sundays free if he would represent a certain literary and commercial enterprise. He declined both. (Ibid., p. 141.)

prosperous congregation in Oxfordshire and accepted the call of the Cavendish Street Chapel, Manchester. The Banbury congregation received Parker's resignation in a wonderful way. They wrote: "It will be the darkest day in our life when you leave us, but we have no doubt that God intends you should remove to Manchester."[1] Symbolic of the unique hold he had upon their affection were their gifts of a handsome clock, a solid silver tea-service, "a handful of gold," and two large silver ladles. "Thus we parted - my first pastoral love and I. It was . . . a dark day for me," confessed Parker.[2] "When the engine strained out of the station no word was spoken: a great grip of the hand had been exchanged, and in significant silence a solemn relationship had been dissolved."[3]

Manchester, 1858 - 1869

It is to be remembered that Joseph Parker went to Manchester only after repeated requests from the Cavendish Street Chapel. Even then, he accepted the call to be their minister on the condition that they would erase the deficit which the Banbury Congregation had incurred in building their new church. In short, the Cavendish Street people bought Joseph Parker from Banbury for £900![4]

Parker's first impressions of the Manchester church were far from favourable. Indeed, it seems that he felt the people were cold, unfriendly and complacent. As he said himself, after he had first preached there as a guest supply, "I was never more coldly received

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1. Ibid., p. 146.
2. Ibid.
3. Clare, op.cit., p. 96.
4. £700 on the Banbury debt; £200 on the Cavendish Street Chapel.

in my life. I was the guest of a millionaire provision merchant, who never uttered a word of sympathy or appreciation regarding my services."[1] Again, after surveying the congregation from the pulpit he said, "Every man seemed to be looking at me over the top of a money-bag."[2] On the final Monday morning of his visit the millionaire provision merchant thawed sufficiently to say, "You must have noticed that your ministry has produced a deep impression upon our people." Parker replied that that had not been is own impression, and that so far as personal inclination was concerned he would never set his foot in their "gothic sepulchre" again![3]

All the same, Parker returned to Manchester in July, 1858 and took up his position of pastor, and entered into his work with the usual enthusiasm and vigour.[4] To be sure, the position of preacher to the wealthy cotton lords of Cavendish Street promised to be trying. Then only twenty-eight years of age, he had come from the relatively quiet country charge of Banbury to a large, wealthy, and

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 51.
2. Ibid., p. 52.
3. Clare, op.cit., p. 98.
4. It is important to cite here the reply Joseph Parker made to the call of the Cavendish Street Shapel. His reply throws light on his administration of pastoral duties at Manchester and also indicates his understanding of the preacher's position in London. Before accepting the call to Manchester he made this statement: "As a minister I claim the most perfect freedom of action. With regard to my conduct in the pulpit, I must be the sole human arbiter. Under the profound sense of my accountability to the Great Head of the Church, I must adopt such modes of appealing to the people as may appear to my own judgment and conscience best adapted to promote interest of truth. I promise no deference to usages or precedent. What appears to me right I shall do, and what appears to me wrong or insufficient I shall unequivocally reject." (Ibid., p. 100.)

influential congregation, in succession to a man more than twice his age, and a leader of his denomination. As one said, some of the Manchester people looked with no indulgent eye upon his coming, and a few positively resented it. He was young, he had not passed through the usual theological training and he possessed no University degree.[1]

Still, in the face of all adverse criticism it was not long before the Chapel, which seated about 1700[2] people, was crowded to overflowing. Not only were these results encouraging, but Parker was pleased with the countless opportunities of the new charge. Encouragement was given him in all areas of his work. The Chapel itself was then possibly one of the finest architectural edifices in English Nonconformity. The congregation was no less remarkable. In describing it Parker said,

> "One deacon was a Member of Parliament, another was a knight, another . . . the senior surgeon of the city . . . eight other deacons drove their carriages . . . and I was only twenty-eight! I had never been in a gold-mine before. 'One thousand' was the unit of this new speech, and I had left behind me a humble salary of a hundred and fifty pounds a year."[3]

One of the most notable features of Parker's pastorate in Manchester was the week-day evening service. Speaking of this service, the Rev. Henry Kendall says,

> "About the time when he (Mr. Parker) came to Cavendish, Dr. (then Mr.) Maclaren came to Oxford Road, and the students (of Lancashire College) were then favoured with consummate models in the art of preaching. . . . Parker used to preach only a quarter of an hour on

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 46.
2. With commendable exactness, Parker indicated their capacity as 1,666. (Clare, op.cit., p. 102.)
3. Parker, A Preacher's Life, pp. 146-147.

> the week-evenings, but he packed a great deal into that short space, and had a large meeting and a good service . . ."[1]

In Manchester Parker was a pastor as well as a preacher and he took a special interest in the varied programmes of the church. The Sunday-schools grew and flourished; missions were established in the poorer sections of the city, and vigorously maintained. Unfortunately, there is no detail given of this mission programme, but one testifies that,

> "Dr. Parker, Mrs. Parker, and their friends literally went forth into the back street, lanes, and courts of the city, preaching the Gospel, and compelling the poor and degraded to come in. The Sunday schoolroom . . . was filled every Sunday evening with a congregation of the very poorest, to whom laymen ministered in a spirit of Christian sympathy."[2]

It appears that, in following out this mission, Parker had several lay assistants who visited and conducted services under his direction. From time to time, he would give them various suggestions and information to aid them in the work.

As an outgrowth of his mission programme and as a result of much thought, he established the Cavendish Theological College. He meant this institution to complement, not compete with, the work of the Lancashire Independent College. The Cavendish College was to be pre-eminently practical in its curriculum and emphasis. He was persuaded that contemporary divinity training was over-balanced on the scholastic and theoretical side. The College developed gradually, growing from "week evening classes" superintended by himself, to include a regular course of instruction of three years duration. An

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 47.
2. Ibid., p. 48.

able and competent tutor was appointed to each class, and Parker was allocated to that of homiletics. His biographer says this of the idea,

> "In addition to studying books, hearing lectures, and conducting conversation on doctrinal and practical subjects, the students were expected to spend some hours each day in carrying what they knew into practice, by visiting districts allotted to them, reporting the work done, and how they had succeeded in their mission."[1]

After two years he found the work too much and retired from the scene. The College later became the Nottingham Congregational Institute and finally became known as the Paton College.

Also at Manchester, for the first time, Parker's sermons were published, thereby enabling a world-wide audience to know him. A series of Sunday evening lectures, in which he discussed several important church questions, was so much appreciated by the congregation that, at their request and cost, they were published and a copy of the book was sent to every member of both Houses of Parliament. In the course of a debate in the House of Commons, Mr. Walpole referred to Church Questions as "a most able book, in the Nonconformist view," and the Christian World spoke of it as "a noble book, full of pith and power."[2] After the current fashion of publishing books anonymously, Parker issued two books: Ecce Deus, and Springdale Abbey, the former the most important of the two and designed as a reply to Professor Seeley's Ecce Homo, and as "an examination of the Life and Doctrine of Jesus Christ on independent grounds." The book was widely and most favourably reviewed, all

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 66.
2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 50.

testifying to the ability of the unknown writer. When it became known that the author was Joseph Parker of Manchester, there was universal surprise and in some quarters not a little chagrin.[1]

The practical nature of his utterances enabled Joseph Parker to succeed to the position of moral instructor of the great community, a position so recently left vacant by the early death of Hugh Stowell. Because he held such a place in the life of the city, he was urged to take part in some of the great meetings in the Free Trade Hall and elsewhere. When he was not making use of the platform he was utilizing the pulpit to challenge the moral conscience of the community. One such instance occurred at the close of the American Civil War, when a collection was made in Cavendish Chapel for aid to the liberated slaves. On this occasion Parker challenged and rebuked the congregation in these words:

> "Last Sunday four millions of Liberated Slaves, men and women, stood at these doors, soliciting assistance to aid them in the altered and now hopeful position in which, by the aid . . . of Almighty God, they now stand. This city is designated Cottonpolis. There are manufacturers and merchants in it who have made their pile through the blood and marrow of these now Liberated Slaves, and yet, it is with sorrow and pain I cannot describe, that I am compelled to announce that the collection made here last Sunday is a disgrace to civilization!"[2]

Towards the middle of his ministry in Manchester, Joseph Parker sustained a great loss. After twelve years of happy married life - comprising about six months in Hexham, a year or two in London, five years in Banbury, and five in Manchester - he was bereaved of the wife who had been his "loving companion and wise counsellor" during

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 78.
2. Ibid., p. 70.

what was perhaps the most critical and formative period of his life.[1] However, after more than a year had elapsed he married Emma Jane Common on December 22nd, 1864 at Sunderland. The bride was the daughter of Mr. Andrew Common, J.P., banker, a Non-conformist and Liberal, well-known and highly respected in the north of England. Although she was but nineteen at the time, the new Mrs. Parker possessed a fine personality and showed more than average interest in the arts: she was to prove a real helpmate to the preacher.

All this time, averred Albert Dawson, "Mr. Parker's position at Manchester had been consolidating, and his influence extending year by year."[2] Cavendish Chapel was realising the best kind of prosperity; all the services were well attended, financial worry was unknown, and a most fruitful work was being carried on outside the immediate borders of the church. Furthermore, in the year 1862, Parker received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Chicago. While Parker was only thirty-two years of age at the time, many considered the honour richly deserved.[3] Later, writing about his position in Manchester, Parker said,

> "It never entered my mind that I could leave Manchester. What could any man desire more than some two thousand regular hearers, one of the finest buildings in Non-conformity, and one of the greatest cities in the country?"[4]

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1. Time was not to destroy Parker's affection for her, and in the year 1899, when the Horsley Congregational Church was rebuilt, he placed a memorial window, which bears the following inscription: "In loving memory of Ann Nesbitt, for twelve years the devoted wife of Joseph Parker, minister of the City Temple, London. This window is reverently and gratefully erected by the man whose life she did so much to mould." (Ibid., p. 71.)
2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 52.
3. Clare, op.cit., p. 102.
4. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 150.

All the same, in 1868, a group from the Old Poultry Chapel, London, the church founded by Thomas Goodwin in 1640, came to Manchester and invited Dr. Parker to become their pastor. Following his custom at Banbury, Parker referred the matter to the deacons, before coming to any decision on his own. Within a short time he was literally swamped with testaments bearing the love and loyalty of the Cavendish Street people, presented with a document signed by every deacon urging him to remain in Manchester, and given a cheque for seven hundred guineas. In accepting the gift of money, Parker made plain that his liberty of action was in no way compromised. He said,

> "Let us be quite clear as to the meaning of this gift. If any man has given a single penny to this testimonial under the impression that it is to be regarded as a detainer, or is in any way to buy my service or bribe me in relation to the future, I earnestly beg him to withdraw his contribution at once. Please to understand that I hold myself at perfect liberty to leave Manchester tomorrow if I see that it is the will of God that I should remove. On this distinct understanding alone can I touch the gift which you offer me."[1]

At the Poultry Chapel during the following fifteen months the pulpit was occupied by many distinguished men. One minister after another was approached to fill the vacant pastorate, but none adequate for the task could be secured. They finally construed the very protraction of their period of waiting as pointing the finger to Joseph Parker as the God-appointed man. Thus it was that, on June 25th, 1869, they renewed their invitation. "We believe," they said, "that God intends you to come to London." Two days later Dr. Parker resigned the Manchester pastorate and returned to the

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1. Ibid., p. 155.

city where his ministry had begun some seventeen years earlier! He preached his farewell sermon in Cavendish Street Chapel in June, 1869, and commenced his ministry in London on the 19th of September following, being then in his fortieth year. In leaving Manchester Joseph Parker left a deep impression on the religious life of the midlands. As Angus Watson said:

> "His work at Cavendish Street carried him to the highest pinnacle as a preacher; his reputation became national; his preaching intensely dramatic, and with a breadth of outlook which was far ahead of his time, set a new standard in the ministry and created a new tradition."[1]

London, 1869 - 1902

One cannot help being struck by the natural sequence of events in Joseph Parker's life. That the youth of twenty-two who first came to London in 1852 should return to initiate a great ministry in the city at forty, is indeed remarkable. The church which had set its heart upon Dr. Parker was no mean or insignificant one. The oldest Congregational church in the city of London, it had a glorious history stretching back to the early part of the seventeenth century. Its founder and first minister was Thomas Goodwin, one of the most learned men of his day, Preacher to the Council of State, member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, sometime President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell.[2]

Parker came to the Poultry Chapel in succession to James Spence. In consequence of the migration of the people to the suburbs,

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1. Clare, op.cit., p. 102.
2. Parker, The Ark of God: The transient symbol of an Eternal Truth (Lond., 1877), p. 109.

Dr. Spence had found it increasingly difficult to gather a congregation, and when his resignation took effect in October, 1867, the church had dwindled to a mere handful. Indeed, it was the contention of not a few that but for Dr. Parker's advent, the church, founded by Goodwin in 1640, would have come to an inglorious end.[1]

With customary courage, audacity and enthusiasm, Joseph Parker entered into the work at hand, and the results were more than gratifying. He rapidly filled an empty church, planned for and built a new church, instituted the Thursday noon-day service, and conducted for three years an Institute of Homiletics for the gratuitous instruction of young students in the art of preaching.[2]

Parker had come to London on condition of the removal of the congregation from the Poultry to a new site. But before this condition was fulfilled he encountered a great deal of opposition. Still, in his first utterance he struck the notes of confidence and challenge, and the text of his sermon was apt and promising: "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." (Isaiah, XIV.2.) In concluding his sermon Parker stated:

> ". . . . There are some people who do not hesitate to say that in coming to this place I have voluntarily come unto a very crooked place. . . . There are, however, two ways of looking at that. If I were starting life as a minister, I should say, 'Do not put me down in a church that is full . . . put me rather in a place that is quite empty, but around which there are plenty of people.'"[3]

When Joseph Parker came to London in 1869 he found himself surrounded on every side by outstanding and popular preachers. Never

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1. Dawson, op.cit., pp. 59-61.
2. Lee, op.cit., pp. 71-72.
3. Parker, The City Temple (Lond., 1869-1870), p. 10.

before, or since, did the pulpits of London present so splendid an array of men as C.H. Spurgeon, Canon Liddon, Dean Vaughan, Morley Punshon, Thomas Binney, John Clifford, and Baldwin Brown. All the same, the presence of such an illustrious collection of men in one place did not impede or retard the success of Parker's ministry. On the contrary, within a few weeks he wrote:

> "We have much reason to be encouraged in our work. We labour under no little disadvantage in consequence of the peculiar construction of the Poultry Chapel; both the principal entrances are on the same side, and when they are blocked up by waiting strangers, two difficulties arise: first, the stated seat-holders find it almost impossible to get to their seats; and secondly, visitors who come later turn back under the impression that the chapel is crowded."[1]

Still, almost insurmountable obstacles set themselves up to defeat the young enterprise. Dr. Parker lost through death the senior deacon, Mr. Smith, a man who had been instrumental in bringing him to London and who was the guiding force of the old church. Then there was the question of the proposed site for the new building; some wanted to remove to the suburban section of the city; and others wished to unite with other London churches.[2] Again Parker assumed the lead and presented the challenge:

> "Let us not avail ourselves," he said, "of the opportunity of going to a part of London where we could take our ease, harbour our strength, and spare our pockets. We are in the centre of London: let us keep as near it as possible, and secure a site for our new Temple which will bear witness for God in the midst of the din, activity, and commerce of the world!"[3]

Ultimately, a site on Holborn Viaduct, then a new area, was

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 68.
2. It is of interest to note here that the very problem of the City Temple of 1869 is that which is plaguing the City Temple congregation of 1953.
3. Adamson, op.cit., p. 96.

secured and construction begun on the new church. During the intervening years from 1871 to 1874, preacher and congregation entered their "wilderness period." Services were held in the Cannon Street Hotel in the morning, Exeter Hall in the evening, and the Presbyterian Church, London Wall on Thursdays in the forenoon. Generally speaking, it is a serious thing for a church to remove from one meeting place to another, and all the more so, as in this instance, when the congregation was all but newly formed. However, the change of locality over the two-year period, while the Temple was in process of construction, apparently did little to lessen public interest in the new preacher. The Exeter Hall, being about a mile further westward from the Old Poultry Chapel and the auditorium much larger and less comfortable than the Cannon Street Hotel, presented the gravest problem. Still, the Christian World reported that, "With the exception of some of the back seats on the platform, the spacious hall, which accommodates upwards of 3,000, was filled."[1]

Finally, in May, 1873, the memorial stone of the City Temple was laid by Dr. Thomas Binney with the aid of a silver trowel presented by Mr. Deputy Fry. It represented a major triumph of faith and consecrated effort over recurring obstacles of the most disconcerting and challenging character.[2]

As if he had not already enough to do in directing the great enterprise, Parker was called upon to defend himself against a curiously bitter attack. The Corporation of the City of London, on the motion of Mr. Deputy Fry, an influential figure in the city,

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 74.
2. Clare, op.cit., p. 119.

decided to present to the City Temple, a pulpit of the value of three hundred guineas. The offer was of course gratefully accepted, but immediately there was a tremendous outcry in certain quarters, the burden of which was that by receiving the gift the church would violate the principles of Non-conformity. In due course, the shouting died down but Parker later wrote:

> "Of all the petty controversies in which I have been called to take part, the pettiest was the bitter assault which was made when I accepted from the Corporation of London a pulpit for the City Temple!"[1]

The City Temple was officially opened on the morning of the 19th May, 1874, when many distinguished guests of Church and State were present. The Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, with official attendants and Aldermen, attended in state; that being the first time the civil authorities of London had attended a Non-conformist church. In an address on the occasion Parker outlined the intent and purpose of the City Temple. He said:

> "For my own part, my decision is to seek lines of sympathy and union rather than to magnify points of antagonism and alienation. . . . With what joy we will hail the appearance of the Dean of Westminster in our pulpit, or Dr. Vaughan of the Temple, or the Dean of Canterbury. . . . And, what would be the special ground for joy? The thought that at last a great barrier had been broken down, and that brethren, long separated, had found one another in their Father's house."[2]

The building erected on the Holborn Viaduct possessed impressive dimensions. Built in the Italian style of architecture, it had a tall tower rising at one end and provided seats for some 2,500 people. The chosen site enhanced the position of the City Temple even

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 255.
2. Dawson, op. cit., p. 88.

more, in that it commended itself to the preacher's heart and imagination because of the historical associations of its environment. Speaking of these he said:

> "If you stand at the front door . . . and look towards the east, you will see a place well known as Snow Hill. In a room above a small shop there died a man whose very name is part of the English language. A rich man had differed with his son, and determined to disinherit him. The man of whom I speak came to London to plead the son's cause. He had to ride through heavy rain. He came, drenched to his lodging in Snow Hill, and was seized with a violent fever, and died in August 1688. Mr. Bragge, the then minister of the church, was with him in his dying hours and saw him pass through the Gate Beautiful. For it was the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" that died there; tinker, preacher, prisoner, writer - John Bunyan!"[1]

In the rear of the church stood the old Fleet prison, where in a loathsome and horrible dungeon, was confined the martyr John Hooper, and Smithfield, the scene of the execution of so many witnesses for Christ, is not far distant.

Throughout his life Joseph Parker spoke affectionately of his "Temple"[2] which was the focal point of his unusual ministry. At the very beginning it housed the unique Thursday noon-day service and as an outgrowth of this, the Institute of Homiletics. The Institute came about as a definite result of the presence of so many students and preachers at the Thursday service. As Parker said in intimating the meeting,

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 97.
2. As far as we know the name "City Temple" was created and chosen by Parker himself. Once James Martineau said to him, "Why do you call your church by the heathenish word 'temple'?" Parker replied, "'Temple' is a Bible term . . . it is a word which Jesus Christ employed and, so to say, endorsed, and the Apostle Paul used the word temple in a living sense." (Parker, The City Temple Pulpit (Lond., 1899), Vol. VII, p. 211.)

> "It has occurred to me that when so many of us meet every Thursday . . . we might hold weekly or monthly councils on the work of the ministry. Why not get to know one another's methods of preaching, by a free discussion of plans of sermons. . . . We should thus destroy Sectarianism; we should enlarge our acquaintance with pulpit methods, and infuse new life into our ministry."[1]

In the course of his London ministry Parker made many visits beyond the bounds of the city. Some of his most successful excursions were made to the United States. He first sailed to America in 1873 to deliver an address at the Evangelical Alliance Convention meeting in New York. Here he met, for the first time, Henry Ward Beecher and John Gough, the noted Temperance lecturer. He twice occupied Mr. Beecher's pulpit in Brooklyn and also preached in the Wesleyan chapel at Montreal, and just before leaving he addressed a mass meeting of some 4,000 in New York. Dr. and Mrs. Parker thoroughly enjoyed their trip, and brought back with them, not only many happy impressions of America, but also a clearer conception of the far-reaching influence of their ministry exercised in the heart of London. The extent of Joseph Parker's fame in the early years of his City Temple work can be seen from these words of J.M. Richards; he said,

> "During the summer of 1873 my attention was attracted to an article in the New York Evangelist, which was written by the Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, describing visits to London churches, and very strong expressions were used in praise of the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker. . . . Dr. Cuyler said, 'You will see in him a man with a head like a lion, with a voice that could roar like a lion, but which could be lowered to the gentlest whisper, and yet the whisper could be heard in any part of the hall.'"[2]

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1. Parker, The City Temple, 1869, p. 48.
2. John Morgan Richards, With John Bull and Jonathan (Lond., 1905), p. 81.

Richards went to hear the preacher and said later, "I tested this for myself and found that the description was absolutely correct!" Later, he became the sole American on the Deacons' Board of the City Temple, and one of Parker's closest friends.

Through his preaching in the Temple, where the back gallery was known as the "Rocky Mountains," and by his printed sermons, Dr. Parker was to forge a link with America that was to last till the present.[1] In time, Joseph Parker was to sail the Atlantic six times; the final time to deliver the Eulogy of Henry Ward Beecher. Of the people of America, no one attracted him so much as the late Henry Beecher. The two preachers were in many respects kindred souls; each admired the other's genius, and had many things in common; they, with their wives, exchanged visits and corresponded in terms of the most intimate friendship. On Sunday, 2nd October, 1887, Dr. Parker preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn. The New York World, the next day, said:

> "The Beecher of England . . . preached yesterday from the platform in Brooklyn which the Beecher of America had preached for forty years. . . . Crowded and pent up as the immense audience was, he held it in rapt attention to the close."[2]

Dr. Parker considered the event "the greatest public occasion in which

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1. During the first World War years, an American, Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, became the pastor of the City Temple. In his book, Preaching in London, Dr. Newton states: "Unfortunately, it was never my privilege to see or hear Joseph Parker, but in the home of my boyhood, his name had a place of honor . . . " (Joseph Fort Newton, Preaching in London: a diary of Anglo-American friendship (Lond., 1922), p. 33.) He wished to effect a "ministry of interpretation between one people and another and the ideal place for such a service was the City Temple, in whose pulpit, more American voices had been heard from the day of Beecher down, than in any shrine in England!" (Ibid., p. 16.)
2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 125.

I have ever taken part!"[1] The possibility of Dr. Parker settling in America had, all along, exercised the minds of his friends in London, and was actively discussed in America. While Parker received many encomiums of praise from the newspapers, friends, and even the President of the United States, Grover Cleveland, on the Eulogy, he nevertheless, wished to return to London. The only inducement the Brooklyn Church could make to him was money, and in that, as he said, "I have no interest."[2]

During the thirty-three years of his ministry in London, Parker inaugurated innumerable projects, edited periodicals, and wrote a number of books. But for himself, the "crowning work" of his life was the twenty-five volume work known as The People's Bible. In 1884, on the verge of commencing the great project he outlined his task as follows:

> "I am just about to open the Bible and to ask you to fix your eyes year by year . . . upon the miracle of books. This is the determination to which I have been led, and I trust divinely and humbly, - just to begin at the very beginning of the book and so far as life and energy holds out to set down in order what thoughts may be given to

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1. Parker, Might Have Been: Some Life Notes (Lond., 1896), p. 109. In his autobiography he revealed his deep affection and admiration for H.W. Beecher: "I noticed in the papers . . . that Mr. Beecher had 'certain faults, which were largely, indeed, the faults of his fellow countrymen.' This was no doubt very wrong on Mr. Beecher's part. What right had he to have any faults? His critics had none, - why should he have any? His critics have a creed, a theology, an ecclesiastical theory, a stainless reputation, infinite prudence, and more than divine sagacity; what right had Mr. Beecher to have one solitary fault? Some critics said that his sermons were largely 'projections of his own personality.' But what a personality it was to project! How many sided and radiant . . . sympathetic . . . human!" (Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 314.)

2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 127.

> me . . . It will take years to do this; the whole speech will occupy some five and twenty volumes. . . . I thought of calling it the "Preachers' Bible" - there is no preachers' bible, it is the people's bible and the little children shall be made, so far as I am able, to understand some parts of it and to find it the very best book that was ever written. And so it is a solemn occasion for me, the beginning and the consummation of my life's work. If I can get this done . . . I shall feel I have done all I can do . . ."[1]

From 1884 to 1891 Joseph Parker preached through the Bible; "the marvel is," stated one, "that any man should have been able to combine so successfully the functions of Biblical commentator and popular preacher."[2] Although the responsibility of maintaining a city ministry kept him close to his work for the greater part of his days, nevertheless, in the later years of his life, he was enabled to undertake several missions throughout the country at large.

As a result of constant demands, he went to Scotland in 1887 and 1888.[3] In his earlier years he had a profound admiration[4] for the Scottish preachers, considering them as men of weight,

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1. Parker, The People's Bible (Lond., 1885-1895), Vol. I, Genesis, pp. 1-6.
2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 116.
3. In December, 1896, Dr. Parker received a remarkable memorial urging him to visit Belfast. The document was signed by the Lord Mayor and the ex-Lord Mayor, by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, by the President of Assembly College and by the President of Queen's University. Unfortunately, Parker was unable to make the trip.
4. During his City Temple ministry Parker carried on correspondence with Principal Rainey, Alexander Whyte, and John Watson. Dr. Whyte was especially drawn to the preaching of Dr. Parker and whenever in London he used to go to the City Temple. Once in a letter to his nephew, Hubert Simpson, who was about to begin his studies for the ministry, Dr. Whyte wrote: "Take a volume of first-rate sermons - Newman, or Robertson, or Parker, or Spurgeon . . . and enter the texts of a whole volume . . ." (G.F. Barbour, The Life of Alexander Whyte, D.D. (Lond., 1923), p. 290.

learning and power; but he felt that they did not, to the full extent, avail themselves of their resources and gifts to rouse the nation to a state of permanent religious fervour.[1] His mission on both[2] occasions was eminently successful and he came back to London with a better understanding of the Scottish Church and its people.

In 1898, Dr. Parker and his wife were widely acclaimed on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his ministry. In this jubilee celebration, pastor and people were able, for once, to come together in the church for a time of fellowship. Although Dr. Parker was never in the habit of going in and out of the houses of his people - indeed, he seemed to avoid this department of ministerial work as much as possible - yet he never lost the love of his people. The jubilee was celebrated on Sunday, June 19th, and on the Thursday following, Dr. Parker preached as usual to a crowded congregation, hundreds being unable to gain admission. Speaking of Parker's swift rise in the ministry and of his numerous accomplishments, Albert Dawson said,

> "In 1848, we saw a saw-pit for a pulpit, and few villagers for audience; in 1893, we have the majestic City Temple, with its three hundred guinea pulpit, and a world-wide constituency of which the congregation gathered within the four walls of the church is but a representative fragment."[3]

Many tributes were paid to the aging preacher from all denominations and parts of the world, and at the close of his reply,

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 177.
2. The first occasion found Parker in Edinburgh addressing the students of New College on "Preaching"; preaching to great crowds in the United Presbyterian Hall, St. Giles' Cathedral and Free St. George's; also he preached in the main Glasgow churches. His second mission he concentrated on the rural sectors of Scotland. (Ibid., pp. 177-210.)
3. Dawson, op.cit., p. 147.

Dr. Parker said,

> "I say to all my friends, God bless you, and as you have done to me this day, may God do to you, and more also, when your day's work is approaching its conclusion, and that you may have a common joy, and unite in a common song."[1]

His life had been confronted by many difficulties and he had sustained a good deal of personal criticism, but all of these things were as nothing when, in the final days of 1899, Mrs. Parker, his helpmate, guide and constant friend and companion, passed away. What it meant to the stricken husband to be separated by death from the wife of more than thirty-four years can only be fully understood by those who had opportunities of seeing how closely their lives were entwined. While no man could be on occasion more reserved and reticent, more "sphinx-like," than Dr. Parker, it was essential to his peace of mind that he should have a kindred spirit to whom he could unburden himself - communicate new ideas, talk over contemplated plans, and lay bare his inmost thoughts. Mrs. Parker supplied exactly that combination of sympathy, appreciation, and encouragement that his peculiar temperament required. One must read his tribute, "An Irreparable Loss," in his autobiography, to grasp the extreme sorrow and pathos which her passing created. He writes: "On January 26th, 1899, I entered upon my old age, for at 9.30 that night the life of my life, the heart of my heart, ascended to the right hand of God!"[2] Again,

> "In that dark hour I became almost an atheist. How could I be otherwise, - my chief joy taken from me - my only joy - that joy that gave gladness to everything

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 270.
2. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 197.

> else - the joy that made holy work a holy sacrament? O the Gethsemane bitterness! The Calvary solitude! I had secretly prayed God to pity me by sparing her, yet He set His foot upon my prayers, and treated my petition with contempt. If I had seen a dog in such agony as mine I would have pitied and helped the dumb beast; yet God spat upon me and cast me out as an offence, - out into the waste wilderness and the night black and starless!"[1]

The last three years of Joseph Parker's life are represented in the figure of a man trying desperately to continue, in obedience to his wife's last word, and yet hoping against constant hope that he would soon be taken.

Amazingly enough, his final ministry was as popular as at the first. One commentator says,

> "It was a privilege to worship at the Temple during Dr. Parker's closing decade. He was growing old, yet the galleries were thronged with young. Of all ages, we came to hear this dour Northumbrian, son of the Moorlands, who built a Temple in the heart of London, and preached there weekly for thirty years to six thousand people!"[2]

Despite the honours[3] which came to him in his closing years, namely, his election for the second time to the Congregational Union in 1901, and to the Presidency of the Free Church Council in the same year; yet he wrote in the British Weekly of August, 1900, "For some reason or other I look upon 1901 as my last year of public work." Of his activity in the early days of 1901 his former secretary writes:

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1. Ibid., p. 211.
2. Ebenezer Rees in personal correspondence with the author.
3. Few things held more interest for Dr. Parker than the invitation which he received from the Vicar of Hexham in 1901. The Vicar, who was the son-in-law of Dean Farrar, invited Parker to preach in Hexham Abbey. Dr. Parker wrote to the young Vicar, saying he was ready at any moment to take train for the north, but he thought it only right to ask him whether he really knew what such an invitation involved. In the circumstances Parker never realised his life-long ambition.

> "He has relaxed nothing. He continues to rise early and to keep well ahead of the day's work. He takes regular exercise in walking and with dumbells. On Sunday and Thursdays he goes on foot a considerable part of the way from Hampstead to the City Temple, and does not shirk the cold bath that always awaits him!"[1]

Approaching his seventy-second year, the valiant preacher recognised that his end was near and he wrote prophetically:

> "And so we come to the quiet and the glow of the sunset. We have never seen just this light on the hills before, - this solemn purple, this crimson gold. No, this is unique. There is no call to battle in this subsiding light. . . . I am nearing Yonderland. Soon, mayhap, tomorrow, tonight, I may see the King! So near is Yonderland!"[2]

On October 2nd, 1902, he conducted his final service in the City Temple. As the service drew to a close,

> "He rose," says one, "and faced the congregation to announce the Doxology, there was a pause, the muscles of his face worked, and he seemed to be undergoing some internal conflict. He appeared to be on the point of making some further personal reference, but, pressing his lips together, decided to say no more, and briefly announced 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'"[3]

His departure from the City Temple was not unlike the last appearance of Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons. The exit of the great preacher, like that of the great statesman, was dignified and becoming in its simplicity and self-restraint. On the 28th of November, after a time of suffering, loneliness, and lingering sorrow, Joseph Parker found rest and peace in death. His passing was peaceful and silent; he had reached Yonderland at last.

While London had been kept constantly informed of his condition and many anticipated his death, still, throughout the great

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 171.
2. Parker, A Preacher's Life, pp. 414-416.
3. "Christian Commonwealth", December, 1902.

city and the world, parishioners and friends of the City Temple knew they had suffered a great loss. The funeral service reminded Londoners of the scenes which took place at the Metropolitan Tabernacle upon the death of Mr. Spurgeon. Said the London Illustrated News: "The extraordinary hold which Dr. Parker had upon the public was evident from the overwhelming demand for tickets of admission to the funeral service."[1]

Prior to the actual service many thousands of all classes and station in society passed by the remains of Dr. Parker in the Lying in State, and all the way to the Hampstead cemetery, the streets were lined with people of every description, standing in the drizzling rain with great reverence.

Even at the last, the preacher possessing amazing prescience had quietly, but resolutely, selected and commissioned his successor, R.J. Campbell of Brighton. Speaking of this Campbell said,

> "I did not tell anyone at the time, but on the last occasion when I saw Dr. Parker, the dying man himself solemnly consecrated me to the new charge, painfully raising himself on the bed and laying his hand upon me and saying, 'The Lord bless you a thousandfold more than he blessed me.' . . . I was deeply impressed, and left the death chamber with the conviction that my Brighton ministry was ended."[2]

So it was that the long, tempestuous life and powerful ministry closed. In the final days with the spirit of life gone from him and the great burden of his responsibility beginning to weigh heavily upon him, he had turned again to his home haunts in the north country (or to the Swiss mountains which he loved to visit) and had become onee

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1. Ibid.,
2. R.J. Campbell, A Spiritual Pilgrimage (Lond., 1916), pp. 83-85.

again the lonely lad of his youth amid the heather-clad moorlands. In those last days, he sought again the dreams of his youth, and the places made sacred by the mother who had first taught him of the Saviour whom through a lifetime he had rejoiced to serve. At his death the papers and pulpits of London, and countless other places, vied with each other in expressing their tributes to the great preacher. Whether spoken by the Earl of Rosebery, Alexander Maclaren, or Principal Fairbairn, the message was the same; a great preacher had fallen; an awful blank had been left in the Christian pulpit. What did Joseph Parker mean to the thousands who heard or read his words round the world? Perhaps this one statement expressed the sentiments of all. Preaching at Oxford, Principal Fairbairn said: "He was a man who loved his God; spoke the truth he believed as he believed it, and the man God gave makes us grateful to the God who gave him."[1]

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1. W.R. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 47.

CHAPTER II

THE PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER

"There has been no man in our day at all like him, there was and there never will be a man at one and the same time so deep and so shallow, so brusque and sarcastic and bitter, so gentle and tender and lovable, so rugged in his dependence on the sympathy and goodwill of those about him, so full of inconsistencies of all sorts."

Congregational Year Book, 1903.

CHAPTER II

THE PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER

> ". . . Who can tell all the mysteries of our temperament and of our constitution, of the subtle circumstances that have made us what we are? Who can go back into our early history and trace us up day by day, and see the marvellous chemistry that has been going on, alike physiologically and socially . . . making up the elements and composition for which there seem to be no words? . . . Unless a man can estimate us critically and exhaustively, his judgment must be marred by the limitation of his knowledge."[1]

To estimate aright a personality so great, so complex, and so many-sided as that of Dr. Parker, is a task so difficult that we, like W.R. Nicoll[2] and countless others, would gladly shrink from attempting it. Yet, something must be said on the subject of Parker's personality, for in so many ways it represents the determinative and crucial factor in the task at hand.

It is greatly to be regretted that he is chiefly known to a considerable section of the public by detached incidents or expressions that reveal only a small part or passing phase of his flexible mind and multifold personality. It is no exaggeration to say that the real, the whole Joseph Parker was unknown to the most of those who were familiar with his name, including many who, in genius, were his natural kin.[3]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. X, 2 Chronicles-Esther, p. 270.
2. W.R. Nicoll, Princes of the Church (Lond., [1921]), p. 169.
3. Dawson, op.cit., p. 9.

Still, there is little hope or prospect of gaining a well-rounded picture or image of Dr. Parker. Not only are we confronted by the uneven character of his nature, but we are further hampered by the inadequacy of data with regard to his person. Our purpose here, therefore, will be to isolate as far as possible the salient and varied features of his personality. Of necessity, we must draw much of our material from those who knew him and from those, less fortunate, who observed him, as it were from a distance. It is doubtful whether Joseph Parker ever fully revealed the arcana of his soul to anyone.

In several particulars, the friends and acquaintances of Dr. Parker are in agreement. First, he was, in his own way, a genius. Of the many lines that divide human beings into kinds and classes, none perhaps is more evident and unalterable than that which separates the small minority who have genius from the vast majority who do not have it. And, if genius is an intuitive gift and not, as Carlyle said, "a capacity for taking infinite pains," Parker was unquestionably in that special category. Outside this hypothesis there seems to be no way of explaining his extraordinary personality. On this point, all who ever knew him or heard him or watched him are in total agreement. Already, the story of his life has been told and we have seen that he had no early advantages. Heredity and environment combined in fighting against him in childhood, and he was denied the advantages of a formal and systematic education. It was said of his American friend, Henry Ward Beecher, and perhaps no more apt comment could be made of Parker, "He was a great original personality,

rather than a great original mind."[1]

This aspect of genius in his character expressed itself most pointedly in the variableness and versatility of his temperament. To be sure, consistency is not a word to be applied to Joseph Parker. It is this changing Protean character of the man which makes any study of him, his preaching and his thought, perplexing. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde seemed always to be at war within him and it is certain that were it not for the Grace of God, he could have been a grave liability to the society of his day. Indeed, did he not say, "We are two men, we are dual, bivalvular, binary stars, contradictions, mutual self-completions, and a mass of paradox and inconsistency. The comfort is . . . that Jesus knows it all!"[2] And again, much of what he said concerning his father is here applicable to himself:

> "With him every known man was an angel or a fiend . . . adjectives went for nothing in the swell and rush of his fierce emphasis. A terrible man to people who lived in another zone and spoke a soft and milky language; but a very Hercules and hero to those who could play with tigers and hunt with wolves."[3]

Generally speaking, people found themselves forced into an attitude of intense admiration or of more or less bitter hostility; neutrality was well-nigh impossible.[4]

There is a second particular pertaining to his personality in which most are agreed, and that concerns his striking masculine appearance. If we cannot say his life was consistent or that his temperament was always gentle, we can at all events, truly declare

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1. L.O. Brastow, Representative Modern Preachers (Lond., 1904), p. 14.
2. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. III, p. 206.
3. Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 3.
4. Clare, op.cit., p. 126.

that the elements were . . .

> "So mixed in him that Nature might stand up,
> And say to all the world: 'This was a man'!"[1]

Parker was a man who commended himself to men, and this was evidenced by his ability to draw large proportions of them to his thrice-weekly services. In days, past and present, it is sometimes interesting, generally discouraging, to note the great preponderance of women in Sunday congregations. Yet, at the City Temple, men, drawn by the robust nature of the man and his message, were readily in the majority for thirty years! One glimpse of the rugged individualist walking down Holborn Viaduct to the City Temple was enough to make anyone turn his head to look.

Parker was in possession of a marvelous physical body and he placed it under the most severe strictures all his days. He credits his parents, "a lion-like father" and the most "enduring of mothers," for his excellent physical condition. He thought that if he had not the constitution "of a tiger" he could not have attempted such a busy pace and would not have achieved success.[2] He says, "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh," they soon found that the meal would disagree with them![3] When he spoke of health, he referred to it in a large sense, including in it, as partly arising from it, invincible buoyancy of spirits. Indeed, health and physical care of the body held a high position in his creed. He

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1. Clare, op.cit., p. 137.
2. Towards the end of his life he remarked, "I thank God for the supreme mercy of vigorous health . . . the public are impatient with men who are in failing health. I know it. I never exaggerate either the importance or the insignificance of the public!" (The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. V, p. 96.)
3. Parker, Well Begun (Lond., 1894), p. 11.

describes his routine:

> "My own habits have been very simple. I rise at seven o'clock, and breakfast at eight. At two o'clock I have my dinner, consisting of a plain joint and plenty of vegetables, together with (as a rule) a tapioca or rice or sago pudding, and two or three oranges as long as the season lasts. No wine, no beer, no spirits. Plain tea at five. For supper I have porridge and milk and a boiled egg, and have had the same simple fare for many years. If you follow this course, you need not care how far from medical men you take up your abode."[1]

Although he recognized that no hard and fast rule could be laid down for attaining good health, nonetheless it is true that, in his case, he hardly had any illness until the very end of his life.

The notes of "self-mastery" and "spartan rigour" are the two ever-present characteristics of his life. From the first, it seems as if he took the full measure of life - its possibilities and pitfalls and unequivocally decided to pursue the path of success whatever the cost. He paid the high cost of discipline and austerity with zeal and eagerness and we can only truly measure his vast industry and many accomplishments against such a background.[2] While he mellowed a great deal in later life, his early words show his extreme sacrifice and resolution:

> "The Gospel is set before us as bread and water, not as confectionary and champagne; the simplicity of bread and water represents what is essential to us, and therefore best for us in intellectual, moral and physical health. Beware of pampering yourself. The fewer your needs the greater will

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1. Ibid., p. 12.
2. Ibid., p. 13.
3. In one place he speaks of how he handled his correspondence: "First . . . anonymous letters are at once thrown into the fire. Secondly, letters beginning in the style of 'Dear Brother and fellow-sinner' are deposited in the waste-paper basket. Thirdly, all letters from strangers that do not state their business in the first sentence are laid aside until 'a more convenient season' . . . Under a less drastic policy I should not have lived to tell the tale." (Might Have Been, p. 263.)

be your riches!"[1]

While physically Parker was massive, and impressive, it cannot be said that he was particularly handsome. To have seen his large head, with the small, deep-set blue eyes, the great mass of bushy hair and the sharply-defined features of nose and jaw was an awe-inspiring sight. It was said by one: "I was awed into a decorous silence . . . by the great leonine face and the voice of thunder."[2] Even his manner of taking his exercise through walks on Hampstead Heath was no less of an attraction to those in the neighbourhood.[3] Even then, there appeared to be a regal quality about the man and he always seemed to be absorbed in contemplation and conversation with himself and the unseen world. His biographer states:

> "Exercise is taken as regularly as his dinner . . . there are few people about Hampstead who have not seen him, umbrella in hand, taking his constitutional between the hours of twelve and two . . . "[4]

The rugged individualism and solid independence of Joseph Parker were to bring him untold grief throughout his life. While he suffered hardly at all from physical disability, he greatly injured himself with his mannerisms and eccentricities. Admittedly, every man has his "Achilles' heel" but Parker's was too often bared to his would-be antagonists. Many never got beyond the unfortunate eccentricities of his speech and demeanour, while his few faithful

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1. Parker, Well Begun, p. 13.
2. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 77.
3. Walking down the Strand in London one day with his wife, Parker heard a passer-by remark, "There goes beauty and the beast," making reference to the heavy features of the preacher in constrast with the striking beauty of his wife. "Who dares to call my wife a beast?" challenged Parker, turning on him. (Forman, editor, op.cit., p. 398.)
4. Adamson, op.cit., p. 215.

intimates were often tested severely by some remark or action that he had made or done on the spur of the moment.[1] It is certain that he realized the impetuous and impulsive character of his nature. Was he not trying to explain himself? when he preached: "All great men are many-sided. All great men are extreme. All great men, judged by the Festus-standard, are now and then deemed 'mad.' Paul's was emphatically a multitudinous character . . . you could not comprehend this man in one day's acquaintance."[2] But, while adept at analysing the faults in others, unfortunately for himself, he never was quite able to fully conquer his own aberrations. As the result of many newspaper criticisms of his mannerisms, of hear-say, of isolated statements removed from their context, not a few pictured the preacher as something of an actor or just an "eccentric." Let this one comment illustrate the situation:

> "I found him other than I had pictured him. Up to this period, and frankly I confess it, I had not been one of his most fervent admirers. I recognised his transcendent, unmistakable genius, but I deplored what I took to be certain of his extravagances and indiscretions in his public ministry. I hardly so much as suspected that profound spiritual experience which lay behind the words he used. But I was quite wrong, as absolutely wrong as the Journalists, who in writing his obituary notices now state that if Dr. Parker had not been a great preacher, he must have been a great figure on the stage. He never could have been anything but a preacher; a preacher he was born, a preacher he remained and a preacher he died."[3]

Let it be frankly acknowledged here that, while Parker poss

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1. P.T. Forsyth wrote: "At one time I thought he was a good man touched with egotism; I have come to the conclusion that he is an egotist touched with goodness." And, as Clare said, "Probably a corn had been trodden on!" (Clare, op.cit., p. 127.)
2. Parker, Studies in Texts, Vol. IV, p. 55.
3. "Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, 1902, p. 373.

sessed magnificent qualities, he was not free from the defects of those qualities. It is also true to say that he was not beloved by all in the city of London, nor even by everyone attending the City Temple. Indeed, from a distance, there was little to lead a person to desire his counsel or friendship. He was brusque and he was severe and he endorses both indictments himself. In an address, delivered at the re-opening of Paddington Chapel in 1900, he remarked: "I have been a man of war from my youth: I have feared the face of no man . . . "[1] When he came to London he gave full play to the assertiveness and forcefulness of his nature, for he believed that no preacher could come into London with any "dominating power of light and wisdom" without having to make room for himself, and even inflicting pain upon many innocent people. If he came in any other manner Parker felt he would not be admitted! Speaking further about this he averred,

> "He [the preacher] must come fighting, battling, blood fury, vehemence, for seven years be suspected and misunderstood and reproached, and only as the divinity is within him would he create his own space and liberty!"[2]

Not only was he brusque in manner but his tongue was sharp as well. To say that he answered the fool according to his folly is a mis-leading understatement. Parker described this side of his character as only he could do in this confession:

> "I am gifted with a delicate faculty of slipping the guillotine through a man's neck without his feeling it. Do not think this gift is to be acquired. It is an original and incommunicable gift!"[3]

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. III, p. 183.
2. Parker, These Sayings of Mine, p. 66.
3. Parker, Might Have Been, p. 98.

And, as if to substantiate his claim, Principal John Baillie tells of the business magnate who said to Dr. Parker, "I'm a self-made man, you know!" and received the quick retort: "Sir, you have lifted a great load of responsibility from the Almighty!"[1]

In short, the truth about Joseph Parker is that he was "rough hewn" from Northumbria; that he did come into London "fighting and battling"; and that he cared little or nothing for convention or what to him was often only the artificialism of society. Here we come upon what was to some the stone of stumbling and rock of offence. Dr. Parker was quite willing, indeed anxious, for the sake of the weaker brother, or because of social convenience, to observe the numerous artificial conventions that had become bound up with the Victorian, especially ecclesiastical, life; but, if the need arose, he did not hesitate to ride rough-shod through all merely arbitrary arrangements, with the inevitable result that many people who did not, or could not, distinguish between the essential and the unimportant, became actively hostile.

Yet, having said all this, the degree in which the man attracted people and retained the loyalty of those brought into close touch with him was remarkable. Among Dr. Parker's most regular hearers and most ardent admirers at the close of his ministry were not a few who had first listened to him in the old Poultry Chapel. Writing towards the close of Parker's life, Albert Dawson recounts the list:

> "Several of his deacons have been associated with him throughout the long period. The late organist . . . served

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1. John Baillie, Invitation to Pilgrimage (Lond., 1942), p. 131.

> without pecuniary reward for seventeen years. The late sexton became attached to Dr. Parker in Banbury, and coming to London when the City Temple was built, rendered its minister devoted personal service for nearly a quarter of a century. That sexton's sister has been Dr. Parker's housekeeper for nearly forty years . . . "[1]

In addition, Parker was somewhat of a hero to many and the opportunity to visit his vestry on the days of a service was considered a high honour in London. Writing in the foreword of The City Temple, Dr. Leslie Weatherhead recalls an instance:

> "Forty-three years ago a boy in his teens was taken into the vestry of the City Temple to have the honour of meeting Dr. Joseph Parker. He does not remember very much more than that the great man said to him, 'God bless you, my boy.' That boy is now the author of this book, the Treasurer of the Temple and the Editor of its magazine."[2]

Whatever the public abhorrence of his mannerisms, once known the man was loved. Then the eccentricities of his person were submerged in an appreciation of the rich points of his character. Towards the close of his career, Joseph Parker was better understood by many who had at first been turned aside. First impressions were altered as in this case:

> "On a morning of October, 1890, my first Sabbath in London, I made my way to the City Temple, dreaming of an edifice vast and dim, with a distant glimpse of one whose fame had reached our village. . . . I cannot remember a word; but can I forget the rugged head with tangled hair, the small and deep-set eyes, the sensitive mouth and warrior chin, those ample folds of his Geneva gown, outstretched like the wings of some gigantic bird? And his

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 13. Even Dawson himself said, ". . . the writer can look back upon nearly twenty years of more or less intimate relations to Dr. Parker, and, as his knowledge of the world and experience of men, ministerial and lay, have extended, and knowing all that has been said and can be said about him, he certainly has not come to think less of his old master."
2. Clare, op.cit.,

> voice deep and thunderous, with sometimes a piping treble which distressed me, and the shaking of his head, and the twiddling of his thumbs? Later, I learned to excuse the mannerisms for the man!"[1]

The mannerisms and eccentricities of the man might well have been resolved had it not been for the fact that Parker chose to live a solitary life. It is a strange fact, but few men ever cared less for general society. He liked to meet people in whom he was interested, and sometimes accepted invitations, but no man in a similar position ever went out so little! A relative of his housekeeper averred,

> "With regard to Dr. Parker's private life . . . it was to the best of my knowledge quiet and very much to themselves. Not a lot of visitors; an occasional visit to a theatre or entertainment. . . . It was methodical in every way."[2]

It would appear that he was content to live out his life between his home and his congregation; in these two things he received all the friendship and stimulus he required. Mrs. Burnett Smith, the well-known novelist of the time, and latterly an intimate friend, gives us a peep into the Parkers' home at Hampstead:

> "The pair were made for each other, and his wife understood the silent sensitive man perfectly. Their circle of friends was a narrow one, for his life was too thronged easily to keep his friendships in repair. . . . He was meticulously tidy in all his habits, and their beautiful home was the constant pride of them both. One reaction he had inherited from the far-off days of poverty - he expected to be kept informed of the most trivial items of household expenditure. Very shortly after his marriage, Mrs. Parker, losing patience with him, brought him the household accounts and demanded that thenceforth he should keep them himself. This he did from that day onward, to his wife's great amusement . . . "[3]

So far as we can surmise there are several reasons for

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1. From personal correspondence with Ebenezer Rees.
2. From personal correspondence.
3. Angus Watson, Great Christians, p. 405.

Dr. Parker's extraordinary retirement from society. First, and the most remarkable, he at no time in his life had any special genius for friendship. Those nearest him, those who had known him best and longest, bear witness with one voice to this.[1] He was full of friendliness, but till the days of his loneliness, till after his wife's death, he did not need close friends. W.R. Nicoll says,

> "When he did accept an invitation to a dinner-party, he was always miserable before he went, and often miserable after. He would imagine that he had said something or done something that should not have been done."[2]

On this matter of seeing allusions to himself, Parker might have done well to have read over his description of John Campbell:

> "There was nothing ordinary in Dr. Campbell's world. All the geese were swans, all the swans were eagles, all the eagles were seraphs in disguise. . . . Some of the German horse-trainers are said to be in the habit of putting highly magnifying spectacles upon young horses, that they, being deceived as to the magnitude of the stones upon the street, may acquire a high step. By some means the same kind of spectacles had been put upon Dr. Campbell's nose; so pebbles became paving stones, and the paving stones were the hugest boulders!"[3]

Unfortunately, like his early mentor, Joseph Parker tended to exaggerate words and occurrences throughout his life and thereby, through his extreme sensitivity, caused himself much personal anguish.

All the same, Parker's sensitivity and love of solitude had a positive aspect; it served to nurture his imagination, to feed and encourage the poetic and mystical strains of his personality. He

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1. Canon R.J. Campbell, in a personal letter to the author, wrote: "I remember the son of Dr. Dale of Birmingham . . . showing me a letter from Parker to Dale. Dale had evidently been rebuking Parker for not being a good mixer. . . . The Parker reply contained the pathetic sentence: 'You have always been honoured and admired. I have always been battered and abused!'"
2. Nicoll, op.cit., p. 172.
3. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 182.

used his self-imposed seclusion as a stimulant for his work. "My books," he remarked, "had never been written had I been a more clubable man . . . "[1] In another place he expressed appreciation for the quiet seclusion:

> "I thank God," he said, "for solitude. We meet angels on the lonely road. . . . When I have been most alive I have been least alone. . . . Shadow-folks have taken from me many a pain, and spread for me many a festival, and spoken to me of the morrow that is to be so bright and so long."[2]

Some interpreted Parker's aloofness as an indication of his egotism. In this, we feel they were wrong. To be sure, the claim that he was an egoist was in a sense true, but the claim of personal conceit is unfounded, for he was at heart one of the most humble of men. If he was often regarded as an enormous egoist, it was because he was so completely immersed in his work.

> "We are told," remarked John Clifford, "to look at St. Paul's for the monument to Christopher Wren; and generations to come will see in the City Temple, and in its annals and associations for a third of a century the abiding memorial to the man who laid bare the secret of his life in the simple confession, 'I owe everything to God's love and hard work.'"[3]

While sensitive and something of an idealist, Joseph Parker was nonetheless one the most practical men of his time. The predominance in him of the spiritual or religious instinct indicated the pulpit as his proper sphere. Yet, without doubt, had he adopted the profession of law, or even entered the business world, he would have been a success. The affairs of the legal and business world held his interest from first to last, and it was not uncommon for a sermon to

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1. Parker, Might Have Been, p. 333.
2. Ibid., p. 336.
3. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 49.

contain suggestions for apprentices and employees about their work. Indicative of his keen concern with the business world is his book, Well Done; containing "notes for those who have to make their way in the world." Interestingly enough, chapter one of the book is entitled, "How to succeed in Business." Parker begins, "A minister talking about buiness? Exactly so. That is precisely how the case stands. I am a minister, yet I am interested in business . . . "[1]

Several men[2] have testified to his prowess in financial matters and certainly his administration of the City Temple over thirty-three years is evidence enough to show his ability in practical affairs. Albert Dawson relates how before Dr. Parker came to London, a midland publisher approached him with a view to the regular issue of his sermons. The matter was discussed and finally the question of terms came up.

> "Well," replied the publisher, when Dr. Parker inquired what were his proposals, "it's all for the glory of God." "Not so fast," returned the young minister. "You mean to sell the sermons, do you not?" "Yes." "In that case I must share. Selling at a penny means a possible profit. Why not divide both the profits and the glory?"[3]

Complex and incomprehensible as Joseph Parker was, yet there was a marvellous streak of simplicity in his character, and his simplicity expressed itself in his boundless love and affection for children. The man who was brusque and stern before men became "sportive and gentle before children." In his memorial address, R.J. Campbell said,

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1. Parker, Well Done
2. Particularly, John M. Richards, a City Temple deacon and proprietor of the Academy, paid high tribute to his business wisdom.
3. Dawson, op.cit., p. 142.

> "We grown up people are not the only mourners for Dr. Parker today. There exists a numerous company whose devotion to him had nothing to do with his greatness as minister of the City Temple, but only with his kindness of heart and loving sympathy with childhood's ways."[1]

Looking over the work of Dr. Parker at Banbury, Manchester, and London, it is not too much to conclude that his ministry to the Ministry, his ministry to Commerce, and his ministry to Literature, though undoubtedly unique, were surpassed in incalculable ways by his ministry to the Young. He encouraged youth and addressed them in language they could understand. In one sermon, he called out:

> " " . . . That is your programme in life, young man, if you are wise. Know where you are for, take your seat, show your ticket . . . and then go on . . . "[2]

There were many acute intellectuals associated with his congregation, although none perhaps more alive than that of the child who, long after she had ceased to see eye to eye with him in spiritual things, always esteemed his character and eloquence.[3] The child was Pearl Craigie, who grew up to become the novelist John Oliver Hobbes. Parker was very fond of the little girl and he encouraged her literary talents. In late life he liked to show his friends the copy of her first book of any size - "A Study in Temptation" - which she inscribed: "To my first reviewer, Dr. Joseph Parker; the first also to encourage my childish attempts at literary composition; the first to prize work which was only remarkable for its gigantic intention."[4]

His sermons abound with allusions to children and he was

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1. "Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, 1902, p. 372.
2. "Christian Commonwealth," December, 1902.
3. Richards, The Life of John Oliver Hobbes, (Lond., 1911), p. 58.
4. Adamson, op.cit., p. 283.

delighted when he noticed a goodly number of youngsters in his City Temple congregation. On one occasion, a young baby began to cry and as the mother was preparing to retire from the church, certain that the disturbance would annoy the preacher, Dr. Parker called after the mother, "Don't go! I love to hear that little voice . . . I don't know what the child was saying, but I know it was all true!"[1] At times he felt that children were more like God than were men and women and therefore he placed more faith in them. Perhaps his unusual love for the children of others was due to the fact that he had none of his own. In any event, his affection for children was returned in many ways. Often he would write funny letters and would illustrate them by caricatures. In Adamson's biography of him, there are many such letters, such as this one addressed to one child:

> "Jessie is here and the baby. We are all well and very poor. I am going to sell Aunt Emma for eighteen pence, but nobody wants her, she is such a plain little thing. We all send love and kisses and blessings,
>
> Affectionately yours,
>
> UNCLE JOSEPH."[2]

Annie Swan, another novelist of the period, was one of the coterie surrounding Parker in his late years and she speaks further of his love for children,

> "He was at home with children as I have never seen any man of his age, and this continued until he was too weary to enjoy their society. His delight in the frank outspokenness of childhood was exhuberant. He would do his utmost to provoke it and then call your attention to it privately. . . . Children accepted him as a large and ever amusing playmate."[3]

Hand in hand with his love for children went his big-hearted

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 144.
2. Adamson, op.cit. British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 22.

generosity to countless numbers of students and needy country ministers. He had no official charity to which he gave his time and substance, as in the case of Spurgeon and his orphanage, but he was constantly helping people without notice or applause. In every regard his charity was great. He did not care to speak of it, but he was unable entirely to conceal it. One who knew him intimately averred, "I doubt whether I have known any man who habitually gave away a larger share of his income."[1] Another records this story of his generous thoughtfulness:

> "A fellow minister had worn himself out, and, at the age of fifty-five, suffered from the effects of bad health and impoverished resources. Dr. Parker's gift to his old friend on his birthday came in the shape of a lovely bunch of roses - fifty-five in number - and in the heart of each rose Dr. Parker had unobtrusively placed a sovereign."[2]

Still, for many, it was not the friend of children or the big-hearted benefactor of students and poor preachers, but the great humourist who caught and held their interest. It is a startling fact that the man who rarely went out and who possessed few friends was one of the greatest wits of his time. It was said that even Sydney Smith had not a readier wit or more caustic satire than he. Habituees of the City Temple were treated with brilliantly witty asides and scathingly satirical ejaculations, but apparently, only those who met him socially, or saw him at his own fireside, could accurately estimate him as a humourist.

Parker was fond of writing to The Times and for years his letters contributed to the gaiety of the nation. His last letter in

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1. Nicoll, op.cit., p. 172.
2. Dawson, op.cit., p. 139.

this direction consisted of a fantastic scheme to re-build the city of London. The new metropolis was to have great avenues, all converging on - the City Temple! His forte was undoubtedly imagination and this faculty he exercised in all sorts of ways to make people laugh. The Christian World published the story which Parker often related when discussing journalism:

> "I had a sub-editor who got me into all sorts of troubles. He would bring up the make up of the paper on Tuesday nights, and I would have him to fill up the little blank spaces at the bottoms of the columns. When the paper appeared on Thursday morning, these little spaces would be filled with paragraphs containing a stab at this man or that society or the other official. I said to my sub-editor one day, 'Young man, don't do this. If you've a grievance against Congregational officialdom, get a barrel of gun powder and blow up the Memorial Hall. Don't fling cherry stones at its windows!"[1]

We are fortunate in our possession of one volume of his repartees and witty sayings and strange imaginings in the book: Might Have Been. In this book the student is allowed to see Parker the humourist who ridiculed everything from the Established Church to the artificialisms of his day. Two special features may be inserted here to illustrate his habit of studying human nature and his ability to satirize on occasion:

> "There was Peter Short, who came into the world with great talents and went out of it with great disappointments. If Peter's mind had been as big as his voice, he would have been heard of. He spoke with a bow-bow which made those who did not know him think he must be a great man at home. And so fluent! At a committee meeting he would 'rise to order' twenty times, and twenty times would sit down amidst great applause. But didn't he catch it at home! Didn't the ferret hunt the rat!"[2]

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1. Porritt, Arthur, The Best I Remember, (Lond., 1922), p. 68.
2. Parker, Might Have Been, pp. 93-94.

His inimitable wit was inexhaustible and extraordinary. Many times the City Temple roared with laughter over some witticism of the preacher. What Dr. Parker regarded as, in its own peculiar way, the best compliment he ever received came from an omnibus conductor. Just as the vehicle crossed Holborn Viaduct and came to the City Temple one passenger heard the conductor exclaim:

> "That's the man and that's the place," said the conductor, indicating the Temple. "I went there once, and I enjoyed myself so much that I'm going again the first night I have off. We laughed and we cried and we had a rare time. You see," the conductor continued, "he doesn't make religion so ---- serious!"[1]

In the foregoing pages we have tried to present the man, the subject of this dissertation. In the course of this work we will be forced to refer again and again to certain features of his personality as they throw some light upon his preaching and religious thought. Taking him all in all, he was indeed a marvel of a man, - one of the giants of the race, too great to be accurately estimated by his contemporaries, too complex to be easily or altogether understood by the present; an insoluble enigma, a perpetual contradiction. Descriptions of Parker's personality and character are legion, but perhaps no single one is so apt and pertinent as the inscription on the Congregational Church which bears his name in Crowborough, Sussex. There, inscribed on the corner-stone of the Parker Memorial Church, are the words: "God made him and then broke the mould!"[1]

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1. Mentioned in a letter to the author from the Hon. Curator of the City Temple, London.

CHAPTER III

THE PREACHER AND HIS SERMONS

"A sermon should be an oratorio for variety, for colour, and for unity."

— Joseph Parker.

CHAPTER III

THE PREACHER AND HIS SERMONS

> "Let the preacher hold his task in high regard, for stone-works will crumble, time will eat up the pyramids, but his work shall be glorious when the world shall be burned up."[1]

It was a true interpretation that Joseph Parker gave of his position and work when, with customary courage, he took for his telegraphic address the words, "Preacher, London." Not more accurately does the second term describe his place of work than the first tells the chief work of his life. It was his firm conviction that there was no work equal, in range, pathos, and grandeur, to the work of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The supreme passion of his life was to be a great preacher, and to restore the role of the preacher to its pristine glory. Nothing was to be allowed to thwart him in this.

> "Our heart's desire," he said, "is to be permitted to assist in reviving the power and extending the influence of the Christian pulpit. Animated by this holy purpose . . . we shall devote unceasing care to the nurture and stimulus of ministerial gifts and graces. We shall lovingly hail the True Preacher, whatever may be the speciality of his method, or the individuality of his effectiveness. The thunder of Savonarola; the lightning of F.W. Robertson . . . the practical philosophy and gentle humanity of H.W. Beecher; the gracious unction and manly strength of Spurgeon . . . we shall ever honour as the great gifts of God."[2]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. I, Genesis, p. 307.
2. Parker, The City Temple, Vol. I, p. 1.

For over fifty years, Joseph Parker paid close attention to the preparation and delivery of sermons. He believed that success was attained by those who, in religion as well as in business, went at their work with resolution and determination. It is probable that few men have ever surpassed, or even equalled, Joseph Parker in his exclusive concern with sermons. Every other activity or pursuit was made subservient to that one concern. "What is your hobby?" a lady once asked Dr. Parker. He replied in a word, "Preaching." "Yes, but I mean what is the hobby which occupies your time of leisure" "Preaching," was still the answer; "I have no hobby but preparing for or delivering sermons!"[1] Parker lived for three sermons a week and when people went to visit him they found the conversation turning to the discussion of texts and sermon subjects. Life was not worth living for him when he could not preach. The Rev. C.S. Horne recounts a meeting he once had with Parker:

> "I remember meeting him not long ago, and asking him how he was. 'Oh,' he said, 'I am very Mondayish.' I was about to commiserate with him when his eyes began to twinkle. 'You see,' he said, 'I only preached once yesterday,' and it was not so paradoxical as it sounded. Other men were 'Mondayish' if they had to preach twice . . . but he was 'Mondayish' if he could only preach once."[2]

Parker never swerved from the firm conviction that he was called to serve God in the Nonconformist ministry, and there was never an hour when he would have changed his work for any other in the world. He considered the preacher's task the most fundamental business in life and he could never tolerate any disparaging remarks on preaching.

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1. Noted in the Archives of the City Temple, London.
2. Nicoll, ed., British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 86.

> "For my part," he averred, "this may get us all into trouble; I hold that preaching is more practical than brick-building, than house-building, than bridge-building . . . . Preaching, as I understand the term, can never be mere preaching . . . preaching that expresses the thought and the prayer . . . of a life-time, and that is delivered with the unction of an earnest heart . . . that releases the mind from error and the heart from fear . . . that answers temptations and cultures faith and enlarges prayer; preaching whose morals are quoted in the market-place, and whose consolations are sung as sweet hymns in the houses of affliction, is not to be snubbed as "mere" preaching!"[1]

How was preaching to be restored to its original position of supremacy? Parker possessed no cure-all; he saw no way other than the way of study and discipline. No one ever preached more earnestly the absolute necessity of labour and concentration for any success in the pulpit, and he practised all he preached. In Advice to a Young Preacher, he said,

> "I will not yield to any man in hearty appreciation of hard work. . . . I insist upon the most critical and zealous preparation for the pulpit; I would have the minister live in his work . . . for his work, and toil as in the presence of Jesus Christ. . . . A terrible malediction awaits the indolent minister!"[2]

Uppermost, in Parker's consideration of preaching, was his concern with the preacher's personal life. Prior to any interest in the mechanics of sermon preparation was the emphasis upon spiritual discipline and devotion. The need for the planned devotional routine was stressed because Parker was only too mindful of the temptation to make the ministry another respectable profession, and professionalism in the pulpit was totally repugnant to his nature. He had the most severe words for the man who masqueraded: "The hypocritical preacher," he said, "will have the hottest of all hells!"[3]

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1. Parker, The Gospel of Jesus Christ, (Lond., [1903]), p. 211.
2. Ibid., p. 39.
3. The People's Bible, Vol. XI, Job, p. 193.

It was possible, he believed, for the preacher to speak of the way to heaven, and yet never walk in it. So he said,

> "It is perfectly clear to me that our first business is to keep diligently our own heart. . . . Forgetting that we are ministers, let us think of ourselves as individual Christians. . . . Retirement, self-examination, devout study of the Holy Scriptures, are entirely indispensable to any man who would grow in grace, and qualify himself for public usefulness in the Church. Are we much alone with God?"[1]

Parker followed his own counsel religiously, and made it his custom to go into his study about seven o'clock each morning for prayer and meditation. So, it was, that the preparation of his sermons was influenced and sustained by constant communion with God. We cannot underestimate his concern here - nor will he allow us to forget: "Let us seek to deepen our Christian conviction and feeling. Let us live very near the Cross; let Jesus Christ be the one all-commanding object of our attention and our love."[2]

The Divine element overshadowed and permeated his thought concerning the preacher and his message. The preacher was commissioned by God to preach His Word, as contained in the Bible. Parker averred, "Preaching is the most impertinent of all impertinences, if there be not behind it, and round about it, a sense of authority other and better than human."[3] In an address to a group of preachers at Nottingham in 1902, he counselled,

> "Don't write me a post-card of your own. Don't show me your autograph in some album. Give the King's letters; let the King be heard. . . . Give the sons of disconsolateness . . . the stray prodigal . . . the broken-hearted and bereaved the King's letters. The heart knows true music when

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1. Ibid., p. 193.
2. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 257.
3. Quoted in the "Fortnightly Review," Vol. LXXII, 1902, by Squire Bancroft, p. 977.

it hears it!"[1]

Parker's preaching was thoroughly Christian, and his sermons reveal the mark of one who tried to look at life through Christ's eyes, and in his spirit.

> "The Christ-less sermon," he declaimed, "is the most monstrous sham. I care not if it be delivered with Demosthenic fervour or Tully-like gracefulness . . . if Christ be not its chief ornament, it is an intolerable mockery of my best nature, and of my deepest necessities."[2]

While profoundly concerned with the spiritual and devotional basis of sermon preparation, Parker was nonetheless the practical preacher. His mind was well-stored with a fund of everyday wisdom. It is to be remembered that he dealt in no subtleties of thought or intricacies of reasoning, never soared into any sublime argument or attempted to fathom the depths of some awful problem. His mind positively rejected the metaphysical and purely speculative for the concrete and pragmatic. It seems, that his first and last association with metaphysical studies, was during his Student ministry in London. Under Dr. Campbell's directions, he had enrolled for some special lectures at the University of London, and apparently found the experience an unpleasant one. Writing later in his Autobiography, he remarked, ". . . There, under a very bewildering lectureship, I studied mental and moral philosophy and formal logic. Bewildering, I must say (though to better pupils the lectureship may have been alike definite and brilliant). . ."[3] His mind craved the living reality and his sermons express only those notes of simplicity and concreteness. He

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1. "Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, 1902, p. 380.
2. Ibid., p. 377.
3. Ibid., p. 76.

believed that preachers, journalists, school-teachers, and parents should speak with distinctiveness, earnestness, and, above all, that they ought to let things speculative wait. "The preacher," he always said, "ought not to be a hypothesis-monger, but ought to proclaim a declared revelation."[1] Again, speaking about the practical and positive work of the ministry, he declaimed,

> "I would lift up my voice most determinedly against the continuation of mere controversy . . . we must not think it our duty to give public importance to every imp who speaks the language of hell with a new accent. We have a great positive work to do. We have affirmative truths to teach, we have to cast out devils, not by controversy, but by divinely-revealed and authoritative truths."[2]

Joseph Parker was essentially a practical man and, not in the real sense, a scholar. Nevertheless, throughout his preaching - most especially in his early sermons - the intellectual element was dominant. His first piece of writing was "Thoughts for Young Thinkers," and his first book was "Helps for Truthseekers." He preached his sermons at a time when there was a considerable breaking-up of the old formulae of the Christian faith; when Christianity was being attacked by the infidel and the sceptic, and when it was customary to say that it had not a reasonable basis, and therefore, his ministry from the first was keenly intellectual, distinctly an appeal to the reason. The desire to understand his age, to show men the best and most solid grounds on which their faith might rest, was given wide expression in his sermons.[3]

Still, while Parker was intellectually alert to the issues of

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XI, Job, p. 193.
2. Parker, The City Temple,
3. "Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, 1902, p. 377.

his day, his sermons are not those of a scholar who was prepared to solve the contemporary problems. They, rather, indicate an attempt to understand and to sympathise and direct, but Theological Science is not advanced at all. In a critique of a volume of Parker's sermons, the Expository Times clarifies the point:

> "'Studies in Texts' . . . He gives that title . . . you would not give it; because you would not think of study, but of a sudden flash in connection with these sermons . . . on the whole you prefer the flash to the study from Dr. Parker!"[1]

To his sermon writing he brought a sound mind and head-heart insight into that which touches the life of the common man. He was always the growing preacher, keeping his mind open to all the light that might reach him from east and west. He lived in the present; he read his newspaper, and, consequently, when he preached, he preached as one who was conversant with the perplexities and doubts of the men before him. Commenting on Parker's great hold on the business men, student and professional population of London, Dr. John Clifford states:

> "I have no doubt that this was a large part of the force which he wielded in his Thursday services. It would have been impossible for him to attract the warehouse-men, the clerk, the merchant, the busy city men from their places of business in the middle of the day, if there had been nothing more than the dramatic in him, or only the literary instinct expressing itself. There was that which gripped men's thought, laid hold of their reason, and brought them at once face to face with the realities of truth."[2]

The congregation always loomed large in his sermon preparation. While it is true he was not a pastor for the greater part of his ministry, nevertheless, he never prepared or preached a sermon that was not saturated with a keen awareness of the needs and problems of

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1. "Expository Times," Vol. IX, 1897-98, p. 373.
2. Ibid., p. 377.

people. He advised divinity students: "In preparing a sermon, bring your congregation imaginatively around your desk, and don't write like a book, but like a speech."[1] He followed his own counsel religiously, trying to visualise, while writing and preparing his sermons, the varied needs of every person in his congregation. While writing his sermons it was his practice to read every sentence aloud, over and over again.[2] "My business," he affirmed, "is to make somebody understand a certain thing . . . I must put it so plainly that he ought to take in my meaning without any difficulty."[3] He was well aware that there were always men present in his congregation whose knowledge superceded his own, still, he accepted the advice of John Bright who said, "Never take anything for granted as to the intelligence of your hearers."[4] In lecturing further to divinity students in London, he counselled:

> "Don't hurry your hearers. Say the same thing over to them without seeming to repeat it. . . . For whole days you had had the subject before you . . . whereas they knew nothing about it until they heard you give out the text; and they could not throw off their cotton-spinning, their shop-keeping, their banking, and their farming, all in a moment. Give them time. Don't expect them to mount your rhetorical steed in a moment, and to canter up your homiletic hills."[5]

What were Parker's tools for sermon construction? They were very simple and quite adequate. The chief implement in his sermon construction was the Bible. The Bible was the basis of all his sermons; all else was subsidiary. "A sermon," he averred, "is nothing that is not a paraphrase of the Bible. It is great only in proportion

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1. Parker, The Ark of God: The transient symbol of an Eternal Truth (Lond., 1877), p. 341.
2. Grenville Kleiser, The World's Great Sermons (Lond., 1909), Vol. VII, p. 198.
3. Parker, The Ark of God, p. 341.
4. "Temple Magazine," Vol. II, 1897-98, p. 52.
5. Parker, The Ark of God, p. 341.

as it begins, continues and ends in the scriptures."[1] A London journalist of the period has stated that,

> "His knowledge . . . of the English Bible was rare in its comprehensiveness. He used to be credited with sitting for hours in his study tapping an open Bible with his finger tips and murmuring: 'This is history - exhausts all history! This is poetry - exhausts all poetry! This is truth - exhausts all truth.'"[2]

It is generally conceded, however, by his few intimates, that he had little to do with systematic treatments of theology or critical and exhaustive commentaries of the Bible. While he considered the Bible the chief text book of the preacher, he never approached it from an exegetical standpoint. Others provided critical and exegetical information when required. Principal Vaughan Pryce, of New College, London, was believed to have done his 'Delitzsching' for him; but he did his own 'Matthew Henrying.'

How did Parker prepare his sermons? Fortunately, he has left us certain details concerning his approach to the sermon, which help us to view his preparation over a span of fifty years. As Parker the man exhibits a certain immunity to cataloguing, so Parker the sermon-maker does not come easily into any special category. His work in the study throughout his ministry is not clear-cut or easy to define. Principally, his method of preparing his sermons admits of a two-fold expression; the first approach appropriately formal and conventional in its nature, the second, unconventional and informal.

For approximately the first ten years of his preaching life, Joseph Parker adhered to the conventional pattern of preparing the

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1. Parker, The Apostolic Life, as revealed in the Acts of the Apostles (Lond., 1886), Vol. II, p. 175.
2. Arthur Porritt, The Best I Remember (Lond., 1922), p. 68.

sermon. This consisted in giving close attention to the composition and structure of the sermon. He had been introduced to, and encouraged in this approach by Dr. John Campbell of London, his adviser and instructor during his student days in that city. How to prepare sermons was the subject on which the preacher expatiated on Saturday evenings. Some understanding of what Dr. Campbell said is invaluable in grasping Parker's early sermon making method. Dr. Adamson reports:

> "Mr. Parker had to read his sermons, and allow them to be examined as with a microscope. Occasionally they were pronounced too long by one half, and had to be reduced to the proper dimensions; at other times they had too many heads, some of which had to be deleted. Or, the Doctor would say - 'I am not quite sure, sir, that you are right in your exegesis; let me see . . .' The original would then be appealed to, and one or two of the best critical authorities consulted. On all occasions, the grammar, the rhetoric, and the theology of the sermons prepared were freely criticised and discussed, so that the young man received the benefit of a life-time's education, and thirty years varied ministerial experience."[1]

Needless to say, after such thorough-going counsel and tutoring, Parker was greatly influenced both by Dr. Campbell's industry and his ideas on preparation.

Parker continued to prepare his weekly sermons as usual until the close of his Manchester ministry. Sometime, however, prior to his removal to London, he entered the second stage of his preparation of sermons. In the first approach, the written and polished manuscript was all-important. Latterly, less emphasis was given to the preparation of the literary product and more attention was turned to the preparation of the preacher's personality. At last, Parker felt he had realised the ideal in sermon preparation. But it had only come after years of hard, steady work. He never depreciated that early period of sermon

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 38.

composition; on the contrary, he admonished his student friends,

> "Devote supreme attention to Sabbath duty, and if you have any leisure time you can devote it to other good purposes. After ten years laborious study you will be surprised to find how comparatively easy your work will then become. Much, however, depends upon the habits you form in the early part of your life."[1]

What did this new method of preparation entail? How did Parker get his sermons from 1868 to 1902? When people asked him these questions, he confessed, "I don't know how to answer you . . . I feel more and more . . . that I have next to nothing to do with the Holy Exercise."[2] On the whole, however, his sermons were produced out of the mystical experience undergone in his study. There, he pondered, meditated and steeped himself in Biblical texts and knowledge. There were times, in his study, when he became so excited over some text or thought that he longed for an audience. "Would that some arrangement could be made," he said, "by which a preacher could instantaneously summon his audience and preach when the fire stings him and all the angels stir him into the passion for preaching."[3]

Furthermore, because of this method of allowing the mind to ruminate over texts and subjects, Parker was wont to say that if he could preach upon any text, he could do so at once![4]

A striking characteristic of this new approach was the self-imposed isolation from society. In Banbury and at Manchester, he had combined a certain amount of pastoral calling with his sermon

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1. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 185.
2. John Edwards, Nineteenth Century Preachers and their methods (Lond., 1902), p. 150.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 14.
4. "Temple Magazine," Vol. II, 1897-98, p. 52.

preparation. But, from Parker's standpoint, pastoral calling was a distasteful duty, considered only as a temporary necessity. One of the chief factors in his decision to remove to London was the understanding that he would be required to do no regular pastoral visitation. He wished to be free to devote his entire time to the pulpit work. Indeed, he felt that there ought to be a division of labour in the ministry:

> ". . . Ought not the preacher and the pastor . . . be two different men? You have men who devote their whole time to the study of the human eye, and others who devote their time to the study of the human ear; why should it be thought unreasonable that another class of men should give their days and nights to the study of preaching, and others spend their lives in the equally important work of comforting and directing the disconsolate and perplexed?"[1]

So, throughout his London ministry Parker was able, partly on account of the transient character of his congregation and his own policy, which excluded pastoral calling, to devote all his time to contemplation and brooding over the Bible. Apparently, he wrote few sermons during this period. Yet, in 1873, in an address to some students, he confessed,

> "Some of us, poor slaves, cannot compose a dozen sentences unless we are shut up in the silent study, and have the best writing materials at hand. In confidence I may tell you that of all such slaves I may almost claim to be chief! Many a time I have gone into the great lane with a steady determination to compose a sermon; but before I have gone far enough to require a semi-colon, my truant mind has taken up with some more tempting, though less profitable subject."[2]

It is difficult to generalise as to the details of his second method. It is sufficient to know that for over thirty-five years, his method of sermon preparation was his own. While it certainly admitted of

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 208.
2. Parker, Ad Clerum, pp. 49-50.

many variations, the need for hard and thorough preparation was never forgotten. He did not get his sermons in the conventional way; he read much in the Bible, and texts started out of its pages. When he found a text he brooded over it in his solitary walks, in his study, and in his garden, till he reached the heart of it. Once the principle was discovered, illustrations seemed to crowd in upon him, and his work was practically done. But this unique ability came, as he so often reiterated, only after years of disciplined preparation.

Parker once confided in a friend that he had frequently to reply to brother ministers who would say: "How easy and simple, Dr. Parker, is your work: Thirty-minute sermon Thursday; Two thirty-minute discourses on Sunday. No sermon writing." "The irony of his answer was in the tone of voice in which he would say: 'Go thou and do likewise!'"[1]

In the course of altering his preparation of the sermon Parker began to view the sermon itself from a new vantage point. John Ruskin states, "There are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition, or a Divine message."[2] Both of these ways are essential to any sermon and the maintaining of a proper balance between them is the task of every preacher. No one recognised, more than Joseph Parker, the claim of composition, but he believed that there was a time when such a discipline could be relaxed. It is at this very point in his growth in the understanding of the sermon that we touch on the subject of a later chapter - the preacher as an orator. His new conception of

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1. John Morgan Richards, With John Bull And Jonathan, (Lond., 1905), p. 83.
2. John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice (Lond., 1851-53), p. 96.

the sermon allowed greater freedom to the homiletic personality in the pulpit. Heretofore, his sermons conformed to a formal plan and were prepared accordingly; now they were to be wholly extemporaneous in character, considered in the study, completed in the pulpit. Parker felt so keenly about his mature view of the sermon that, on occasion, he tended to disparage the conventional homiletic ideal. "Homiletics," he once maintained, "is too much of a cabinet-carving set, the square and the compass have been too much in requisition."[1]

The shift in his understanding of the sermon came gradually; it was a steady growth. In his early days, Parker was influenced by Dr. David Thomas and The Homilist - a magazine of sermon outlines and homiletic hints. When The Homilist made its appearance men were becoming tired "of dividing everything in heaven and earth into first, second, and third, with three sub-divisions under each head, three points of application, and with 'finally, one word more, and lastly for a melancholy peroration.'"[2] "At that time," Parker exclaimed, "any brother who could make a suggestion bordering upon novelty was privily called for by the wise men, and diligently inquired of concerning the birth of the child!"[3]

While The Homilist did bring variety, it, nevertheless, upheld a modified structural and divisional sermon plan, and Parker soon became restless and desired greater variety and flexibility. He criticised Dr. Thomas: "His homiletic mannerism is unchangedly fixed. He never surprised readers who have familiarised themselves with his

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1. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 111.
2. Ibid., p. 82.
3. Ibid., p. 83.

style . . . everywhere you find order, logic, and proportion."[1]

His own extemporaneous idea of the sermon was an outgrowth of several influences. Whereas, it cannot be maintained that Joseph Parker ever had any "Homiletic Father," nevertheless, he did read the sermons of several men, who undoubtedly stimulated him, even though they did not leave their mark upon his sermons. W. Robertson Nicoll contended that Parker read, at least toward the end of his City Temple ministry, a good deal of J.H. Newman's sermons. But, perhaps, the one man of the nineteenth century, who was like him both in his personality and in his concept of preaching, was Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn, New York. Parker and Beecher were very close friends and they shared pulpits on several occasions. One of Parker's finest discourses was said to have been his Eulogy of H.W. Beecher, delivered in Brooklyn in 1898. Some contend that the Beecher influence did not penetrate deeply, nor operate so as to overcome the special qualities of Parker's sermons.[2] However, it is to be remembered that Parker considered Beecher's homiletic and preaching ideal nearer to his own than any of his other colleagues'. On one occasion he remarked,

> "Most heartily do I commend Mr. Beecher's sermons as the best models of pulpit addresses with which I am acquainted; they are full of matter . . . instructively and popularly philosophical, without being distractingly metaphysical; they abound in allusions to common life and the universal experience of mankind . . . I have reason to speak gratefully of Mr. Beecher; his words so natural, so human, yet so divine, have stimulated and blessed me when the refined analysis of Bushnell, the vehement eloquence of Chalmers, the waxen beauty of Harris, and the perspirational rhetoric of Melville were unsuited to my spiritual condition."[3]

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1. Ibid., p. 86.
2. Adamson, op.cit., p. 173.
3. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 110.

In his Lectures on Preaching, Beecher represented Joseph Parker's sentiments exactly: "Considered ideally, he who preaches unwritten sermons is the true preacher; and however much you may write, the tendency of all such mechanical preparation should be toward the ideal of the unwritten sermon."[1]

Joseph Parker's understanding of the sermon was greatly changed after his study of Jesus as a preacher. In all his thought on preaching, the method and style of Christ is prevalent and supreme. Every aspect of Jesus' ministry was scrutinised for its help to the preacher; His subjects, content and method of treatment were all considered. Parker was satisfied that his own plan was a reasonable facsimile of that used by Jesus. "Jesus Christ," he averred, "knew nothing of our homiletic tricks. He had no time to prepare some of his sublimest utterances, they were retorts . . . not a three day thinking, not a week's preparation, but an answer out of the abundance of the heart."[2]

All in all, Parker's sermons are products of a method and plan which was an expression of his rugged individualism. To use the term "plan" in referring to his sermons is almost a misnomer. He deliberately discarded the planned sermon as such, and concentrated on equipping his mind. Everything relating to the sermon is his own. His sermons contain few quotations from other authors and little in the way of allusion to history or poetry. We possess approximately forty volumes of his sermons and the majority of these are examples of extemporaneous address. In one place he defines their nature and

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1. H.W. Beecher, Popular Lectures on Preaching (Lond., 1872), p. 172.
2. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, as revealed in the Gospel of Matthew (Lond., 1886), Vol. I, pp. 310-311.

purpose:

> ". . . . These discourses may be taken as illustrations of what is known as extemporaneous preaching. I am not aware that I wrote more than about a dozen sentences of any of them. There is no attempt at literary composition. My aim was to preach; to formulate sentences that would go immediately home to the intelligence and feeling of my hearers, and to prevent all wandering of interest and expectancy. It is not to be thought that extemporaneous preaching is extemporaneous thinking. With the thoughts of these discourses I have been familiar for a life-time; the words alone are the choice of the moment."[1]

He was content to pursue his plan even though it meant the sacrifice of smoothness and the absence of sustained thought. He had come to the conclusion that "the people do not want our nice outlines or homiletic tricks - it is a lost art . . . . They live upon our wisdom, sympathy and pathos."[2] Therefore, after the sermon was "spoken" and recorded by the reporters, Parker wished never to see it again. Unlike C.H. Spurgeon, who carefully revised and corrected every sermon before allowing it to be printed, Parker chose to let the sermon go to the publisher just as his reporter had taken it down, confident "that oil runs off where acid bites!"[3] It was enough for him that the following prefatory remark should appear:

> "These sermons have been printed from the reporter's notes. Probably not a sentence was written beforehand, this will account for irregularity and roughness, and apparent want of punctuation, in the style. Those who heard the discourses will be able to read them according to the preacher's intention."[4]

When he went into the pulpit, Parker took with him a few main thoughts, scribbled on a piece of paper. These were his sermon notes.

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1. Parker, These Sayings of Mine, preface.
2. Parker, The Ark of God, p. 341.
3. Ibid., p. 340.
4. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VII, preface.

Here is a reduced facsimile of those notes, as presented by Albert Dawson:

Cannot Give up the argument from Design

1. Science has never seen the soul.
2. Laws of nature are fixed. Where? When?
3. Only matter can affect matter? Where?
   (mind starts up the action of the body - telegraph everything.)
4. Unbelief has greater difficulties than Faith.
5. Faith constrains towards Discipline
   Service
   Character

The student of Parker's sermons will discover the range and variety of his subjects and topics to be large. His sermons do not really take kindly to any one label. Again, they do not invite dissection or homiletic analysis, and it is of interest that no one has attempted such a task. This, it would appear, is how Parker meant it to be. He wished deliberately to frustrate the critics in their desire to analyse his sermons, and on one occasion he gave expression to his strong feelings on the subject:

> "You say that you thought the sermon very good when you heard it, but when you came to take it to pieces you were surprised how little there was in it! How foolish then to take it to pieces! Take a steam-engine to pieces, and how little there is in it! Take your own face to pieces and your mother will be ashamed of it. Take a rainbow to pieces and see how much remains to be admired! We must judge by the effect of the whole, and not by pieces and sections!"[1]

Did he preach his sermons in any form of series? Generally speaking, he did not. However, we possess his sermons preached over a seven year period in the People's Bible. In so far as these represent sermons from Genesis to Revelation, he may be said to have preached in series. For instance, he preached twenty-nine consecutive discourses

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, p. 48.

upon the Book of Numbers, and thirty-two out of thirty-three sermons were based on Deuteronomy.

The major portion of his sermon subjects are simple, short and obvious. They rarely attempt to elicit curiosity or bring about any special interest. The subject is merely the title of the special discourse. In one volume of sermons, the subjects are: "What is the Gospel?"; "Easy Work"; "Incidental Ministry"; "The 'More' of Christianity."[1] More often than not, he selected his subject from the words of the text.

The fundamental element in the sermons of Joseph Parker is the text. He was chiefly a preacher of the Bible and, as such, he gave first place to the careful consideration of the text. He wrote and spoke much about the place of the text in the sermon. "He preaches well," he claimed, "who grapples with his text, and unfolds its secret; who makes the text the sermon. . . . The sermon is an amplified text . . ."[2] He believed much damage had been done in the treatment of texts uprooted from their Biblical association and he was never so vehement as when he said:

> "In choosing a text, don't be anxious to find anything very peculiar; . . . Be you a digger; sink the shaft fearlessly, the gold is embowelled in the deep places; go down, persevere, and bring it up."[3]

No one text was, to him, complete in itself; it was only one of a series. "Carefully collate the whole class," he advises, "then the Bible will not be just a repository of texts!"[4]

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1. Parker, The Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. X, 2 Chronicles-Esther, p. 231.
3. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 194.
4. Ibid., p. 92.

In choosing texts for sermons, Parker selected them equally from the Old and New Testament. Of the two hundred and ten sermons in the City Temple Pulpit, almost one half of the texts are taken from the Old Testament.

In most instances, his texts appeal to the imagination. They bring out something to see, to feel, and to do. And, very often, they attempt to surprise and elicit curiosity and interest by posing a question. For example, Parker chose as his text for his initial Sunday in Manchester, Acts 10:29: "Therefore, came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore, for what intent you have sent for me?"[1]

As a rule, he gave the preference to the short text. In this way, he was able to repeat the text often, and the layman found it easier to remember. In one volume, his texts are: "Injurious" - I Tim. 1:13; "No Little Kindness" - Acts 28:21; . . . "A Thousand Generations" - Deut. 7:9; and "She felt that she was healed" - Mark 5:29.[2]

How did Parker treat the introduction of the sermon? It was the custom for earlier pulpit masters to start slowly and build up towards power at the end. Also, they could take for granted that their hearers would listen patiently while they got under way. Such was not the case in the late nineteenth century. The minister needed to gain attention at the beginning, and hold attention until the close. This was Joseph Parker's custom; he viewed the first paragraph, often the first sentence, as decisive and crucial. While he did not fully

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 60.
2. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. IV,

prepare the words of the introduction in most of his sermons, he knew the importance of making a good start. Most of his introductions show his unique possession of that quality, which Spurgeon called the "Surprise Power." Coupled with Parker's dramatic instinct, this "Surprise Power" was used to great effect. One observer has remarked that in a sermon based upon the text "And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man," (St. Matthew, 26:72), Parker introduced the sermon with these words: "It's a lie! He did know the man!"[1]

Parker introduced his sermons in a variety of ways. Sometimes he would begin with the context and define the terms or any ambiguous words. Very often, he opened the sermon with a question. In a sermon entitled "Birth and Resurrection," he began: "Have you ever compared or contrasted the birth and the resurrection of Christ? Or have you separated the birth and made it an event complete in itself? Then you have wronged it!"[2] In another place, he uses the introduction to define the doctrine of the text, as in "The Perverted Way" (Proverbs 19:3):

> "The Doctrine of this text is, that when a man gets wrong in his way of living - wrong in his habits . . . conduct - he begins to fret against God . . . and to get up all possible objections against religion generally . . ."[3]

The introduction is generally short; it was his contention that the day of long, intricate beginnings had vanished. "I have no objection," he said, "to the beautiful carriage drive, but I do not care to find only a cottage at the end of it . . . The day of the introduction, like the day of miracles, is gone!"[4]

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1. From personal correspondence with Dr. Albert Tobey, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.
2. Parker, Studies in Texts, Vol. V, p. 138.
3. Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 46.
4. Parker, The Ark of God, p. 350.

Whatever method he chose to introduce the sermon, he usually set out to preach at once. By the means of direct and pointed language he began the sermon. An example of this method is to be found in a sermon entitled "The 'More' of Christianity." The text was taken from II Corinthians, 10:22-23: "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I . . . more":

> "That is where the Christ comes in. The Hebrew, the Israelite, the son of Abraham, plus 'I . . . more.' It is into the mystery of that 'more' that I want to conduct you; not that you do not know all about it, but that I may be able by God the Holy Ghost to remind you of things that may have faded a little in the recollection, and especially that I may make your hearts glow with love to Him who was not only son of Mary, but Son of Man; not only Son of Man, but Son of God. Christianity does not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them; Christianity does not come to whittle a man away to nothing."[1]

It is to be remembered that Joseph Parker's sermons do not come naturally under what President Coffin has listed as the five sermon categories: Expository, Doctrinal, Ethical, Pastoral and Evangelistic.[2] His sermons partake of the nature of all five, but no one method of preaching prevails. For our purpose, it will be best to arrange Parker's sermons in five ways: (1) Early; (2) Expository; (3) Dramatic; (4) Later; and (5) Sermons in miniature. There is much overlapping in each division but we feel that this approach will allow some kind of overall view of his extant discourses, while at the same time, attempting to point out the notable progress in Parker's sermon style. While the position of the titles within the division cannot be pressed too far, nevertheless, there is a definite succession in the types of

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1. Parker, The Gospel of Jesus Christ, p. 127.
2. H.S. Coffin, What to Preach (London, 1926), preface.

sermon Parker preached.

Early Sermons

There are only a very few of these in print. They are indicative of Parker's preaching in Banbury, and Manchester. They serve to illustrate his chief concern with homiletics at that time in his life. He believed that the strength of the sermon was often in its structure. If the sermon lacked that, no fineness of phrasing or facility in illustrations could ever make it up.[1] These early sermons are characterised by a clear cut frame-work and simple divisions. The following is illustrative of this type:

Subject: "On the Private Ministry of the Gospel."

Text: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (St. John, 1:45.)

Proposition: "To this higher courage we are called - to this private and direct ministry we are impelled by our own thankfulness for a revelation of the Son of God; let us, therefore, endeavour to discover the basis and the method of this blessed and most lofty vocation."

I. The Christian Minister has a Distinct Message to Deliver to the World.
   (a) The Christian ministry takes its stand upon facts.
   (b) The Christian ministry must sustain a personal relationship to the facts.

II. In Delivering His Message the Christian Minister will Encounter Opposition.
   (a) Of Speculation.
   (b) Of Prejudice.

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1. W.E.H. Sangster, The Craft of Sermon Construction (London, 1949), p. 53.

III. The Christian Minister has a Most Practical Answer to all Objections.

(a) It is practical, 'come and see,' not speculative.
(b) Note direction of this invitation,
1. Not to see the 'church,'
2. Nor our literature,
3. Nor the preacher.
4. Jesus Christ is the objective.

IV. When the Practical Answer of the Christian Minister is received the most blessed results are realised.[1]

(a) Antecedents of belief swept aside by Jesus.
(b) Grand expansion of Christian truth seen.

The latter is typical of Parker's conventional concern with the skeleton of the sermon. For most of the initial ten years of his preaching life, his Sunday sermons followed this procedure. Not only was there the constant regard for sharply defined frame-work in the sermon, but he wrote each sermon with a certain appeal to the reason and the intellect. These early sermons are distinguished by an attempt to convince and convert by giving large attention to closely reasoned thought. Often they took the form of a series of affirmations, such as this one, -

"(a) That Christianity is adapted to man in all respects of his being;
(b) That earnest seekers will be gloriously rewarded;
(c) That it is the duty of all who know the truth to disseminate its blessings."

Then, according to Dr. Clifford, it closed with the Parkerian ring: "Let your charity be wide as the universe and profound as the springs of Life."[2]

It will not be forgotten that these were the first and last sermons Parker was ever to write out fully. In these early sermons he gave a certain amount of attention to style and literary finish. He

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1. Parker, The City Temple, p. 169.
2. "British Weekly," 1902, p. 53.

said himself, in speaking of the sermons at this early stage: "I was very careful about style - perhaps too careful in the matter of terseness and condensation."[1] One notes the effect of his initial concern with style and writing in this sermon taken from the text, Isaiah 14:2, "I will go before Thee, and make the crooked places straight."

> "Man must go. It is not a question of whether we will go or not go, that is determined for us - we must go. Every man is accomplishing a journey, going through a process. No man is standing still. The infant is going towards youth; youth is advancing towards the stature and strength of manhood; and man, in the summer of his prosperity and honour, is going on towards the sere leaf... Men must go, then. The only question is - How?"[2]

Parker's early sermons were considered by some to be some of his best for they contained, to a limited degree, the marks of good structure - unity, order, symmetry and progress. They were so arranged that, as one has said, "The woman in the pew could tell her husband in two sentences the central thought of the sermon."[3] But, if they were noteworthy for form and progression, they also shared the faults of sameness and the stereotyped format of the regularly divided and sub-divided sermon. In order to avert staleness, Parker introduced the second type of sermon, best denoted as the Expository type.

Expository Sermons

The classic example of this type of Parker sermon is to be found in The People's Bible. Within the twenty-five volumes of this "crowning work," covering a period of seven consecutive years, Joseph Parker expounded the Bible. These are expository sermons patterned after his own conception of exposition. It is enough to say that they

1. "Temple Magazine," Vol. II, 1897-98, p. 52.
2. Parker, The City Temple, 1869, p. 4.
3. J. Paterson Smyth, The Preacher and his Sermon (Lond., 1907), p. 108.

are not meant to be received as illustrations of what is generally meant by expository preaching. According to Professor Blackwood, an expository sermon is "One that grows out of a Biblical passage longer than two or three verses."[1] In so far as Parker begins with the Biblical text, these sermons can be termed expository in character. But thorough-going exegesis or profound interpretation is not to be found. His purpose in these sermons was other than scholarly; he wished to preach, not expound. He went into the pulpit each time to meet a human need, not to explain a passage. "The purpose of The People's Bible," he said, "is pastoral; it aims to bring all . . . under the moral sovereignty of the sacred book as to arm them against temptation, enrich them with solid comfort, and fortify them with the wisdom of God."[2]

His supreme passion was to get the Bible back into the common life of every man. He has often been compared to Chrysostom in this regard, and C.S. Horne might well have been describing Joseph Parker when he said:

> "We have two qualities in Chrysostom which in their combination make him unique - he is a Man of the Word and a man of the world. . . . Chrysostom himself is saturated with the scripture, and is determined that his audience shall be taught to base their lives upon the principles of Holy writ . . . the homilies of Chrysostom are not the expositions of a lecturer, but . . . the expositions of a preacher . . . "[3]

Like Chrysostom, Parker believed that expository preaching was the ideal, but he always drew a distinction between the expositor and the preacher. "A man may be one without being the other," he used to say.[4]

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1. Blackwood, op.cit., p. 69.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. I, Genesis, p. viii.
3. Horne, op.cit., pp. 144-146.
4. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 55.

He considered himself an expository preacher. "Exposition alone," he was wont to say, "can save the ministry from dullness."[1] And again, in advising young preachers, he remarked,

> "At the base of your ministry let there be sound, enlightened, fearless, and reverent exposition of the Divine work; without that your ministry will be a failure, you will never train men; you may please giddy and shallow listeners, but no manly host will prove the vigour of your teaching."[2]

The content of Parker's exposition was definitely of his own making; other commentators rendered little or no assistance. Expansiveness may be said to be the striking quality of these sermons. He always sought the large, broad interpretation of the text or passage. Parker claimed that he had been greatly stimulated in his method of Biblical exposition by Professor Jowett, of Balliol College. He averred:

> "Professor Jowett . . . has given me a new sermon, a new Bible, a new harvest ground. How has he done that? By one grand pregnant sentence, which so many of us poor preachers forget. . . . Professor Jowett says . . . 'In interpreting an author, the question is not what did he mean, but of what applications are his words capable today.' It was light to me . . . there is the liberty of the preacher . . . "[3]

It is to be remembered that Parker allows himself ample liberty in his expository sermons. Some have ventured to say that he allowed himself too much liberty and is often not sufficiently objective and accurate in his treatment of the text. One critic had this to say:

> "Dr. Johnson said of Thomson that he could not look on two candles burning but with a poetical eye, and Dr. Parker cannot look on the driest list of names in Chronicles but with the eye of the expositor. His besetting sin is probably to take more out of a passage than, fairly treated, it should yield . . . "[4]

While these sermons are, in the broadest sense, expository,

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1. Parker, The City Temple, 1869, p. 1.
2. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 280.
3. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VI, p. 216.
4. "British and Foreign Evangelical Review, Vol. XXVI, (Lond., 1877), p. 310.

they must also be regarded in the loosest sense, as sermons. In the first place, they are extemporaneous, unwritten discourses. In the second place, they are of such an extemporaneous nature as to be more like impromtu, spontaneous comments on the Bible, verse by verse, than anything else. Let this remark of Parker's define their real purpose and nature:

> "The sermon, in too many cases, has come to be endured rather than to be enjoyed. It is too often more of a sedative than a stimulant. The suggestion of many changes is not difficult, but at this time I prefer to adopt rather than propose; and therefore, instead of announcing a few words as a text, I invite you to regard yourselves as constituted into an immense Bible class, and to accompany me with your eye, as well as with your ear, in an attempt to interpret part of the . . . book . . . "[1]

Parker followed this policy closely for seven years, commenting on verses and passages and books of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Many of these expository sermons represent many sermons packed together and only a man with the genius and personality of Joseph Parker could have followed such a method and won success. For instance, he treated Exodus 22-23 in this fashion:

> Subject: "Negative Commandments."
>
> Introduction: "We cannot read the book of Exodus without being struck by the number of things which we are not to do . . . we are not left to ourselves in any instance to determine a case of doubt; from beginning to end the Divine voice is clear, and direct, and final in its tone. These negative commandments are interesting upon every ground; but perhaps especially so as revealing human nature to itself."

Following this introduction he uses four verses out of these two chapters to treat these "Negative Commandments" as showing what human nature is apart from Divine directions; each delineation of the verse is

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1. Parker, Hidden Springs (Lond., 1864), p. 141.

in reality a distinct sermon in miniature.

I. "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him" (22:21.)

. . . In this command from heaven, we have the beginning of the great Gospel of Christ. To God there are no strangers. And to ourselves there would have been no strangers had we been faithful to God. Why all this strangeness? Simply because we have become estranged from the Father of us all.

II. "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child" (22:22.)

This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the book of Exodus. There is a majestic solemnity in His voice that is full of ineffable tenderness. This is the Father of all . . . who speaks for the widow? - God; and the orphan? - God. Then be cheerful, take heart again; the Orator who speaks for you is God.

III. "Thou shalt not revile the Gods . . . of thy people" (22:28.)

This is a passage difficult to understand and impossible fully to explain. In other places, we find idols broken, temples erected to forbidden names thrown down, as by great thunders and lightnings, and strong winds blowing contempt from eternity upon the petty creations of the debased religious imagination. Yet consistently with all this there is to be no reviling of gods. This is a subtle lesson. Mock no man's religion!

IV. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (23:2.)

. . . There is a sense in which the majority is at this moment against Christ . . . the emphasis is not altogether upon the word multitude, it is upon the word evil; and we ought to ask God to be enabled so to pronounce the word evil as to feel revolt from everything which it implies and suggests.

Conclusion: "Looking at these negative commandments, are we not surprised at the wonderful knowledge of human nature which they reveal? . . . These commandments also show the true relation of God to the human race. He is the Ruler . . . if any of us have outlived the mere letter and need it no more, praised be God for a spiritual education which has delivered us from the bondage of the letter and led us into a nobler bondage of the heart, a sweet servitude of the soul, a glorious slavery, a glorious liberty!"[1]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. II, Exodus, pp. 177-183.

Unlike the earlier sermons which Parker preached, which gave expression to structure and symmetry, these sermons often admit of no visible outline or division. Instead, the student finds that theyconsist of various ideas and comments, arising out of a particular group of verses or passage. These ideas may, or may not, belong together, but they represent the type of exposition Parker presented. In a sermon, entitled, "Deputation to Samaria," he expounds the series of verses, 14-25 in the eighth chapter of Acts - he begins,

> "'When the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.' This must have been a most instructive experience to the Apostle John. There was a time when that Apostle did not conceal his feelings respecting a village in Samaria. . . . Amongst our old enmities we may yet find our sweetest friendships. Do not seek to destroy any man, however much he may reject you or misunderstand you. A time may come when you can render him the service of prayer . . . "[1]

He continues by calling attention to the unique fact that Samaria, in receiving the word of God, had become Christian.

> "In reality," he says, "it is the dawning of a new day, the winning of a great battle, the opening of a beneficient revelation . . . we lose so much by forgetting the circumstances of the case. . . . This is a verse now read as IF it had no atmosphere. What is it that we lose in history? It is the atmosphere that we lose . . . "[2]

Again, in commenting further upon the words "sent down," Parker adds this insight:

> "Was Peter then really 'sent down'? So it would certainly appear from the text. We thought that Peter would have sent down other men! It is evident, however, that that thought is misconceived. Peter himself was a messenger. . . . His name appears first, and yet he was but a deputation! There is nothing papal here. The Pope is not sent down, he sends down."[3]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXII, p. 233.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 234.

Let this final extract from this sermon be sufficient to illustrate the varying character and material to be found within each expository sermon. Parker does a typical thing by posing a question to gain a point, as here:

> "When Peter and John were come down to Samaria what did they do? This will reveal the right aspect of apostolic influence and office. Let us read the text in a way of our own. . . . 'Peter and John, when they were come down, sat upon a great and high throne, and waved over the astounded Gentiles a staff that was supposed to have singular power in it, and the amazed and wonderstruck villagers . . . fell back before such dazzling dignity and bewailed their own unworthiness.' That would be poor Scripture! . . . How does the text really read? It reads in this way: 'When they were come down, they PRAYED for the villagers, that they might receive the Holy Ghost!' Pray for your friends; do not affright them. Pray for inquirers; do not overpower them. . . . Do we PRAY now? The question is not do we use the terms of prayer, or face into the attitude of supplication, but do we PRAY? . . . as if we meant to have what we ask? "[1]

"Round about methods are sometimes best," said Parker to a group of divinity students, "but don't lose sight of the object!"[2] The nature of some of his expository sermons makes it somewhat difficult at times to discover the preacher's object. So much material, so many ideas are put forth in each sermon that they tend to overwhelm and confuse. The fact is, Parker had many objects in the expository sermon; there was something in each for everyone in his vast congregation. Sometimes he quoted the Bible literally, but more often he paraphrased, extended, amplified, and thus illuminated the passage. "Speak to all," he said, "if you speak to some; speak the universal language, if you would be understood by the universal heart."[3] He practised this counsel in his expository sermons and he received the acclaim and appreciation of

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1. Ibid., p. 235.
2. Ibid., Vol. XVIII, p. 258.
3. Ibid., Vol. XXIV, Romans to Galatians, p. 307.

countless men of his time. Alexander Gammie has written:

> "His People's Bible is a mine for preachers, because of its freshness, originality and insight. Often by a flash of intuition, inspiration, or genius - call it what you will - he made texts sparkle with a new meaning."[1]

Dramatic Sermons

In a real sense, all of Parker's sermons contain much that is dramatic and therefore, pictorial. Equipped with the imagination of the Celt, he saw illustrative material and pictures everywhere. No one ever criticised his sermons for being dull or sluggish in their movement. Always there is action - dramatic movement - as he "paints metaphysics"[2] from start to finish.

But while the dramatic element is present in most of Parker's sermons, it appears more often in one group - those dealing particularly in scenes, or concerned with character study. We are fortunate in possessing one volume in this category.- The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sermons of this type allowed ample expression to his many-sided genius. "For my part," states J.F. Newton, "I think he was best when dealing with the memoirs of Nehemiah and the Gospel of Matthew, and he seemed always to excel in the portrayal of tragic, stormy men like David."[3]

In one sermon, Parker excites interest at once in his choice of the text: "He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side." (Acts, 10:6.) His theme, or rather objective, is to show Christianity as the authentic social reformer in society, but this is

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1. A. Gammie, Preachers I have heard (Lond., n.d.) p. 40. In 1952, Dr. George Buttrick of Union Seminary, New York, advised his students to procure these expository sermons for use in the study.
2. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 67.
3. J.F. Newton, Preaching in London (Lond., 1922), p. 38.

not always clear as he describes the situation:

> "A good deal is made of this man and his address . . . There must be something in this. What have we to do with Peter's lodging or Peter's host? If we could grasp this text in its totality of meaning and suggestion, we should see that the whole history of Christianity is in this verse."[1]

Then Parker establishes the position of the tanner in Jewish life:

> "We are told that an old rabbi, bearded, wrinkled, has written: 'The world cannot do without tanners, but woe unto that man who is a tanner!' That is the point we must start from. How to get a Jew to lodge with a tanner would require . . . the combined energy of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. . . . Howinveterate must have been the prejudice against this occupation! The house of the tanner was always at the east end of the town. There is wonderful suggestion . . . that Simon's house was 'by the sea-side!' The Jews pushed the tanners out as far as possible; they would gladly have pushed them into the sea. They hated tanners."[2]

Throughout the sermon Parker employs descriptive language such as: "Simon Peter, clean-fingered, ritualistically pure, a purist among the pedants - 'He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner' . . . " and finally, getting to his point, Parker says:

> "The Christian minister is also building, also ventilating, also cleansing in the town. . . . His is the inclusive function; if men would say Amen to their own prayers, they would sweep every chimney, cleanse every drain, whitewash every underground dwelling, and give every man breathing-space to live in."[3]

One additional example from the sermon "Christ and the Lawyer" will serve to make plain Parker's ability to portray and dramatize:

> Text: "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" . . .

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1. Parker, The Gospel of Jesus Christ, p. 61.
2. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
3. Ibid., p. 69.

". . . Was the question wrong? Were the words ill-chosen? No. What was wrong? That which is always wrong - the man's own spirit. . . . It is not the intellect that is so far wrong, it is not cleverness that has gone so much astray; it is not for want of choice of words that men are not where they ought to be. This lawyer was a clever, able, sagacious, virile. . . . Then, what was wrong . . . ? His soul!"[1]

And again, Parker demonstrates his high talent in illustration:

". . . This lawyer had been reading the book all his life-time, and knew nothing about it. He could quote the letter, but not the spirit. When he said 'Love,' it was as if a frosty morning had said it. Sometimes you have seen water trickling down the roof, and it has been caught at the edge and made an icicle of; so when this man said, 'Thou shalt love,' the words hung like icicles upon his frosty lips."[2]

Later Sermons

Most of these are to be found in the volumes of the City Temple Pulpit. They represent the work of Joseph Parker over the closing years of his London ministry. As might be expected, these possess a maturity and a certain mellowness of tone not found in the earlier sermons. These later discourses are more poetic, spiritual, and contain more sympathy and emotion. The loss of his beloved wife caused Parker to be more understanding and human in his preaching than ever before. For instance, the sermon entitled, "The Master Key," based on John, 4:8, 'God is Love,' concludes in this personal and subjective manner:

". . . So I come back to my little Bible, my three-syllabled Bible, the Bible that holds all the Bible. When I come upon a great and awful mystery I call for the lamp, and it has a way of throwing its beams down into the deepest cavities. I have held it over the grave . . . it is the word that is written on the portals of the churchyard, 'God is Love.' I have seen a strong man reel

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1. Ibid., p. 88.
2. Ibid., pp. 90-91.

over his son's grave as if he would plunge himself into it . . . He was not in a mood to hear any preaching . . . it will be no use speaking to him today; he sups sorrow; nay, he does not sup it, he gulps it, he drains the dish of grief at one gulp. We must call upon this man tomorrow; we must be remote, we must learn in God's grace how to touch a wound without hurting it . . . but 'God is Love.' Who says so? I do. On what authority? My own experience; I have dug a grave as deep as you. . . . That was a thousand strokes in one laceration, and I, brother in grief, fellow-mason in tears, I say, God - is - Love. Let us meet again when we are both quieter."[1]

Sermons in Miniature

Joseph Parker seldom delivered a sermon without making some reference to preaching. He was encouraged to make such pronouncements, from time to time, because of the high proportion of preachers attending his various services. This final category of his sermons consists of suggestive points on various texts and passages, not generally touched upon in his regular, full length sermons. These sermons in embryo, are the result of what Professor Blackwood would call Parker's "homiletical garden."[2] Some consider these "hints" among the best of Parker's sermon contributions. In a sense, these "sermons in miniature" represent his flashing insight, power of epigram and suggestive ability as disengaged from the rest of his material. He referred to them as "Garden Sermons," not only because they were mainly sketched in the garden, the park, or by the waterside, but also, because "of the hope that they may be used as seeds which shall become beautiful and fruitful as the result of honest culture."[3]

The indicative character of these "hints" can be seen from several examples. Under one group bearing the caption "'Handful of

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. III, p. 240.
2. Princeton Theological Seminary Class Notes, 1949.
3. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, p. 108.

Purpose,' for all Gleaners" Parker presents the following:

Text: "And Esau said, I have enough, my brother." (Gen., 23:9.)

". . . The first man who ever did so . . . whatever non-spiritual men say, should not Christians say more? . . . Property should be a heart-store. . . . 'Enough' can never be true of spiritual blessings. . . . Christianity should be proved by contentment . . . "[1]

And again, employing the . . .

Text: "Ye shall be as Gods." (Gen., 3:5), Parker suggests this line of thought:

". . . Tempted to an upward fall! . . . Another instance of forcing destiny. . . . Man was meant to be something better. . . . Man must not know evil by creating it . . . "[2]

Passing from this consideration of the body of his sermons, it may be asked, how did Parker treat the application and conclusion of the sermon? Generally speaking, he makes the application throughout the sermon. His conclusions range from the plain re-capitulation and re-statement of the text to the persuasive appeal for a verdict. There are occasions when he ends the sermon quite abruptly and one awaits the remaining words. On the whole question, Parker has remarked:

"Exposition . . . without application is fuel without fire. When the preacher omits the application, he betrays his cause. But how is the application to be conducted? How tender it should be! How persuasive . . . fervent . . . The preacher should beware of separating himself . . . from his hearers . . . "[3]

Many of his sermons conclude briefly with notes of affirmation and appeal as in this expository sermon on "The Death of Abraham." (Gen., 24:8.):

". . . Abraham is our father, too, if we believe, for he

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. I, Genesis, p. 363.
2. Ibid., p. 362.
3. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, p. 13.

> is 'The Father of the faithful.' If we blame him for aught of short-coming or misdeed, we blame ourselves, for we are more to be reproached than he. Abraham lived in the twilight, we live in the full-noon; Abraham stood alone, we are members of the general assembly and Church of the first-born, with throngs of friends around us . . . Let us cultivate the pilgrim spirit. Let us 'declare plainly that we seek a country.' Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Bind the sandals, grasp the staff, tarry briefly everywhere, and though faint, be ever more pursuing, content with nothing less than heaven."[1]

The number of Parker's sermons is fantastically large, and he never hesitated to repeat them on occasion. At times, he would announce from his pulpit that he would repeat a sermon on a special subject; but it was never actually the same sermon for, as one has claimed, "Verbal repetition is to him difficult and almost impossible."[2] Apart from repeating his own sermons, he urged young preachers, when they found sermon-making difficult, to preach "a sermon of the very best kind belonging to some other man!" Elaborating upon this bold scheme, he remarked,

> ". . . The sermons of Chalmers and Wardlaw . . . and Melville; the sermons of Robertson . . . Bushnell . . . Beecher; great sermons, like the far-stretching acres of wheat standing in the glow of the autumnal sun. Preach them. Get them into your hearts . . . and at the end of every discourse give the immortal name of the immortal author."[3]

Perhaps it is true to say that there were two classes of hearers and readers on whom Joseph Parker's sermons did <u>not</u> exercise much influence: those who were in anxiety about salvation, and those who delighted to hear of the high experiences that were possible to the believing soul. Whereas C.H. Spurgeon suited the former, and probably H.W. Beecher, the latter, Joseph Parker tended to move between the two.

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1. Parker, <u>The People's Bible</u>, Vol. 1, Genesis, p. 254.
2. Dawson, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 119.
3. Parker, <u>The Ark of God</u>, p. 355.

For many, it was not the full and completed sermon which caught their attention. It was rather a striking sentence, or a pregnant phrase. With his rare imaginative insight, Parker was able to focus or epitomize in a scintillating epigram or aphorism a searching criticism, a just prospective, a profound truth or a moving appeal.

> "Since my boy-hood," states a man from Wales, "I have remembered some sentences of a sermon Dr. Parker delivered in the mid-seventies. The question of the sermon was, 'Does God forsake the righteous?' . . . In the course of the sermon, the preacher described the house of a poor widow. He spoke of it as a place out of which even the sheriff's officer could not take even a shadow and would not take even that because he could not sell it. . . . The preacher himself had been sorely beset, for he remarked, 'I have been as nearly forsaken as any man in the world. I have looked around on all sides and could see no way out - NO LATERAL WAY, ONLY A VERTICAL ONE!'"[1]

Certainly the description of Disraeli as "a born phrase-maker" would have perfectly fitted Joseph Parker. He thought in epigrams. Turn over any of his published sermons, and every page sparkles with them - "Death is a necessity. If emigration relieves the congestion of nations, so death relieves the congestion of the globe."[2] And again, his imaginative insight makes this scene real:

> "If thy brother has gone astray, say nothing about it, but as soon as possible go out into the darkness and find him - and sit down beside him and kiss him back into manhood and hope and son-ship."[3]

In the final analysis, the sermons of Joseph Parker are as many-sided and complex as the man himself. Their freshness is as abundant at the end as at the beginning. And it is freshness of word as much as of idea. "Nor," claimed the Expository Times, "is it such originality as paralyses thought or prevents appropriation. One can read Dr. Parker

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1. Newton, Preaching in London, p. 40.
2. Parker, Studies in Texts, Vol. II, p. 68.

with greater safety than Dr. Maclaren. It is not matter, it is inspiration, or at least stimulus that he gives us. We cannot reproduce him, but we can produce better sermons because of him."[1]

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1. "Expository Times," Vol. XII, 1901, p. 26.

CHAPTER IV

THE PREACHER IN HIS PULPIT

"Preaching . . . means heralding, going up and down from east to west, crying, shouting, with a ringing voice, 'Prepare!' He is the preacher who . . . breathes through the herald's trumpet, and startles the stagnant air with shattering blast, and says, 'The King! The King!'"

— Joseph Parker.

CHAPTER IV

THE PREACHER IN HIS PULPIT

> ". . . Remember, the world is never affected by an argument which it cannot understand; it is moved by impulse, intuitions - something in them which answers as an echo to a voice."[1]

Up to this point this study has been largely confined to a consideration of Dr. Parker's published sermons, and the preacher in his study. Such a survey, however, gives only the most minute suggestion of his real power. Joseph Parker believed in the pre-eminence of the pulpit and he made his own City Temple pulpit 'his throne.' For him, the hope of the pulpit was in distinctiveness, not in colourless neutrality. The pulpit was not to be an adaptation of the printing press; it had to realise its own peculiar function.[2] In his own way, he helped the Christian pulpit to realise its peculiar function as a leader of worship, a preacher-orator, and through his Thursday noon service. It is the purpose of this chapter to depict the preacher in his pulpit from these three vantage points.

The Leader of Worship

In discussing the ministry of Joseph Parker, men have spoken much about his printed sermons and other writings, and have talked, to a great extent, about his unusual and sensational preaching. But few

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XI, Job, p. 120.
2. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, p. 106.

have paused to note his power as a leader of public worship, yet it is a fact that he gave the fullest attention to every portion of the City Temple worship service. There was never anything commonplace or mean in his rendering of an act of worship. Every detail of the service had been carefully prepared for and arranged as an offering to God.[1] The general form of worship adopted by Dr. Parker in the City Temple was orderly, reverential, musical and, to a slight extent, liturgical. The service included the 'general confession' from the Prayer book, and anthems sung by a partly professional choir, and usually ended with Gounod's 'Threefold Amen.'[2]

In worship, Dr. Parker was wholly identified with the congregation in the act of praise and thanksgiving; he did not convey the impression of one possessing a strange air of detachment.[3] His words to divinity students are indicative of his concern:

> "You have to unite in the offering of worship. How can you do so if you fumble with the Bible, spread out your manuscript, and make sundry arrangements which ought to have been made before you went into the pulpit? Have you no part in the song of praise? Are you a paid conductor, or a fellow-worshipper?"[4]

While Dr. Parker announced the hymns, and called attention to their importance by his special interpretation of their meaning, he was most noteworthy as a reader of the Bible. Albert Dawson said, "I do not know that he has an equal as a reader of the Scriptures."[5] Another auditor remarked, "His Bible reading never exceeded a dozen verses, but the reading was remarkable, commanding the attention of everyone."[6] As

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1. "Scottish Congregationalist," Vol. XVI, 1903, p. 68.
2. "The Times," 29 November, 1902.
3. Sangster, The Approach to Preaching (London, 1951), p. 50.
4. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 116.
5. Dawson, op.cit., p. 118.
6. Richards, op.cit., p. 302.

with everything he set his hand to do, Parker gave much time and thought to his reading. He practised reading the Bible aloud and mastered each Sunday's passage before entering the pulpit. He believed that few men read the Bible intelligently and expressively. Some ministers, he charged, "read the Bible in a tame and deadening tone, as if they had mistaken insipidity for veneration; others read it with a theatrical cant which is shockingly impious."[1] What is the remedy for such manhandling of the Bible in public worship? Dr. Parker felt the remedy was two-fold:

> "We must, first of all, feel that the word of God itself is actually before us, and our elocution will then be dictated by our veneration. In the next place, we must by private study prepare ourselves for the public reading of the scriptures."[2]

With Professor Wheeler, of Princeton Seminary, Dr. Parker considered it a 'pulpit sin' to read in the pulpit a chapter to which no attention had been paid in private.[3] As to the much controverted question of interjecting explanatory remarks with the reading of the Bible, Parker's mind was open. He felt that at least one portion ought to be read without comment, and that the minister should feel himself at liberty to read the other with such interspersions of his own as he wished. In any case, the comments ought to be brief and to the point. "Where a man cannot express himself tersely he ought not to attempt an intermixture of reading and comment. If he should be infatuated enough to do so the inspired word will be lost in the uninspired garrulity!"[4] Parker himself often added an 'aside' in the course of his Bible

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1. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 116.
2. Ibid., p. 117.
3. Princeton Classroom Notes, 1949.
4. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 118.

readings; for some, his 'asides' often made the worship service memorable. Once he read, as a lesson, part of the twentieth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, and after repeating "in his inimitable way the words 'Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord,' he paused and then, slowly and unforgettable . . . added his searching comment: 'That is the only Gospel worth preaching.'"[1]

Joseph Parker thought congregations ought to ask themselves two questions about their minister: How does he read the Bible? and How does he pray?[2] As for his pulpit prayers, it is surprising that in the numerous estimates of his ministry comparatively little reference has been made to what, in the judgment of not a few, was its most remarkable feature. If Dr. Parker's Bible reading was memorable, to have heard him leading the great City Temple congregations in prayer was no less stirring an experience. It was no uncommon thing for visitors to the City Temple to confess that, while the sermon left them practically untouched, the prayers were an inspiration. Dr. Parker considered that preparation for public prayer was as needful as for preaching and, in his own case, the preparation was thorough and constant. Fortunately, he has recorded his own policy in this matter of preparation: "First of all," he suggested, "read the devotional portions of the Bible largely; in addition to this exercise, read the devotional writings of the most spiritual divines;[3] and thirdly, make

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1. Clare, op.cit., p. 204.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 454.
3. In addition to the general list, Parker cites: Theo. Parker, H.W. Beecher, C.H. Spurgeon.

earnest and unsparing inquest into your own heart."[1] After such preparation, he claimed, one would pray from a spiritual and not an external centre, and the preacher would be liberated from "prayers which were nothing better than catalogues of Church institutions . . . such as 'bless the ragged school, or bless the band of hope . . . . '"[2]

The pulpit prayers of Dr. Parker were distinctly sui generis; they possessed two dominant qualities: they were broadly human, and strong in the sense of the eternal. He never wrote out nor memorised a prayer for the pulpit.[3] His prayers were reported as uttered and given to the public at large through the printed page.[4] Not a few thought this practice indelicate and irreverent. Whatever can be said for this sensitiveness, the printing of Dr. Parker's prayers constitutes a great argument for the other side. For their beauty and power to be fully realised they had, of course, to be heard, but to read them is to feel "that silence leaves them still warm with life."[5]

If ever the heat of controversy provoked the remark that in his own way Dr. Parker was a veritable 'high priest,' the words, whether born of jest or bitterness, touched upon the truth; "for to few men in any generation," remarked Joseph F. Newton, "has it been given to so finely make others feel that their souls were in touch with God. The penetrating awe felt by the devout Roman Catholic at the elevation of the Host was not more profound than the awe felt by

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1. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 119.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 129.
4. Many of Parker's pulpit prayers are published in The People's Bible, The City Temple Pulpit, and Studies in Texts.
5. "Christian World," December, 1902.

the sincere worshipper in the City Temple, when Dr. Parker called his people to prayer."[1]

"O Lord, make us so much like Jesus as to be mistaken for Him,"[2] may be an impossible prayer in its literal sense, but it is a perfect expression of the most eager yearning of Christian aspiration. How tender and poignant was the petition he offered after the loss of her whom he called his "other self," and whom he loved just short of idolatry: "O Thou Man of five wounds, say to our withering humanity: I am the Resurrection and the Life!"[3] His prayers reveal how deeply his mind was steeped in the imagery and idiom of the Bible which had become, as it were, the dialect of his own soul. Through his pulpit prayers he helped many an inarticulate man to utter those longings for God which well up in every human heart, but which so few can ever express. "I know not how many men," states Newton again, "told me that they learned to pray from Dr. Parker - often reading his prayers on their knees."[4]

Dr. Parker's pulpit prayers are rich in every element of formal prayer; adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, are all present in good measure, but he gave little attention to the elements of petition and supplication. "The begging-attitude," he averred, "becomes us well, but we must not abide in that posture of petition . . . we should be one with God; we should enlarge prayer from petition into fellowship, communion, sympathy . . . "[5] Always, in his

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1. Newton, Preaching in London, p. 39.
2. Ibid., quoted by J.F. Newton.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., pp. 38-39.
5. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. II, p. 315.

prayers, Parker affirmed the great facts about God. For instance, in one prayer he began:

> "Almighty God, we come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Priest, our only answer to Thy Law. We live in Thy remembrance of us: when Thou dost forget us, we shall die in the darkness of Thy frown. Who can stand the neglect of God? Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. That Thou givest them, they gather; Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good; Thou turnest away Thine eye and they die in the infinite darkness. Who can stand against the Lord, or fight against His Almightiness and prevail? Thy chariots are as the whirlwind and Thy horses are swifter than eagles . . . Thereby, we live because Thy compassions fail not."[1]

Again, towards the close of the prayer,

> "Speak to those who are nearly done; show them that they have but a few pages to write and the Life-Letter will be complete. Speak comfortably to those who are in the midst of their records, and do Thou show them that what is now being written will one day be read by Thy Self."[2]

Still, if Joseph Parker considered the worship service vital and important, it was because it furnished the background, the setting for preaching. James Black maintained that the preacher could use the whole service to create "atmosphere . . . to create a receptive and expectant spirit among the people, so that when we come to our preaching, our sermon may be the natural climax of worship."[3]

The Preacher-Orator

No man questions that Joseph Parker was a great preacher, but we learn very little from that fact, because great preachers are of many kinds; chiefly of two kinds. There is the type represented by

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1. Ibid., p. 29.
2. Ibid., p. 30.
3. James Black, The Mystery of Preaching (Lond., [1924]), p. 154.

men like Frederick W. Robertson and John H. Newman. To be sure, this man is no striking orator. He can never, it would seem, be popular. He succeeds greatly, but it is by the depth and vitality of his ideas, by the intensity and clarity of his vision of God, and by the form and beauty which he presses into the service of his vocation. His power tends to lie wholly in his message and in his high concern to utter it. He influences men deeply, genetically, and remains a kind of fertilising power after his death.

Dr. Parker, it must be understood, did not belong in the above category, but rather to the type represented by Henry Ward Beecher, C.H. Spurgeon, and Phillips Brooks - the orator, the master of great assemblies. This type of preacher is sometimes a scholar, but seldom a deep thinker; he is picturesque and noble, fascinating alike for his power and his charm, and he sways men as the wind sways the clouds.[1] It was to this order of preaching that Joseph Parker belonged.

It is true to say that no printed sermon by Dr. Parker shows us more than one third of the man. Those[2] who have endeavoured to speak of his eloquence are all agreed on this, that he was a rhetorician of the first magnitude, but his art, at its best, was incommunicable in the printed word. "It is impossible," states one, "to transfer to the printed page the tone, gesture, glance and fire of the preacher."[3] Moreover, as if he recognised the futility in such an act, Parker

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1. Newton, Preaching in London, p. 35.
2. George Holyoake, noted nineteenth century Rationalist and Debater, said: "I dedicated to him my book on Public Speaking and Debate, because he had become a Master of the Art." ("Two Great Preachers," 1903.)
3. Joseph Lucas, compiler, Detached Links: Extracts from the Writings and Discourses of Joseph Parker, D.D. (Lond., 1873), preface.

asserted himself, "It is impossible to publish a thunder-storm!"[1]

Countless people have spoken in one way or another of his oratory; it is good to mention two here, while others will be included at various points. Donald Maclean declared that he had heard seven thousand speeches while Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, but none of them equalled a sermon by Joseph Parker which lived in him still.[2] Again, Alexander Maclaren, who began his Manchester ministry at the same time as Parker commenced his eleven year pastorate at Cavendish Chapel, had this to say of Parker's oratory:

> "Sheer vigour of character, not of intellect merely, nor of any one side of his nature, but of the whole - reason, will, love, daring disregard of conventionality, a gift of forceful, picturesque speech, the born orator's temperament. . . . He was that rare thing - a voice, not an echo."[3]

Parker recognised and appreciated the fact that his type of preaching was dramatic and different, and this is the way he wished it to be. His passion was to make the pulpit distinctive in his time, and to do this, he felt, individuality must be safeguarded and encouraged at all costs. To a large degree, his own preaching method, plus his personal convictions on the subject of preaching, can be said to have been a moving force in favour of 'less uniformity,' and against all forms of the preacher stereotype. What Gladstone was in Parliament; what Henry Brougham was at the bar; and what Bishop Wilberforce was on the platform, preaching should aim to be in the pulpit.[4] His own preaching style, he thought, was a step in the right direction. In one

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 46.
2. From personal correspondence with the Rev. Ebenezer Rees.
3. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 35.
4. Parker, These Sayings of Mine, preface, p. i.

place, preaching about preaching, he declaimed,

> "We have lost the proper vocation of the pulpit. The pulpit has become now another branch of book-making. The sermon has lost its individuality. It ought to be a thing that cannot be printed. A sermon that can be printed is not a sermon. . . . A sermon is a speech, an expostulation, an entreaty, an exhortation, having its quality made up of the very personal elements of the man who delivers it - his accents, his quality of mind, his enlarged sympathy and nobleness; hence the true sermon is impregnated with elements which cannot be caught, fastened down, and presented to the eye. The sermon is not addressed to the eye; it is a thunder that beats upon the ear."[1]

Already we have spoken concerning Parker's zealous pre-occupation with the preacher and his sermons, here we wish to cite his ideas on the freedom of the preaching personality.

It is not to be forgotten that Joseph Parker became a Christian minister without ever having passed through the accredited divinity schools of his day. Lacking this training, he was prone to build up his own concept of theological education, and to be somewhat prejudiced against all divinity school training. He urged the Church colleges to give more recognition to individuality, and to the expression of the individual traits in the pulpit. In one place, he presents his own case against the pulpit-regimentation of his time. He has been speaking about the Apostolic understanding of the Church and ministry, and he affirms:

> "The Church had not then become a machine. Ordination was not then a thing to be arranged. It was inspiration. It was the sudden seizing of the mind, and its transformation into spiritual dignity and majesty. We do not understand this now. Men are now 'prepared' for the ministry. Now we 'educate' men for the pulpit. By all means be educated, be instructed; but educate the man . . . the citizen, and let the pulpit alone. You do not educate the poet . . . let the pulpit receive the

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1. Parker, Apostolic Life, Vol. I, pp. 124-125.

gift of God. We are not to come to this work by arrangement of man . . . inspiration makes the minister."[1]

While seeking to project, in some way or other, his personal ideas relating to the training of ministers upon the Church schools, and advocating, at the same time, a type of 'hands off' policy with reference to the growth and individual expression of the young preacher, Dr. Parker was also a keen exponent of lay-preaching. Since he had undertaken some village preaching in his early days in Hexham, he never failed to boost and encourage the lay-preacher in his work. "To my mind," he said, "Congregationalism has lost great opportunities by not sufficiently developing the public talents of business men. I am a heretic in these things. I would encourage every man to preach to whom God has given the talent of preaching."[2] Again, he defines his position and illustrates how high he rated the speaking qualification: "We do not ask for a man's certificate . . . we say, 'stand up and speak.'"[3]

The ability to speak plainly and with extraordinary force was evident early in Parker's life, and those who knew him as a boy, speak of his striking performances at debates and soirees. He says of himself, "The speaker was always most prominent and instinctive in me . . . "[4] And, later, to illustrate further this innate quality of speech, he remarked, "I preach because I breathe!"[5] While possessing wonderful endowments of voice and healthy body, he nevertheless brought them under the most severe discipline and training. He early learned and practised

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXII, Acts, p. 242.
2. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 373.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVI, Jeremiah-Daniel, p. 161.
4. "Temple Magazine," Vol. II, 1898, p. 52.
5. Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 6.

phonography and confessed that it was a treat to "get hold of some halting, hesitating speaker, that I might take him down in the longest style of short-hand . . . I was able . . . to take him down in long sinewy forms and almost to vocalise him."[1] Courts of Justice and the proceedings of Parliament always exercised special fascination over him, and it is to be recalled that, as a youth in Hexham, he used to purchase the edition of popular cases and debates and plead the particular issues, before invisible juries in his room![2]

Of this early concentrated drill and training he says:

> "How difficult is the beginning of everything! Yet the beginning must be made strenuously and patiently, or the end will be unsatisfactory . . . submit to drill. The man has to be taken to pieces, his whole scheme of speaking has to be broken up, he has to become a fool that he may become wise. When he is pronouncing each syllable, breaking up a word into its syllables, and then breaking up the word into its letters, and giving each its value and force, and note and music and colour, he seems to be pedantic. So he is in the meantime, but he must pass through that process until his apparent pedantry shows itself to be the new and better nature that is the perfection of excellence!"[3]

Because he believed that the popular effectiveness of a man's pulpit work depended largely on his ability to speak, Dr. Parker placed almost all of his emphasis upon the delivery of sermons. Like Demosthenes, Joseph Parker held that the three main points of eloquence are: first, delivery; second, delivery; and third, delivery.[4] Fortunately, he has recorded quite fully his ideas relating to good delivery in the pulpit. "Be earnest" - that is essential and paramount," he advised his student friends. Furthermore, he cautioned them to have nothing to do with what he termed the "dental" method of earnestness.

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 24.
2. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 65.
3. Parker, The Gospel of Jesus Christ, p. 158.
4. Arthur Allan, The Art of Preaching (Lond., 1939), p. 23.

This method, he averred, is employed by those who do not speak from the heart. The man who speaks thus, "could have preached four times not only on Sunday but on every day of the week; and could have visited all sorts of people between the services, without so much as . . . having one turned hair. Never a word came from beyond his teeth!"[1] But, just as important for good delivery as earnestness, is that the preacher "be natural ... . and unlike a book as possible."[2] Parker cites numerous examples of what he calls "rhetorical abominations" and speaks scathingly of those who affect poses and simulate emotion in the pulpit. In further words deploring premeditated antics for the pulpit, he quotes the sound advice of David Garrick: "What you would be in the parlour be in the pulpit."[3]

The key-stone of Parker's pulpit delivery position was, however, that a preacher ought to deliver his sermon without the aid of manuscript. If he laboured any one point, it was this one relating to extemporaneous preaching. His own sermons were delivered extempore, and the notes he carried into the pulpit could have been written on a visiting card - just a few "feathers for arrows" he called them.[4] Let this remark, one of many, serve to show his feeling on the issue: "The solemn advice I reiterate with all the mellow emphasis of ever-enlarging personal experience of pulpit life and service . . . preach the gospel! Do not read it . . . "[5] H.H. Farmer, in his lectures on preaching, lends force to the point: ". . . to read the sermon is fatal. It is worse

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1. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 13.
2. Ibid., p. 25.
3. Ibid., p. 36.
4. Richards, op.cit., p. 83.
5. Parker, These Sayings of Mine, preface, p. vi.

than fatal, it is a culpable repudiation of one's task and calling."[1]

Many, of course, reminded Dr. Parker of Chalmers, Newman, Liddon and Farrar, all of whom read their sermons. Still, he countered:

> "Don't be startled at the suggestion that Dr. Chalmers and the eminent men referred to cannot in my opinion justly be called preachers! Call them effective readers of eloquent addresses; call them dignified or vehement repeaters of elaborate dissertations; but preachers in the apostolic sense of the term they certainly ought not to be called. Peter and Paul were preachers; Knox and Bunyan were preachers . . . may their mantle fall upon our rising ministry!"[2]

When in conference with his varied contemporaries, Parker was wont to press this point and on one occasion he inquired of R.W. Dale why he read his sermons. Dale replied,

> "My command of words is such that as a young man I could preach standing on my head. To be condensed is my object in writing my sermons. If I spoke extemporaneously I should never sit down!"[3]

It is of interest to record here that Joseph Parker had no option but to preach without manuscript. In the first place, he was endowed with a very poor memory and was therefore unable to memorise his sermons. "Why did nature," he complains, "deny me a verbal memory? . . . It is almost wholly impossible for me to commit anything to memory."[4] Again, we are told, when he had, on occasion, to read an address, the rendition was inevitably a failure. His personal stenographer claimed that "the further Dr. Parker gets away from the manuscript the better he preaches."[5]

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1. H.H. Farmer, The Servant of the Word (Lond., 1941), p. 59.
2. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 80.
3. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 409.
4. Parker, Might Have Been, p. 157.
5. Dawson, op.cit., p. 118.

Preaching without notes was only part of the secret of Parker's pulpit power. He believed himself to be a kind of "medium" between God and the people. He did not define in specific terms what he meant when he referred to himself as a medium. Yet it is a fact that he considered himself one, and affirmed that in all great preaching the preacher yields himself as a mere instrument in the hands of God.[1] He speaks often of what W.E. Sangster calls 'the plus of the spirit,' something which he only felt, but did not understand.[2] Parker elaborates on the point in a sermon entitled "Water from the Fountain":

> "No prophecy is a dream of the prophet; in fact, the prophet has little or nothing to do with it; he is a mere instrument through which the revelation comes, and when he is out of his prophetic mood, he is conscious that great presences have passed before his vision, that great questions have been stated, and great visions have been seen. He is a mere instrument. . . . That is what preaching ought to be!"[3]

In referring to the mysterious quality of his delivery, one commentator had this to say of Dr. Parker on such occasions: "Sometimes he seems to be literally 'possessed;' his voice takes on a peculiar swing, there is a steady, even flow of words, the pauses are few, and he seems to be merely the medium through which a message is being delivered."[4]

What was the reason for this inspirational quality? Where did Parker get the mysticism which influenced his delivery? He believed that he took after the womenfolk in his family. It will be remembered that his mother was a superstitious character and he said, ". . I must

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 194.
2. Sangster, The Approach to Preaching, p. 14.
3. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VI, p. 215.
4. Dawson, op.cit., p. 118.

in some degree take after her - for I, too, see the wind, and the things that fly in it; and I, too, hear its moan, its cry of pain, and its glad up-breaking of the winter . . . I thank God for this inner vision."[1] It was this introvision which led John Pulsford, the mystic, to describe him as a 'pulpit clairvoyant or medium.'[2]

Whatever the real nature of the inspiration which took hold of him and made him feel that he was being used of God, it is certain that some understanding of it is vital for an accurate knowledge of his pulpit power. While he urged others, his student friends in particular, to prepare for free delivery by 'mental composition,'[3] it is conceivable that he entered his pulpit, steeped in his message, equipped with a few sparse notes, ready to have words 'put into his mouth.'[4] Preparation had not been dispensed with, it had only been altered to suit his method of delivery. He averred, "I know my subject; I know that I am going from A - B, and not from A - Z. By this I mean that the subject has made a distinct track in my mind, and weather permitting, I get over the course as faithfully as I can."[5]

Two very distinct influences affected Parker's pulpit delivery: the inspiration which came from God and the stimulus of his congregations. In his role of 'pulpit medium,' it was this two-fold inspiration, playing upon him and using him, which made his preaching in the pulpit.[6] "Contact with great congregations," states Principal Rainy,

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1. Forman, editor, op.cit., p. 406.
2. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 23.
3. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 23. On this point he averred, "The sermon should be spoken as part and parcel of the preacher" (The People's Bible, Vol. XIII, Proverbs, p. 207.
4. City Temple Archives, London.
5. "Temple Magazine," Vol. II, 1897-98, p. 52.
6. Parker, Apostolic Life, Vol. 1, p. 313.

"was his highest form of life, and it was the inspiration of his oratory."[1] Dr. Parker never underestimated the power of his congregation to make or mar his work. He never viewed the City Temple congregation, varied as it was, as a public mob or a miscellaneous gathering of unrelated atoms. Speaking of that congregation, he said, "I look upon it as a constituted medium . . . through which the Most High can communicate present day revelation."[2] The preacher incarnated himself in his audience to the degree in which his audience was sympathetic and appreciative.[3] He averred, "The pew makes the pulpit. What the people demand they will get."[4] True eloquence, he believed, was in the hearer. "If I see a man with brightness in his eye and a smile upon his face I can preach ever so much better . . . I preach to the electrical hearer!"[5] The congregation, he felt, could exert a positive or negative influence over the preacher. He said, "If they want anecdotes and muffin-pathos, they can drag down the pulpit to that level!"[6]

Like other great preachers, orators and parliamentarians, Parker was afflicted by self-doubt, and lacked confidence in his pulpit ability. Behind the self-confident, brusque exterior lay an extreme sensitivity and uncertainty; he required the constant encouragement of individuals and the congregation to carry on his work. Often, just prior to entering his pulpit, he would enquire concerning the size of the congregation, and, latterly, he had a small hole cut in his study

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1. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 38.
2. Parker, Might Have Been, p. 252.
3. Parker, Apostolic Life, Vol. II, p. 35.
4. Parker, Might Have Been, p. 66.
5. Lucas, compiler, op.cit., p. 220.
6. Parker, Might Have Been, p. 66.

door, so he could see for himself. In his autobiography J.F. Newton relates the circumstances surrounding his initial service at the City Temple:

> "Putting on the pulpit gown of Joseph Parker was enough to make a young man nervous, but I made the mistake of looking through the peep-hole, which he had cut in his vestry door the better to see the size of his congregation."[1]

Until now, we have dealt with the underlying elements, the features, which supply the background to, and helped to fashion Parker's oratorial ability. What, however, was the real nature and character of his oratory? It was, quite understandably, a strange, unique mixture of diverse elements. Like his personality, Dr. Parker's oratory was many-sided, complex and incalculable. Phillips Brooks' definition of preaching as "truth through personality" was never more appropriate than in the case of Joseph Parker.[2] Indeed, the truth about God and man, never came through a more complex and unique personality. It has been well said of Dr. Parker: "He cultivated the art of being contradictory!"[3] His oratory was chaste and unpolished, profound and audacious, by turns, and invariably he left even the most astute critic in doubt as to its real secret.

"To those who never heard him preach," claimed Angus Watson, "the power of his oratory is almost beyond description."[4] Professor Henry Drummond, in company with one of Scotland's most able preachers, walked the streets of Edinburgh for hours one night after hearing Parker preach, endeavouring to define the secret of his power and

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1. Newton, River of Years, p. 150.
2. Phillips Brooks, Lectures on Preaching (Lond., 1895), p. 8.
3. "The Times," November 29, 1902.
4. Forman, op.cit., p. 403.

popularity, but failed to satisfy themselves that they had found a solution. George Matheson, the preacher-hymn-writer who admired and often heard Dr. Parker, presents his first impression:

> "I first heard Parker preach about sixteen years ago, in one of the Churches of England. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the special form of his eloquence. I have never heard anything exactly in the same line. It resembled the mutations of the wind in all its degrees of cadence. It could pass from a sigh to a storm, from a storm back again to a sigh. It was as wayward as the wind proverbially is. You could not depend upon its next note. . . . I am not . . . speaking of the greatness of the oratory, but of its uniqueness - unlikeness to other forms of eloquence."[1]

When compared with contemporary orators, the unique quality stands out plainly. Speaking on this point further, Matheson remarked,

> "Caird was a great orator . . . but Caird could be counted on. His voice was the building of a magnificent temple. You heard the process of building. . . . Spurgeon was a great orator . . . you could depend upon the voice of Spurgeon. . . . Liddon was a great orator; but he rose up on steps and he never missed a step. . . . All the pulpit orators I have known, with one solitary exception, have been planetary bodies; their orbit can be calculated. But Parker was a comet; you could not trace his orbit or predict where he would go!"[2]

What factors contributed to the 'uniqueness' of Parker's oratory? They would seem to be three in number: his voice, his physical presence, and his dramatic instinct.

1. His Voice:

If Joseph Parker's voice was one of the contributing factors of his great oratory, it was so by virtue of many years of careful and continuous training. Every aspect of voice culture was undergone and Parker makes mention of these special measures. The whole business of breathing demanded and received his attention early in his life. He

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1. Nicoll, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, pp. 41-42.
2. Ibid., p. 43.

counselled his student friends, ". . . breathe through the nostrils, and never through the mouth." Breathing through the mouth exposed the throat to cold air, and therefore, dryness and congestion was the result. Moreover, in breathing, he himself took special care to breathe deeply. "If I breathe properly during preaching, I am as little tired at the end as at the beginning."[1]

As to speaking itself, he advised: "Stand erect and let the throat have room. Speak from the tip of the tongue and use the lighter tones often."[2] He learned from listening to Roman Catholic and High Church priests intoning their words and tried to apply their technique in part. His own pattern of speaking was a modified form of intoning; he expressed it this way, "Don't intone, but speak as if you had half a mind to do so, and then you will catch some of the lighter and finer tones that are in your voice!"[3] Even in the simplest fact, the application of water, we are enabled to see how he sought to care for and safeguard his voice. He cautioned against drinking half a glass of water at a time. "Sipping," he said, "is the way for a speaker. . . take a sip of iced water every five minutes if you want to have a throat to work with."[4] Concerning his own policy, he confessed,

> "If my throat wants a little special petting in a heavy service, I keep a little raspberry vinegar in the pulpit. Some discerning and agreeable people have observed this, and called the coloured liquid claret. I have never corrected them. I beg that you never will. Why spoil their omniscience?"[5]

To be sure, Dr. Parker was very meticulous and even extreme,

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1. Parker, Ark of God, p. 333.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 337.

where his voice was concerned; he would not speak to anyone between his study and his pulpit. Sometimes 'cordial strangers' stopped him on the street but he would point to his throat and pass on! He admitted that he was probably too extreme here, but he said, "I think I have my reward.[1] I am sure I have it. And what I have proved, I now recommend."[2]

But his recommendation went beyond the elementary concerns of breathing and speaking properly. He was convinced that the preacher must be effective as well as audible. He was accustomed to remarking, "There is an actor's voice and there is a bell-man's. The auctioneer talks; the orator speaks." He urged divinity students to persevere with voice culture, for as he said, "Some day you will meet a man who has studied the human voice, who knows its mystery and loves its music, and his appreciation will reward and cheer you."[3] Because Dr. Parker did study the music of utterance and realised that it was not enough to say words, his voice was acclaimed as one of the striking features of his oratory.[4]

For not a few, his voice was the significant feature of his preaching. It was rich in its risings and fallings,[5] haunting in its flute-like cadences, with its soft "whispering and wooings;" but if melting in pathos, "no less terrible in its thunder, its withering

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1. At the close of fifty years of preaching Parker confessed that he had lost his voice only once (The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. V, p. 68.)
2. Parker, Ark of God, p. 335.
3. Ibid., p. 337.
4. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, p. 78.
5. Dr. Morell MacKenzie, on hearing him, said when he reached his highest note that it was impossible to descend from that pitch in a graceful manner. He was more than astonished when the next sentence falsified his prediction! (Adamson, op.cit., p. 130.)

scorn . . . its scalding sarcasm."[1] After many years of regular attendance at the City Temple, one experienced auditor states, "He spoke such words as 'God,' 'Jesus Christ,' 'No,' Yes,' 'Nothing,' in a way to give more value to each word than any speaker I have ever heard."[2]

But not all the comments bearing reference to his voice were positive or even commendable. While his voice, which was full of action and tinged with a burr,[3] was judged 'matchless' and 'marvellous' by many, some took exception. Arthur Porritt, the journalist, expressed a negative reaction: "Dr. Parker's voice was deep and thick, and when he raised it, it was unpleasant . . . to hear him shout the word 'murder' - and he always shouted it - was horrible!"[4] There is little doubt that the criticism was valid to a certain extent, but the majority felt that his voice was wonderful in its organ-like quality and impeccable in articulation. Angus Watson summed up the sentiments of most auditors and critics when he declared:

> "It rose and fell in sonorous periods, as he poured out his perfectly phrased sentences. To hear the constantly changing inflection, now soft as a whisper, then challenging as a trumpet; the effect was so memorable as to be almost overwhelming."[5]

2. His Physical Presence:

Joseph Parker was one of those preachers of whom it is almost impossible to think without instantly recalling their physical appearance. The City Temple was often referred to as a "Place of Hearing,"[6]

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1. Newton, Preaching in London, p. 36.
2. Richards, op.cit., p. 302.
3. "Sketch," December 3, 1902, p. 250.
4. Porritt, op.cit., p. 233.
5. Forman, op.cit., p. 404.
6. Newton, River of Years, p. 138.

but it was equally important as a "Place of Seeing," for Dr. Parker had to be seen, as well as heard. There was that in his erect figure, his massive head, his flowing hair that might have 'moved the envy of a Nazarite'; it was his masterful lips, his keen, deep-set eyes, which at once attracted attention.[1]

We cannot underestimate the great force which his live, healthy physique exercised over his preaching. Parker was ever abounding in vitality, alive from head to foot, and when he entered his pulpit, his vigour had no little effect upon his congregation. At his death, George Matheson wrote:

> "I can understand the quiescence of Newman . . . the silence of Carlyle . . . the repose of Tennyson . . . but Parker at peace! - Parker in quiet! - Parker laid to rest even for an hour! - that is something as the stillness of a child. He was the soul of animation - without exception the most animated presence I ever encountered."[2]

Whatever theory may be held as to the secret of pulpit inspiration and the means of 'striking twelve' in every sermon, Dr. Parker n e v e r neglected the physical basis of it. His arrangements here are of interest: to his mind there was nothing equal to the cold sitz-bath. "Give me that," he exclaimed, "and I am physically master of any congregation that ever assembled. I have come down to this place sometimes hardly able to stand, but one dip has made a man of me again!"[3] The bath, the cold shower, the spare meal, the cup of hot beef-tea, all immediately before entering the pulpit, such was his method of securing the physical glow which made the body the fit instrument of the glowing mind. "No man," he suggested, "ever found the depth of his mind until

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1. "Christian World," December 1902.
2. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, pp. 40-41.
3. Parker, Ark of God, p. 334.

he had found the length of his body."[1]

Undoubtedly, Joseph Parker thoroughly enjoyed preaching, but there were occasions when he confessed he felt 'anti-pulpit.' "I tell you plainly that there are times when I go into the pulpit when I would gladly go ten miles the other way!"[2] Preaching three times weekly in his City Temple, plus numerous outside engagements, placed his body under the most terrific strain. Speaking about this strain, he said, "Preaching is self murder, it is shedding of blood. It is the most terrible of all physical and spiritual ordeals."[3] In order to save himself for his own pulpit, he made the following characteristic and impressive intimation, at the beginning of his City Temple ministry:

> "As an arrangement for self-protection, I am driven to announce the following . . .
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> Preaching on behalf of the salaries of poor ministers: NOTHING.
> Preaching for ministers whose salaries are less than £100 a year: NOTHING.
> Preaching at the opening of chapels: Six volumes of standard literature.
> Attending tea-meetings: Fifty pounds.
> Going to Bazaars: A Hundred guineas.
> Serving on Committees: Two Thousand pounds."[4]

3. His Dramatic Instinct:

The world, and London in particular, knew Dr. Parker as a great speaker, a compelling personality, but many recalled him as a

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1. Newton, Preaching in London, p. 36. Until the bombing of the City Temple, in the second World War, Dr. Parker's old bath-tub was still to be seen.
2. Parker, Ark of God, p. 344.
3. "Evangelical Magazine," Vol. LIX - New Series, Vol. IX, 1901, p. 2. Dr. Parker hoped that the twentieth century would bring to a close the practice of two worship services on the Sunday.
4. Clare, op.cit., p. 110.

superb actor. In his ability to dramatise everything he saw, heard and spoke, lay his strength and weakness, as an orator. He was dramatic in the pulpit because he was dramatic in his home; it was his nature. He did not agree with those who urged restraint in the pulpit; indeed, the only thing he found necessary to restrict at times, was his humour and wit. So wonderful were his dramatic talents, that actors used to come often to see him; and according to one commentator, "They generally went away in despair, for they had seen a master whom they could never hope to get even near to."[1]

Naturally, it is quite impossible to capture the dramatic talent of the man and place it upon paper, we can only hope to present 'sides' and facets of his instinct. He was dramatic in his use of gesture. He would spread his great arms towards the ceiling of the City Temple, peep down with pointing forefinger to the ground, wheel fiercely on his heel, or 'dally with dangerous calm' with the leaves of his pulpit Bible.[2]

He was striking in his application of the dramatic pause; he used it as an effective means to emphasis. Like a musical composer, who increases his effect by 'rests,' he would often pause for several seconds. The silence would be punctuated only by swaying of the body and 'Jupiterian' nods of the head.[3] An instance of his use of the pause is recorded by one who considered it "as fine as anything I know in oratory - except John Bright's historic passage . . . in the speech on the Crimean War . . .

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1. "T.P.'s Weekly," May, 1902.
2. Ibid.
3. "Christian World," December, 1902.

> . . . At the conclusion of his sermon Dr. Parker stood for a few moments in the dimly-lighted pulpit silent and with bowed head. Then, in a low voice, he commenced to read the autographs of the long list of illustrious names inscribed within the City Temple Bible. After each name came in solemn tones the word 'dead,' and for some moments the congregation listened in silence, not knowing whose name was to come next. A slight pause and the preacher had stepped back from his desk and in a loud voice that penetrated every corner of the building announced, 'Dr. Talmadge, dead!' Again, a long silence, and wrapping his gown around him and shrinking as if he had heard the sound of the rustling of the dread angels' wings, the preacher added, 'It makes me feel very lonely.'[1]

In his delivery, Dr. Parker demonstrated deep emotion and freely exercised the right of passionate fervour. Several examples follow which will aid the reader to gauge for himself the varied and extraordinary powers of the man. On the occasion of the Cromwell tercentenary celebration in 1899, Parker, in a sermon, referred in scathing language to the Armenian massacres, and to the ex-Kaiser's public declaration of friendship with the Sultan of Turkey. The passage has often been quoted, but no study of Parker would be satisfying without including it, if only because of its effect upon the congregation, and the public at large. Here is the memorable passage:

> "When I heard that the Kaiser went to the East, and after a dinner - hear this, for there is no more solemn word in the speech of Christianity - when I heard that the Kaiser went to a dinner, and in an after-dinner speech said, 'My friend, the Sultan,' I was astonished. I could have sat down in humiliation and terror. The Great Assassin had insulted civilization and outraged every Christian sentiment, and defied concerted Europe. He may have been the Kaiser's friend: he was not your's, he was not mine, he was not God's. Down with such speaking! and let every man's voice be heard on this matter. So long as any man can say, 'My friend, the Sultan,' I wish to have no commerce or friendship with that man. The Sultan drenched the land with blood, cut up men, women and children . . . and did all manner of hellish iniquity. He may have been the Kaiser's friend, but in the name of God, in

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1. "T.P.'s Weekly," May, 1902.

> the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost - speaking of the Sultan, not as an individual, not merely as a man, but speaking of him as the Great Assassin - I say, 'God damn the Sultan!'"[1]

These words were uttered with such awful and progressive energy, that when the last fell, his audience gasped for several seconds, until a reporter flung away his pencil and led the applause.[2] People felt that something had been said that cried for utterance. The world seemed a cleaner place for the utterance.[3]

In another place, Dr. Parker was speaking of the success or failure of a congregation, and the idea he wanted to press was that numbers did not, after all, count for so much. He began,

> "You say, 'there has not been much success in the Church. We only added one last year.' Who was that one? 'Well, it was a poor washerwoman.' Oh, indeed. Any family? 'Large family; six boys that we know of.' And you added the mother of six boys to your Church? Who can tell how many you added when you added that laundress? There may be six kings, six leaders of men, six apostles, and you say you only added one last year? What was his name? 'His name? I think his name was Robert Moffatt.' And you only added Robert Moffatt to the Church in one year? Do you know who Robert Moffatt is? When you added Robert Moffatt to the Church, you added a world!"[4]

Joseph Parker was, in many ways, a born actor, and certainly he had a high regard for drama and the stage. He numbered among his friends and regular auditors, some of London's leading stage personalities.[5] In a day when it was uncommon for preachers to speak favourably of the stage, Parker said, "The stage cannot be put down.

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. I, p. 166; he was properly lampooned by the papers and magazines of London for this outburst; not a few headlined their articles, "The Swearing Parson."
2. "T.P.'s Weekly," May, 1902.
3. Clare, op.cit., p. 129.
4. The Archives of the City Temple.
5. Notably, W.S. Penley, creator of "Charlie's Aunt" and J.L. Toole, the actor (Westminster Gazette," November 29, 1902.)

It responds to an instinct which is ineradicable and which need not be ignoble. The parables of the New Testament are the sublimest recognition of that instinct."[1] But, however high in regard he held drama and the stage and while some thought of him simply as an actor who had missed his way, and instead of reaching the stage, had slipped into the pulpit, his final submission was that the function of the preacher was infinitely superior to the function of the actor. In his own case, he tried to bring as much drama into the pulpit as possible, and often, quite spontaneously and unrehearsed, he would portray some mood or activity for his congregation. Sir Edward Russell relates the story of one such incident: Reading from one of the Epistles, Dr. Parker came upon a passage in which St. Paul speaks of one person as dear and another as most dear.

> "Dr. Parker looked up from his Bible, paused, and then in his most sententious manner said, 'There would be an unpleasantness in that Church!' Another pause, and long solemn nodding of his head: 'There would be a huff . . . shall I show you what a huff is?' Then the Doctor turned right round, showing his back to the congregation, and in every fold of his gown, every line of his head, every finesse of his attitude, this consummate actor conveyed the idea of huff to his startled audience."[2]

He used pathos in abundance and with consummate skill; it was part of his nature. With these words, he appealed to his people to seek Christ:

> "What are you? 'I am a poor woman who has got all wrong somehow.' Go and see Him; He knows all thy sins, and if you behave aright He will say, 'Thy sins which are many' - He does not conceal them - 'are all forgiven thee. Begin again, and summer will dawn in thy poor winter-bound soul' . . .
> . . . What are you? 'A thief half-damned.' What, just

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1. Parker, Might Have Been, p. 184.
2. Dawson, op.cit., pp. 145-146.

going into Hell? 'Yes.' Say, 'Lord, remember me,' and though the affairs of eternity are in His brain, He will not forget thee . . .

. . . What are you? 'A poor suffering creature, a poor woman with a secret sorrow, with a heavy affliction; my very heart oozing out of me, and nobody to speak to. I came in here to spend an hour . . . my very heart is leaking away, I have no joy in life' . . . Go to Him. I saw a dear old mother go to Him in just such a plight as you. She said - I heard her say it just under her breath as women sometimes speak - 'If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole.' I saw the poor creature wriggling her way through the crowd, and when she thought nobody was looking, she touched the hem of His garment and she stood upright like a tree of the Lord's right hand planting. Go. I will go too. I need Him, as you do, every day. Sometimes as a judge, oftenas a comforter, always as a teacher, and the more I need Him, the more He is."[1]

If Dr. Parker's dramatic genius managed many sublime moments in the course of his oratory, it was also capable of offending on occasion. It must be asserted that his dramatic oratory was known to have committed unforgivable atrocities against every ideal of good taste in pulpit decorum and these not only tended to limit his power, but injured the City Temple. After such incidents, he confessed he would not enter his pulpit again. One time, he stopped suddenly in his sermon and exclaimed, "In the middle of the Church there is a large man occupying one seat with his body and another with his coat, while elsewhere many of our friends are compelled to stand. Such things should not be!"[2] The 'large man' in question, who happened to be one of his loyal admirers and most wealthy supporters, was naturally indignant - more especially as he was entirely unconscious of the offence of which he was charged in such an uncomfortable fashion! It was from the heart that Dr. Parker prayed: "O Lord save

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1. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. I, p. 323.
2. "T.P.'s Weekly," May, 1902.

us from the insanity of defending ourselves";[1] and he might with wisdom have adopted the motto which Jay of Bath learned from Wilberforce: "Never complain, never explain."[2]

Still, whatever judgment men may pass upon oratory in general, or upon his in particular, Parker himself was quite certain the pulpit eloquence in itself was less than nothing. Men said he was dramatic and sensational, and so he was, but he had no place for "irreverent mountebanks who play all sorts of grotesque and ridiculous tricks!" With calculated, premeditated simulation he had nothing to do and he spoke in vehement terms against such tactics. He said, "I detest such wicked exhibitions with all my heart. By sensational preaching do you mean a screaming noise, 'an idiot's tale, full of sound and fury signifying nothing?' Then, I am sure you will not attempt to degrade my understanding by asking me whether I approve of it."[3] Chiefly, his dominant concern, as a preacher-orator, was by drama, pathos, sympathy and sincerity, to enlist men for God. When the accidental features of his preaching ministry are viewed in their true subordinate position, then the preacher's single aim will be seen and heard:

> "I call you to Christ. The more deeply I study His character the more do I see that He is the only saviour of the world. A working peasant, a carpenter's son, a root out of a dry ground. . . . To me, He is none other than Emmanuel - 'God with us.'"[4]

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1. Newton, Preaching in London, p. 40.
2. Ibid.
3. Parker, Ad Clerum, p. 61.
4. Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 321.

The Thursday Service

It will be recalled that Joseph Parker was drawn away from the comfortable appointments of Cavendish Chapel, Manchester, in the hope of establishing a noon-day service in the middle of the week in the centre of London; that hope determined him to leave a sphere in which it was his intention to live and die. In the face of popular dissuasion and the prophets of doom, he did what he set out to do: "I'll build a pulpit in the centre of the City and draw a congregation around it!"[1]

It is fitting to conclude this chapter with a consideration of the preacher in his Thursday pulpit. This was the service he loved above all and London seemed to return his own affection for it. From the beginning, the service was of the simplest nature. The full choir was never present, the praise being led by the organ and a few voices. The hymns, generally two in number, were well known; the scripture reading was brief and was followed by a short prayer. The sermon occupied the longest time, lasting from thirty to forty minutes.[2] The text chosen for the initial service became the general theme of all: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Dr. Parker challenged his congregation thus:

> "Let us now return to the crowded street, and to the duties and anxieties of our daily calling, lovingly yielding ourselves to the infinite care of our Father, and doing His business with both hands. . . . Make your desk an altar; turn your business into a means of grace; let your counting house be a sanctuary; and then heaven will be but the natural climax of your Christian progress!"[3]

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1. The Archives of the City Temple.
2. Adamson, op.cit., p. 140.
3. Parker, The City Temple , 1869, p. 24.

From the first Dr. Parker emphasised the fact that the service was absolutely non-sectarian. On Sundays a church of the Congregational order met within the walls of the City Temple; on Thursdays denominationalism was unknown and unrecognised. The tenor of the service was somewhat informal and popular; he was able to give free rein to his preaching eloquence, invective, sarcasm and humour.[1] It was not uncommon, on occasion, for the congregation to be convulsed with laughter. In the course of one Thursday morning sermon Dr. Parker, ridiculing certain forms of Spiritualism, drew a living picture of people who "go about tap-tapping." Under the caption 'Dr. Parker at the Phone,' the Sunday Circle presented this account:

> "Striking an attitude, making an ear-trumpet of his right hand, and inclining his head as though speaking through a telephone, Dr. Parker, personating the 'medium,' chanted in staccato tones, 'Are you there?' 'Yes,' came the sepulchral answer. What do you want?' 'Nothing!'"[2]

A chief point to be noted in connection with the Thursday service is that, in company with Chalmers and Guthrie in the North, Liddon and Spurgeon in the South, Parker revived the tradition of Whitefield as a preacher to great crowds.[3] He belonged to that select order of men who seemed ordained to traverse the prevailing idea that the day of the orator had passed with the revival of letters and the propagation of knowledge through printing. The average attendance at the noon-day service, over a period of thirty-three years, was between

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 140.
2. "Sunday Circle," November 22, 1902
3. R.F. Horton, in his Autobiography (London, 1917, p. 182), said, "Everyone knew that we could crowd the Queen's Hall, or any hall, to hear Dr. Parker: his dramatic genius could call together a crowd and dismiss it delighted!"

one thousand and fifteen hundred people. It was a magnificent congregation for variety and composition, being thoroughly catholic in character, as one worshipper shows:

> "One can never attend a service without noticing the presence of a number of very poor persons, who may be seen occupying the same pew as people far removed from them in worldly circumstance. The divinity student and the college professor, the village pastor and the popular preacher, may be seen sitting side by side; the prosperous merchant and the struggling clerk may share the same hymn-book. The agnostic and the salvationist rub shoulders. . . . The masculine element greatly predominates."[1]

Through the uniqueness of his preaching-oratory, Dr. Parker had drawn a vast concourse of folk about him and with them came the interest and admiration of the great city he loved. He received his popularity humbly and with deep appreciation to God. "I thank God," he said, "that . . . I have been standing in the midst of a crowd as a Christian minister."[2] Crowds, money and patronage came his way, and while he recognised their subordinate role, he did not despise them all the same. When the critics of London professed to have discovered his recipe for popularity, he turned on them, and exclaimed:

> "There is nothing meaner than the criticism which is often passed on preachers. If a man has a great congregation it is considered to be a kind of wickedness on his part by some people. They can always tell you how he gets the great congregation: it is by casting out of devils in the name of the Prince of devils. We are told that this man or that has a great congregation because he says peculiar things. The Lord knows that there are men enough who never say anything at all, either peculiar or non-peculiar! The whole world is gone out after Christ. Why? Because He hath a devil and is mad, because He dines with publicans and sinners, because he is peculiar, eccentric, unlike other people. How much better to say: No; He touches the world's heart . . . Let great reasons be set against great consequences. To great effects assign great causes!"[3]

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1. Dawson, op.cit., p. 99.
2. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. I, p. 330.
3. Clare, op.cit., preface, quoted by Leslie Weatherhead.

So it was, that close by the walls of St. Paul's Cathedral, Joseph Parker preached the Gospel of Christ with an eloquence, a vigour, an originality, and an impressiveness which, according to Archdeacon Sinclair, "was surpassed by few, if any, of our own Christian orators!"[1] Appreciation of his oratory was the possession of no single social class or profession; he appealed to all types and conditions of men. An evangelist, who preached in Cambridgeshire, among brick-makers, navvies and farm labourers, brought one of them, a brick-maker, to London for a holiday and took him to the City Temple.

When the service was over the evangelist said, "Well, Sam, what do you think of Dr. Parker?" "I tell 'ee what it is, sir," was the reply, "that's just the sort of preaching as we wants up at the Heath." "Is it, Sam?" said his friend, somewhat astonished. "Yes, sir, . . . what we wants there is a man as has got summat to say, and as knows how to say it."[2]

Sir George Mason sums up the amazing nature of his ministry in slightly different language:

> "There is one man holding a religious service, for one hour, on one day of the week, preaching from one book, and essentially on one subject, for thirty years, and the people all the while waiting with eagerness on his ministry."[3]

The great white pulpit and the City Temple itself, are gone, smashed almost beyond recognition by the bombs of the second World War. The man who built that Temple and "beat his name into the drum of the world's ear"[4] from its pulpit has gone too, but his spirit continues to move among the modern day City Templars, encouraging them in their efforts to rebuild.

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1. "Christian Commonwealth," December, 1902, p. 161.
2. "The Examiner," December, 1902.
3. Adamson, op.cit., p. 150.
4. "The Homilist," Vol. 1, 1875, p. 61.

CHAPTER V

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF JOSEPH PARKER

". . . . I will not be measured and bounded by my own little judgments, which I can convict already of a thousand mistakes; I will not be self-bounded; my vanity and pride of intellect shall not make a prisoner or victim of me; I will live in the great world of faith, imagination, hope, sympathy, religious sensitiveness; and I will not be surprised by thy greatness, O God; nothing could surprise me in thee but want of love and power."[1]

— Joseph Parker.

CHAPTER V

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF JOSEPH PARKER

> ". . . . The Gospel of Christ is a big thing; we must pray God to stretch the skin of our minds so we can grasp more of its grandeur."[2]

Throughout the first sixty years of the nineteenth century, the story of English theology and religious thought has hardly a dull page. It was at this time that the forces were slowly accumulating which were to revolutionize theology, and to bring about that recasting and reconstruction of belief in which we today are called on to bear our part. Joseph Parker was forced to do his thinking in this unsettled atmosphere of transition and change. On the one hand, the forces of the Negative movement, with its accent on Biblical criticism and physical science, tended to undermine the accepted theories of inspiration and revelation. On the other hand, the Broad Church movement, fostered and influenced by the progressive and liberal nature of the times, was making a vital contribution to life and thought through the

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1. Parker, Studies in Texts, Vol. II, p. 55.
2. Quoted by J.F. Newton, in River of Years, p. 257.

efforts of Stanley, Jowett, and F.D. Maurice.[1]

Just where Dr. Parker fits into the framework of the nineteenth century and its varied expression of thought is difficult to say. As heretofore, and most especially here, he falls into no neat category of thought or doctrine; he remains the stubborn individualist. But this much can be said at the out-set; in so far as the nineteenth century religious thinkers stressed the appeal to the heart, displayed a strong distaste for dogmatic theology, vindicated the claim of the Christian conscience, and enunciated a spiritual conception of religion,[2] Joseph Parker, to a large degree, was representative of the times. He does not, however, stand out as a thinker or a scholar in the technical sense of those terms; his theological education was of too desultory character and the mass of his thought is too slight for that. But his vivid intuition of the Eternal, his broad catholicity, his intensely human and truth loving aspirations allow him a significant place among those who understood the needs of the era, and who laboured to promote a more enlightened view of Christianity.[3]

To some degree, Parker's thought reflects the Victorian era's transference of interest from the sovereignty to the fatherhood of

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1. Vernon F. Storr, The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century: 1800-1860 (Lond., 1913), p. 4.
2. John Tulloch, Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the nineteenth century (Lond., 1885), p. 11.
3. Speaking of the nineteenth century, Parker said: "On every hand the new wine is bursting the old bottles. . . . Open the Church to all truth - to Science, to Music, to Philosophy, to Art, to Philanthropy, to Prayer, and to the mighty Preaching which bows all things as by an infinite majesty; then there will be few who will go astray for lack of bounty or want of love." (Parker, Weaver Stephen: odds and evens in English religion (Lond., 1886), p. 277.)

God, from the doctrine of the Atonement to the doctrine of the Incarnation, from the concern for personal to the concern for social salvation, from a religion of authority to a religion of experience.[1]

Still, we present a false picture if one understands Joseph Parker as thoroughly in accord with his era and its new emphases. He used his pulpit as a watch tower, whence he could tell the visions that came to him. "The visions," observed Principal Fairbairn, "were often remarkable, and the speech was never commonplace."[2]

It is important for an authentic understanding of his religious thought to remember that, while Parker associated himself with no particular theological party, and demonstrated little interest in formal systems of theology, it would be wrong to think of him as other than orthodox. As a matter of fact, his preaching, to a large extent, was a prolonged and powerful rearguard action in defence of the old conceptions. All the same, if Parker's theological conceptions were orthodox, they were assuredly as broad as orthodoxy can ever have allowed.[3] For himself, Parker wished to be remembered as an Evangelical. Writing in his autobiography, he states,

> "Personally, I have accepted what is known as the Evangelical interpretation of the Gospel, because I believe that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as evangelically interpreted, answers more questions, satisfies more aspirations, responds to more necessities, and supplies better motives for service than any other conception of the Kingdom of God."[4]

On the great questions that divided nineteenth century Liberalism, he wavered, changed his views from time to time, and

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1. H.G. Wood, Frederick D. Maurice (Cambridge, 1950), p. 23.
2. Nicoll, editor, British Weekly Extras, Vol. IV, p. 46.
3. Clare, op.cit., p. 135.
4. Ibid., p. 84.

latterly he shrunk wisely from committing himself. He would take up a cause and grow weary of it, and turn to something else. "On all but the great subjects," observed W.R. Nicoll, "his mind was restless, and he would seek for premature and impossible reconciliation."[1] In short, no simple explanation can be made to account for Joseph Parker. "He was," as Canon R.J. Campbell said, "like a river in a desert; his message was never mediated through anybody else; it was God-given, fresh, original, like the words of Jesus."[2] His strong influence had its source in a hidden life. He was deeply, humbly and fervently religious. He was before all things a preacher of the Christian redemption, living and dying "under the benediction of the Cross." With works of systematic theology he had small acquaintance, but he was mighty in the Scriptures, and never was the Bible read more earnestly and believingly than by him. By his own study and thought he worked out independently[3] all the main conclusions of evangelicalism, and he never really moved far from them. The Christian faith, he claimed, "is to take its place amid all the controversies of the times, by changing nothing essential, touching nothing vital, but by enlarging its terms so as to comprehend all unsuspecting occurrences . . . all varieties of the highest and the most urgent thinking of the times."[4]

The path over which Joseph Parker had to go before reaching

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1. Nicoll, Princes of the Church, p. 177.
2. "Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, 1902, p. 374.
3. Still, Parker was influenced to some degree by F.W. Robertson and H.W. Beecher. "Who would not love to have one whole summer day, the longest in the year, with F.W. Robertson," he asked. "He was the greatest teacher of his day, the child-man, the man all but angel . . . " (Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. VII, 1 Samuel XVIII - 1 Kings XIII, p. 332.)
4. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. III, p. 282.

his conclusions was not an easy one, nor did he cross it without struggle. It is certain that few people suspect, much less realise, how much a man of the pulpit preaches to himself, and what a struggle goes on in the lonely places of his own soul in respect of the faith that makes us faithful. It is still a matter of debate as to whether Newman was not in intellect a sceptic, as in heart he was a mystic. So it was with Joseph Parker, in whose life even a casual student must feel the stress and strain of a struggle never quite adjourned; and, if he did not become a saint, he had it in him to be a great sinner, as well as a thorough-going sceptic.[1] Speaking of his spiritual pilgrimage, he said, "I tell you with all simplicity that my experience has been . . . most trying. . . . My Christian life, I hold at a great expense of intellectual difficulty and pain, but I hold it all the firmer for that!"[2] And, in another place, he confessed:

> "I know well what it is to fight with unbelief, and having been brought out of darkness into 'marvelous light', I wish to help others. . . . Once I needed an elementary teacher, and God graciously sent the Philip I wanted . . . "[3]

How, then, did Joseph Parker react to the trend of his times? In his relation to nineteenth century thought and action, Joseph Parker is not one man, consistent and logical, but two men: the one broad, manly, intellectual; the other conservative, almost narrow and timid. Nor do the two blend into one, they remain side by side, and he will rapidly pass from the one into the other. This leads to apparent inconsistencies, as when he scornfully denounced the 'cast iron'

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1. Newton, Preaching in London, p. 37.
2. Parker, The Priesthood of Christ:a re-statement of vital truth (Lond., 1887), p. 278.
3. Parker, Some One (Lond., 1893), p. 1.

theory of inspiration, while appealing to the authority of the text.

In the first instance, Parker's thought is expansive and somewhat liberal; it conformed to the temper of the century. Believing that all men are not mentally equal, he said, "Why plague all men with the same definitions. Define for yourselves; love God in your own way!"[1] Confident that "enlargement is the key word in Christianity,"[2] he urged all critics and thinkers to bring their minds to study the Gospel, that its truth might be liberated from ignorance and superstition.

> "I gladly join good men of every communion," he announced, "whose supreme object is to show that Christianity is infinitely more than a mere argument; that it is a redemption, which can neither be measured by logic, nor expressed in words . . . "[3]

In one of his supreme moments of sympathy with the work, which the men of his time were trying to accomplish, Joseph Parker replied to some of his evangelical colleagues who feared for the future of faith:

> "What panics we have seen! What godly godless excitement, as if the truth could ever be in danger, as if some blind Samson could catch hold of the pillars of heaven and shake down upon us the contents of the sky. What a sky we live under if you think it can be shaken down! . . . I would rather teach that the men of true science are all men of a Christian spirit. They may not be so advanced as others; they may be sadly wanting in this or that . . . but wherever I find a man whose supreme purpose is truth and reality, I find not an enemy, but a fellow-worker."[4]

It was to be thoroughly deplored, thought Parker, that the

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 6.
2. Ibid., Vol. XXII, Acts I-XVI, p. 293.
3. Parker, The Priesthood of Christ, preface, p. vii.
4. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIII, Acts XVI-XXVIII, pp. 150-151.

name of evangelical theology had often been monopolised by a theology not only elaborate and final, but irrevisable, and often obscurantist. He endeavoured to tell his brethren that the evangelical faith could only "be hinted at."[1]

> "It is not to be catalogued, sect arianized, , or put into constabulary custody," he affirmed; "its dogmas are but beginnings. Its catechisms are but shadowy and temporary outlines. . . . Official zeal and insolence would 'take Jesus and make him a king by force'; but He Himself declines the tinsel crown, knowing that when His 'hour is come,' He will reign by right, and therefore, reign forever!"[2]

Furthermore, he called upon all to have done with formal creeds and systems. Setting himself up as an example, he declared,

> "Personally, I would not sign a creed my own hand had d r a w n out. It is my creed at four o'clock to-day, it may not be my creed at four o'clock to-morrow. . . . I am a growing man; if that creed were growing, I would sign it a thousand times."[3]

Parker admired F.W. Robertson for affirming that "God's truth must be boundless," and he demonstrated how keenly he felt the truth when he said at the close of the Eulogy to H.W. Beecher,

> "I burn with anger when I say that I know not of any more damnable treason than to codify the infinite love and thought of God in words of human invention, and to declare that such codification is complete and final. I say with Emerson: 'That which is true in transition becomes false when fixed.'"[4]

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1. Furthermore, he claimed that affairs of technical theology and studies in science were only for the qualified few. "Most of us," he averred, "can be but humble followers of such men. Their genius is incommunicable. . . . At whatever sacrifice of feeling, we must strengthen ourselves to tell some men in the pulpit and in the pew that they are not theologians!" (Parker, The Religious Outlook (Lond., 1890), p. 7.)
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIII, Acts XVI-XXVIII, pp. 150-151.
3. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 35.
4. Eulogy of H.W. Beecher (Lond., 1887), postscript.

Because of his broad catholicity and occasional liberal sentiments, and his distaste for certain brands of Calvinism ("Paul seems to have been handed over to this man Calvin. Now we have in Christ's church Calvinism; what an intrusion!"[1]), Joseph Parker was shunned by some of his London contemporaries, notably C.H. Spurgeon. The Metropolitan Tabernacle preacher regarded Parker as inconsistent, incomplete, and even unfaithful, in his expression of the evangelical doctrine. All the same, Dr. Parker, urging Spurgeon to shed some of his narrow and extreme puritan conceptions, wrote:

> "My dear Spurgeon . . . take in more fresh air. Open your windows, even when the wind is in the East. Scatter your Ecclesiastical harem. I do not say destroy your circle; I simply say, enlarge it. As with your circle, so . . . your reading!"[2]

One final example will serve to illustrate the large, free, and expansive nature of Parker's thought on occasion. Toleration of other forms of religion was a by-product of his healthy and open-minded outlook. His watch-word here was, "Mock no man's religion - point out the inadequacy of it, show the vanity of the small idolatrous form . . . but confine your remarks to the visible thing. . . . The religion is beyond the idol, - above it, below it, away from it . . . show them the truth . . . "[3]

But if Joseph Parker encouraged his nineteenth century auditors to attend "any church" where the minister "can charm you away from your counter and desk, and make you feel, even for a moment, that

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 3.
2. W.Y. Fullerton, C.H. Spurgeon (Lond., 1920), p. 301.
3. Stopford A. Brooke, Life and Letters of Frederick W. Robertson, M.A. (Lond., 1865), Vol. II, p. 36.

the universe is larger than you had supposed it to be";[1] even if, as he said, "I read the books that make me larger, I follow the authors that tell me of bigger things than I have yet seen";[2] still, it is to be remembered he was two men, and the timid and fearful side often obscured the manly and intellectual. In the second place, his word to the nineteenth century was one of caution, even rebuke.[3] He confessed that he was not always prepared to grant the implications of current conclusions. As he criticised his evangelical contemporaries for making too much of one system or theology, likewise he reprimanded the rationalists, "for whom the mind constituted the supreme court, holding that nothing should survive in Christianity but what is congenial to it."[4]

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1. In referring to Evangelist D.L. Moody (once) in a sermon, Parker indicated: "There was a time when I was slightly disinclined to have much commerce or communion with Mr. Moody, because I feared he was a man with only one set of sympathies." However, after a visit with Moody in his house in America, Parker confessed: "I found he was a big man, a man of wide views and wide sympathies, and that he only needed more light, or the opportunity of enjoying more light, in order thoroughly to enter into his privileges." Parker cleared Moody of narrowness, when Moody showed him two volumes of The People's Bible and said: 'I never travel without these . . . these books have done more for me than any other books . . . I ever read.' (Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. II, pp. 268-269.
2. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. I, p. 18.
3. In particular, Parker criticised the Natural Scientists Tyndall, Huxley, and J.S. Mill in his satire Job's Comforters. Here is a sample passage: "And in the day of his prosperity, Job sent for the books of Huxley the Moleculite, John Stuart the Millite, and Tyndall the Sadducee, and read them all with an attentive eye. Then he rose up, and said: 'O wise yet foolish men! your books are full of knowledge and instruction, and mighty men are ye in the fields of learning. But have ye forgotten that there is a spirit in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding? . . . Keep your learning in its proper place, and it will help the progress of the world; but attempt not with it to heal the wounds of the heart.' (Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 157.)
4. P.T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and Modern Mind (Lond., 1907), p. 215.

> "Let us take care," he warned . . . lest an 'intelligent' faith become the worst type of self-trustful rationalism; by drawing the whole emphasis into the words 'intelligent' and depleting the word 'faith' of its grace and force. To be saved by intelligent faith is to be saved by works."[1]

Falling prey to the fear of the "blind Samson" about whom he earlier warned his conservative friends, Parker, himself, expressed concern for the old land marks of faith and doctrine, fearful lest they be swept away by the theological reconstruction. Likening all theologians to men who had reached the top of the 'mountain of faith,' he bade them have pity and sympathy upon those "still seeking the way to the top." In one almost pathetic paragraph we catch a glimpse of the real tension between conservative and liberal in Dr. Parker's nature. He asks,

> "What would you think of a man standing on the top of a hill and saying to climbers below, 'What are you doing down there? The top is the thing! Here am I, look at me' . . . You would say, 'The man forgets that he was once down here himself.' Exactly, there you have the whole thing. We do not fly to the top. We travel to it step by step, oh, so slowly, so wearily. . . . Men are at different points in the line of progress. . . . Let not the one who is on the top of the mountain discourage the climbers who are patiently toiling up. Do speak kindly to us. We would like to be as high up as you are, and we mean to be someday, but give us time. Once you were here; why, here is your very foot-print - see, there is no mistake about it. Give us, therefore, the word from above."[2]

For the most part Parker's thought represents an attempt to achieve some solid ground, beyond formal systems and removed from controversy. For him, "Theology is God struggling into words, and the struggle never comes to anything but struggle."[3] So, he sought to go beyond, even to surmount the struggle by attending to the practical,

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1. Parker, Apostolic Life, preface, p. v.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 83.
3. Ibid., Vol. XXI, John, p. 422.

encouraging patience, and remembering the utter mystery of life. "No man," he remarked, "can understand religion. Religion was never meant to be understood; it was meant to be felt, a secret, subtle, infinite fire, a climate, not an over-coat . . . "[1]

If Spurgeon's preaching represented a clear revelation of his view of truth, Joseph Parker's was an inspiration to truth-seeking.[2] The perplexed adult and the inquisitive youth: all, were bidden to explore truth for themselves,[3] while Parker himself took refuge in the knowledge that things eternal were best understood as being 'ineffable.' The frequent presence of the word 'ineffable' in Parker's writings and sermons, is indicative of the spiritual heart-quality of his message. Let him sum up his position in these words:

> "No man can touch my religion. If our religion is an affair of letters, forms, dates, autographs. . . . Then I do not wonder that our cabinet is sometimes burglariously entered and certain things filched from it . . . . I do not keep my religion in a museum; my Christianity is not locked up in an iron safe; my conception of God no man can break through, nor steal. You cannot take my Bible from me; if you could prove that the Apostle John wrote the Pentateuch, and that Moses wrote the Apocalypse . . . you have not touched what I hold to be the Revelation of God . . . "[4]

What then is our criterion for judging truth? For Dr. Parker, it is the heart, the intuition, the imagination. You cannot interpret religious truth without the religious imagination - "That wondrous

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1. Ibid., Vol. XVI, Daniel, p. 447.
2. "Commonwealth Magazine," December, 1902, p. 160.
3. Parker averred: "My experience leads me to the conclusion that people are tired of hard and inexpansive dogma, they are not tired of truth. . . . Man is called to the patient quest of truth, not to its complete acquisition. To love truth is orthodoxy; to put truth into cast-iron forms may be the worst unbelief." (Parker, Might Have Been, p. 106.)
4. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIII, Acts XVI-XXVIII, pp. 51-52.

power," he says, "which keeps the literal and yet comes out into apocalyptic visions and interpretations, and glorifies the letter until its raiments shine and its face glistens with a light brighter than the sun."[1] How do we know religious truth? "The heart," he maintained, "knows it." The conscience has a voice in all such matters; not by eloquence, or reasoning, or "painful analysis of evidence," but "By the consciousness of our best moments, by the agony of our loftiest sorrows, by the right interpretation of the events which constitute our life, we come to know the touch of love, the light of heaven, the authority of God."[2]

In the following pages, we present the main assertions of Parker's religious thought. As to the special features of his message, Joseph Parker has been allowed to express himself wherever possible and practicable in his own words, and in proportion to what he said, or failed to say, on any particular subject.

Concerning the Bible

Joseph Parker was unquestionably a man of one book; and that book was the Bible.[3] He said that as a child the only books his family owned which were interesting to read were The Pilgrim's Progress and the Bible. From the early days, even until the final days of his life, the Bible remained not only the most interesting, but by far the most important of all books. It was said of Abraham Lincoln that no man read less, or thought more. Perhaps this was true of Parker. In any case, one book he knew and in it he lived and

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1. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. 1, p. 327.
2. Parker, The Religious Outlook, p. 15.
3. His works: People's Bible, Pulpit Bible, Family Bible, make this plain.

moved and had his being. Sitting by his study fire one day, he exclaimed to a friend: "Look at that Bible." On the fly-leaf, in a flourishing hand were the words: Joseph Parker, Banbury. "I've got thousands of sermons out of that," he said, "four of them this morning. Put some coal on the fire!"[1]

Parker considered the Bible from four vantage points: its Inspiration, its Authority, its Interpretation, and its relation to Natural Revelation.

1. Inspiration

Speaking in the early years of the nineteenth century, F.W. Robertson remarked, "It is this grand question of Inspiration which is given to this age to solve;"[2] Joseph Parker felt himself called, to some extent, to aid in the task of solution. But, if he tried in his own way to clarify the meaning and place of Inspiration, it was only through constant affirmation of the fact, not in any academic presentation of new ideas. For him, there is no doubt as to the inspiration of the book; it is granted and assumed, once and for all. The question he raises is this: "Are we in the nineteenth century light, to stand by such a position or to abandon it?"[3]

Standing firmly and absolutely by the accepted position, Parker explains that Inspiration is, indeed, without an explanation. Like its Author, it is a term which has no equivalent in words; it is without suitable definition. Strange as it may seem, "There are some words," he declares, "which lexicography cannot break up into

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1. From personal correspondence with Rev. Ebenezer Rees.
2. Brooke, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 135-141.
3. Parker, The Larger Ministry (Lond., 1884), p. 18.

explanatory syllables . . . we must feel some meanings, as blind men feel the morning sun."[1]

However difficult it may be to determine the exact nature of Inspiration, "where it begins, ends, how it operates, and where it separates itself from genius"; yet, according to the teaching of the Old and New Testaments, a few men seem to have been divinely inspired either to speak or to put into written form what was communicated to them by God.[2] Furthermore, the fact that their number was small, is rather an argument in favour of their claim. But, if few have been inspired to speak the word, all have been inspired to feel it.

While affirming his belief in the present fact of Biblical Inspiration Parker will not, however, endorse any mechanical or restrictive theory. That some have posited such theories, and even made them pre-requisites to faith is unfortunate, and to be deplored. Elaborating on this, he remarked:

> "Possibly, in our early reading of the Scriptures, we put ourselves into a false relation to the book by taking with us a preconceived notion, or theory of inspiration, and trying to make the Bible fit our mechanical orthodoxy. This was like timing the sun by our chronometers, instead of timing our chronometers by the sun!"[3]

Parker's own conception of Inspiration is eminently simple, and spiritual. We come to know that the Bible is inspired in the most natural way; "Inspiration grows upon a man much as the consciousness of his own intellectual and spiritual life grows upon

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. I, Genesis, p. 9.
2. Parker, The Paraclete: An Essay on the Personality and Ministry of the Holy Ghost (Lond., 1874), p. 19.
3. Ibid., p. 7.

him."[1]

It is of interest to record here that Dr. Parker was not afraid to admit the presence of errors and discrepancies in the Biblical record. Nevertheless, while there may be verbal and technical mistakes, the essence, the supernatural fact is not impugned. If he gave credit, on occasion, to the Higher Critics ("By all means let discrepancies be reconciled or removed; scholarship is quite equal to the task . . . "[2]); still, he reminded them: "You are altogether mistaken if you think that the successful readjustment of chronologies, dates, and authorships, will lead the infidel to accept the Bible as the inspired record of the Word of God."[3]

While Joseph Parker had his moods, when he valued the work of the Higher Critics, it is almost certain that he despised their accomplishments as being the work "of the enemy come to take away the sacred Book!"[4] According to his self-appointed successor at the City Temple, Canon R.J. Campbell, "he did not really follow, or appreciate the trend of Biblical criticism."[5] It is to be regretted that Dr. Parker did not take his own preaching to heart on the business of leaving controversial and argumentative matters alone. Controversy, as he admitted himself, was not his forte, yet worry

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1. Parker, Ecce Deus: essays on the Life and Doctrine of Jesus Christ (Lond., 1870), p. 25.
2. Parker, Some One, p. 35.
3. Parker, None Like It; a plea for the old sword (Lond., 1864), p. 65.
4. Ibid., p. 67.
5. From a personal letter addressed to the author.

and argument over the Bible often served to make his life miserable.[1] At one point, he directed this plea to the contemporary critics:

> "The Bible has been very precious to us. I know not what the house would have been without it. . . . Be patient with us if we cannot all at once change our point of view and modify our appreciation. We do not mean to be narrow, but we do mean to be just."[2]

And again, in another place, he confessed,

> "In substance I retain the Bible exactly as my Mother gave it, for she, too, was an expert . . . my reason for referring to it now is to remind the critics that there is a Bible dear to the common people. They were made by it, converted by it, comforted by it, and they live upon it, and I do not want the critics to take it away until they have something better to give than 'a series of tentative suggestions' . . . "[3]

What is the relation between Science and the Biblical Inspiration? Science is in perfect harmony with God's Word. While, perhaps it does not know it, Science is now "running errands for religion."[4] Since the Scriptures have been given to man in a rough outline, as it were, Science helps to fill up the "middle part" as life advances and wisdom increases. In a consideration of the creation episode, Parker illustrates just how Science works hand in hand with Biblical Inspiration. Said he,

> "This is the text, now let the commentators come with their notes. The geologist has come and he says - 'read this word beginning, as if it referred to incalculable time'; . . . read this word day as if it meant a great number of ages'; very good, we read it exactly so, and it

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1. A perfect example of the contradition of Parker's thought is seen in his reaction to R.F. Horton's Inspiration and the Bible. When the book came out, Parker allied himself with those who denounced it by writing None Like It. Shortly after denouncing publicly Horton's book, he wrote to say it "was discriminating, generous, sympathetic, and powerful. . . . Not a word in it should be changed!" (Albert Peel and J.A.R. Marriot, Robert Forman Horton (Lond., 1937), pp. 174-176.)
2. Parker, None Like It, p. 165.
3. Ibid., p. 222.
4. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 115.

> does us no harm. Then other men of Science say . . . 'Don't suppose that the heavens and the earth were made exactly as you see them; they came out of a germ, an atom, a molecule,' and I answer so be it: God did not make a tottering old man exactly as we see him . . . instead of resenting these suggestions I am thankful for them. I put them altogether and I find the difference between Moses and his scientific commentators to be that Moses worked synthetically and they worked analytically. . . . The first chapter of Genesis is like an acorn, for out of it have come great forests of literature."[1]

2. Authority

If the Bible is divinely inspired, it follows that it is divinely authoritative. Inspiration and Authority must stand or fall together. There are three special reasons, according to Dr. Parker, why men should recognize and accept the divine authority of the Word of God: its universal human appeal, its sublime moral tone, and its divine revelation.

In the first instance, people must never hold the idea that the Bible can only be understood by certain men to whom exceptional privileges have been granted.[2] The man who says, 'I can do without it,' may be speaking sincerely, but he is speaking ignorantly.[3] This "Magna Charta" of the civilised world,[4] ignores that which is merely "national, temporary, casual or adventitious," because it is meant for everyman.[5]

On the other hand, how grand is the moral tone of the Bible.[6] "No such morality," affirms Parker, "have I met in any other book."[7]

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1. Parker, Adam, Noah, and Abraham (Lond., 1884), pp. 6-7.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. V, Joshua-Judges, pp. 291-292.
3. Ibid., Vol. XX, Mark-Luke, p. 274.
4. Ibid., Vol. IV, Numbers-Deuteronomy, p. 4.
5. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. I, p. 312.
6. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XIV, Ecclesiastes -Isaiah XXVI, p. p. 318.
7. Ibid., Vol. III, Leviticus-Numbers XXVI, p. 71.

Whatever difficulties may surround the intellectual approach to the book, still, its wonderful moral character remains. Parker goes so far as to say that where there are attacks upon the Bible, very often these are inspired by a bitter hatred of its moral strictures.[1]

It is significant to note that the moral element in the Bible had a great effect upon Dr. Parker. In his autobiography, he confessed: "The moral sublimity of the Bible enables me to accept its spiritual mysteries. It is saved from superstition by righteousness. Its Moses necessitates its Christ."[2] In another place, he demonstrated how great a place he assigned to the moral factor of the book, especially in relation to sustaining its authority. He averred, "Where a moral course has been vividly indicated in Holy Writ, it should never be regarded as open to criticism, and the revision of dissenting minds!"[3]

In the final analysis, however, the Bible possesses infallible authority over human life because it is the Revelation of God. The Bible reveals, it does not suggest; it declares, it does not investigate. "All the surprise is on the side of the reader, never on the side of the writer."[4] Parker asks, "What is it that is professedly revealed?" He answers, "What is it? It is not history; it is not cosmogony . . . ethnology . . . nor even a code of morals. The supreme revelation that is made in the Bible is the revelation of God Himself. Everything else belongs to the region of detail!"[5]

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1. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. III, p. 152.
2. Ibid., p. 117.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XIII, Proverbs, p. 334.
4. Parker, The Paraclete, p. 33.
5. Ibid., p. 24.

God is represented in the Bible as being the mightiest, and, in some respects, the weakest of all beings. The Bible finds a "cradle for Him in Bethlehem and an altar on Calvary."[1] It represents Him as voluntarily and lovingly sparing the very race that rejects and dishonours Him. It says there is a secret, and the answer to it is Father, Saviour, Redeemer, Lord.[2] God's personality, method of governing the world, and His purpose in the education of human nature are all contained in the Bible.[3]

But the Book, which is the very "biography of God,"[4] "is not so much a book containing a revelation, as a revelation accepting the risks and limitations of a book!"[5] Those who inquire as to why they should be bound by this authoritative and infallible revelation are reminded that "in deciding to reject the authority of the Bible, they do not escape the responsibility; they only alter the point of pressure."[6]

3. Interpretation

Joseph Parker gave primary consideration to establishing the fact of the Inspirational and Revelational content of the Bible in order to clear the ground for a better, clearer understanding of its unique message. His own desire was to relate the Biblical message to his time, and it was the opinion of not a few, that he was most able as an interpreter of Holy Scripture. The "letter of scripture"

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. I, Genesis, p. 77.
2. Ibid., p. 100.
3. Ibid., Vol. XVI, Jeremiah-Daniel, p. 268.
4. Ibid., Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 252.
5. Ibid., Vol. XXV, Ephesians-Revelations, p. 450.
6. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. II, p. 363.

was important to him, not for itself, but because of the Spirit contained in it.[1] He agreed with R.F. Horton that "the difficulty in the Church has seldom been to believe that the Word of the Lord came, but always to believe that it comes."[2] So he said,

> "Because thou hast seen the Bible, the written record, - the mere letter, - thou hast believed . . . thou shalt see greater things than these; from the letter thou shalt pass to the spirit; the Book itself shall be forgotten in a still higher gift; thou shalt lose Inspiration in the Inspirer Himself."[3]

Parker's method of interpretation was simple, personal and always suggestive. He endeavoured to view the Bible with a sympathetic spirit, to read it with an eager and expectant mind; he lived with it till the book became his friend,[4] more, till it became the "Book of the Presence."

But, before one takes any interest in the special features of the Bible's message, one must read the book from cover to cover. The revelation is a whole; "you must begin with the beginning, and go through the whole unfurlment of the Divine thought, if you would have any grasp of it."[5] He urged the discipline of Bible reading upon all of his City Temple auditors, and, as if to give his people some plan, he commended Dean Stanley's approach to fiction as valuable for perusing the Bible. "Dean Stanley," he claimed, "was accustomed to say

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1. Adamson, op.cit., p. 173.
2. Horton, Verbum Dei, p. 52.
3. Parker, Weaver Stephen, pp. 89-92. For Parker, however, the spirit and letter were really indivisible . . . "Some say, 'Not the Book, but the Spirit that is in the Book! . . . Far be from anyone of us to denounce the doctrine . . . But if He inspired the Book, the Book must be of kindred quality with His own." (Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 80.)
4. "It is impossible for me to convey any sense adequate to the occasion of the manner in which the book grows on me . . . it is my best friend."
5. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. III, p. 67.

that he read a work of fiction, first for the story, second for the thought, and thirdly for the style . . . he perused the work three distinct times!"[1] Joseph Parker followed his own counsel and set an example for his congregation in setting himself to read the Bible through during each summer vacation!

Still, he was well aware that "it is possible to read the Bible through, yet know nothing about its secret soul." So he reminded his friends: "The Holy Spirit surrounds all interpretation . . . and guards private interpretation against error and danger." We must have the double action of the Holy Spirit . . . "He inspired the writers, he must now inspire the reader."[2] Thereby, we are kept from the worst kind of impiety, namely, the sort which sets aside commonsense, and "literary rectitude . . . fixing attention upon isolated passages, and setting up denominations and schools upon texts . . . under the pretence of superior sanctity, and more humble faith."[3]

To be sure, most of the material in the Bible is plain, and comprehensible. Christ is there from first to last; He is in the Old as well as the New Testament. In short, Parker declared that Christ gives unity to the whole Bible.[4] But, if much is clear, succinct, there is also not a little material in the Bible that is not plain, much that is beyond us; we cannot know its meaning. "O foolish soul!" he exclaimed, "trying to make out the meaning of the 1290 days and forgetting to pay the wages of the hireling - forgetting to cool

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. II, Exodus, p. 9.
2. Ibid., Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 409.
3. Parker, The Paraclete, p. 80.
4. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. I, Genesis, p. 85.

the brow of fever. Do the little you know!"[1] And to those persons, who were pre-occupied with literal "letter qualities" of the Bible, he spoke a parable:

> "You gave your little boy of four or five a rocking horse, and when he is four and twenty years, he comes to you and says, 'What did you mean by so insulting me . . . giving a man a thing like that, a dead piece of wood, a painted horse?' Suppose you had such an idiot son, what would you say to him? You would say, 'My boy, it was not given to the man, it was given to the child; it was not given to five and twenty years of age, it was given to a five year old infant; it was not intended that you should always be on the rocking horse, it was a hint, a suggestion, something to be going on with - the only thing you could use then. . .' So, there are persons who still reckon the Bible in its letter only . . . O, my friend, thou art a personal letter, locked up in the little gaol of some literal verse!"[2]

In any case, of the two methods generally applied in interpreting the Bible, namely, the critical, and the imaginative, Dr. Parker urged and adopted the latter. The imaginative interpreter brings up the Word to the present time, and sets it in direct relation to our own thought and action. "Some men," he observed, "are afraid of being allegorical . . . I find allegory everywhere in the Bible."[3] His advice to the ordinary reader was "Seize the principle, get hold of the genius, the divine meaning . . . get at the Bible."[4] And again, "Begin where you can . . . at a parable . . . at beatitudes . . . at any accessible point . . . work from the known to the unknown . . . steadily, constantly and patiently."[5]

In the end, the Bible vindicates itself. We are to believe it not because our father believed in it; not because it has a romantic

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1. Ibid., Vol. XVI, Jeremiah-Daniel, p. 452.
2. Parker, These Sayings of Mine, p. 285.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 442.
4. Parker, The Pulpit Bible, p. 1025.
5. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 415.

history; not even because of priestly exhortation; but "because of its own proved power to enlighten the mind . . . bless the heart . . . elevate the life and destroy the power of death, must the Bible be held first in our love and highest in our veneration."[1] Joseph Parker's final plea, spoken at the close of his ministry, sums up his high concern for the Holy Bible.

> "How bold a book is the Bible," he declared, "What other book cares thus for man? Not one. . . . Keep it in your families, it will keep the father in his place, and the child in his place, and give a blessing to each. Keep it in your politics, it will teach men to do unto others as they would have others do unto them. Keep it in your business, it will burn your false measuring rod, and destroy your unequal balances, and be just to persons on both sides of the counter. Hold up the Bible; read it in the right tone . . . let the Bible itself, in its own language . . . its own way . . . its own spirit, be heard, circulated, understood; even yet we may rescue it from the hands of the conjurer, tear it away from the hands of the priest, and make it God's own Word to God's own children!"[2]

4. Natural Revelation

Two Bibles are mentioned in Parker's thought - The Bible of God as written in the Holy Scriptures; the Bible of God as written on the heart, conscience, and nature of man. We are to read them both. That Parker found innumerable lessons, poems, and parables in nature is evident in his own sermons.[3] His sermons abound in allusions to nature in every form. From Nature we learn of God, we understand ourselves, and we are made to wonder and be silent.

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1. Lucas, op.cit., p. 98.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. II, Exodus, p. 167.
3. In one sermon Parker advised: "Find your theology in the grass; find the defence of your faith in every bird that flies; erect the fair lilies into fair altars, and bow down before them and say, 'As God made this lily and takes care of it, so He made me and so He will preserve my life;' yea, I will say to grass and lily and flying bird, how much more have I than any of you, being a man - a transcript of God." (Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 46.)

"Nature is ablaze with God."[1]

Yet, not every man is educated by, or even interested in Nature as a teacher. It is often like this, Parker explained:

> "Two men shall walk along the same road; the one shall see nothing of beauty . . . hear nothing of music. . . . The companion . . . has, on the contrary, enriched his mind with many a picture . . . has heard voices which will linger in his ear for many a day; the wayside flower has spoken to him . . . and the whole scene has been to him as the distinct hand-writing of the great Creator."[2]

But, the worship is not an end in itself. The cry of all nature is for something beyond itself.[3] Parker himself, while often charmed by nature, saw it as indicative - as an outer court only. Said he,

> "I love nature. She is always full of suggestion . . . however, nature is, but an alphabet or, at most, a primer; I soon begin to see that she has no answer to my deepest wants . . . she pleases my intellect . . . answers my fancy . . . piques my curiosity; but in all her meads and groves, she has no plant which can heal the fatal wound of my sin. If I ask her for <u>mercy</u> I am as one that raves in madness . . . "[4]

At a time, and in a century, when the prestige of physical science and the role of Natural Law had advanced greatly, Parker was quick to remind all who thought that God had "pinioned himself hand and foot" by His own laws, and "built Himself out of His universe," that the forces of Natural Law were subject to a higher law. Behind all was God's mind, God's controlling intelligence![5]

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1. Ibid., Vol. XIV, Ecclesiastes-Isaiah XXVI, p. 51.
2. Lucas, op.cit., p. 100.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 201.
4. Lucas, op.cit., p. 378.

Concerning the Miracles

As a natural corollary to his profound belief in the authority and inspiration of the Bible, Dr. Parker believed whole-heartedly and literally, the miracles of the Old and New Testaments. "If your conception of God were like mine," he remarked, "no miracle that ever was reported could touch the region of impossibility!"[1] The greater the miracle the easier it is to believe it. "My own life," he was wont to say, "springs up into a daily miracle - a miracle every moment, a day crowned with wonders."[2] Why the miracles should stagger the intelligence of some, while to others they are but the "weeds of the omnipotence of God,"[3] is beyond the imagination of Joseph Parker.

The whole question of miracles is inextricably bound up with countless other matters of importance. If the miracles are closed, inspiration is closed, communion with God is closed - "it were better," states Parker, "to have lived in the days of the prophets and the apostles!"[4] But it is not so, the miracles are not closed. God's policy is not thus narrowing or "self-with drawing," for miracles of the Holy Ghost are being performed every day.[5]

Only, when we see the miracles of the Bible as Jesus Christ saw them, can we be sure of a true perspective. Jesus is the final and ultimate authority in any justification of their case. In Him, we see the "stoop of God" and, therefore, the supreme miracle of all.[6]

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1. Ibid., Vol. II, Exodus, p. 83.
2. Ibid., Vol. V, Joshua-Judges V, p. 113.
3. Ibid., Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 79.
4. Ibid., Vol. XVI, Jeremiah-Daniel, p. 320.
5. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. II, p. 67.
6. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. IX, 1 Chronicles X-2 Chronicles XX, p. 211.

All the same, Christ did not make much of miracles; He considered them as many-sided in character. One side looked towards suffering men, another towards observers, a third towards doubters, and a fourth towards the Devil.[1] But if Christ did not exalt the miracle, nevertheless, He did them with a real purpose, and objective in mind, namely, to bring men to repentance.[2] He used the miracles as trumpets to awaken men, to make them look, meanwhile "He seized the opportunity to touch and bless their inner natures."[3]

Always, with Jesus, there was the moral issue; and man, though unconsciously perhaps, was being spiritually restored.[4] For Parker, the grand interpretation of the miracles is "that mind is over matter;" Mind, that is God, is regal and supreme, while matter is slavish, servile, and wholly helpless under the dominion and "beneficent regnancy of the soul."[5]

In a sense, the day of the miracles has gone for the moment, but we may be sure that it will return with the return of faith. For the present, let us be assured that Life, the New Creature, is the supreme miracle of God.[6]

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1. Parker, Ecce Deus, p. 65.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 79.
3. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. II, p. 180.
4. Ibid., p. 308.
5. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. II, p. 337.
6. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. I, p. 65.

Concerning God

1. His Attributes

Parker stands in humble awe before the idea of God; "what a wonderful thing it was to introduce the word God into human speech."[1] If it were possible for us to "think ourselves out of our familiarities back to beginnings,"[2] we should find in the introduction of this word something like a miracle in language. 'Once uttered," declared Parker, "once written, it is immediately recognised as the word "which the ages have been waiting for!"[3]

Yet, now that someone has put into the mind the idea of God, we cannot get rid of it. "The Heavens declare His Glory!" Even reason is not humbled by this confession, but ennobled by it. "Reason," states Parker, "says it must be so! Reason takes off its sandals, lays down its crook, saying, 'Surely this is holy ground!'"[4] So, while some have tried to undermine and cut away at the "idea of God," we accept the idea. "We did not create it," Parker remarked, "yet there it is - a great light, a solemn darkness, a temple of mystery, a deep well where all our thoughts are drowned."[5]

How, then, does Parker picture God? While profoundly aware of God in all of His attributes, Dr. Parker was particularly impressed with and especially emphasized His mercy, and His justice. God loves and God hates.

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 25.
2. Parker, The Larger Ministry, p.12
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 13.
5. Ibid.

Judgment is the strange work of God. Either He will have men as an inheritance, or He will have them as vessels which are fit only to be dashed to pieces. Those who choose to scorn His grace, Parker warned, shall perish by His power.[1] Furthermore, he said:

> "We can never change the thought that God is against wickedness, that as to iniquity God is a consuming fire. . . . That fact cannot be changed. If that fact could be changed, the throne of God itself would be over-turned . . . written upon the face of the universe is this tremendous fact, that no man can sin against God and live, no man can be wicked and yet be justified in his wickedness; no excuse can stand as against the accusation of God."[2]

To point out, however, the terribleness, and the severity of God is not to appeal to fear, but to "support and encourage the most loving confidence in God's government."[3] Parker will not have it said: "Be good, or God will crush you"; for that is not virtue, nor liberty - "it is vice put on its good behaviour!" It is to be remembered that the Justice of God is neither an "empty taunt, nor a law-less passion." When God speaks of breaking the wicked with a rod of iron, and dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel, He is not to be compared with the kings and rulers who said, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." God's Justice[4] has a moral purpose in view, which is to turn the kings to wisdom, and the judges to instruction; His Justice is, indeed, a vital aspect of His Gospel. But man must not tamper with that Justice! When man does tamper with the Justice of God, then life assumes tragic dimensions. If a man shall arise at the last, and tell the Lord that

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 30.
2. Ibid., p. 87.
3. Ibid., Vol. XV, Isaiah XXVII-Jeremiah XIX, p. 170.
4. Parker stated: "When we have doubts concerning the Justice of God we should lay the fault to our own understanding, and believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right!" (Parker, Inner Life of Christ, Vol. III, p. 354.

he "knew that He was an austere man, and therefore, he had carefully kept the talent and rendered it back just as he got it, the Lord will say, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest . . . thou oughtest,' therefore, God pins us down with our own excuses. He takes them away from us and thrusts them through our head and nails us to the earth with the very metal which we supplied."[1]

Still, God's Justice contains mercy as well as wrath. Although some men have made up their minds to renounce God, yet God has not made up His mind to renounce them.[2] To be sure, the Terrible One is gentler than the gentlest friend; He who rides in "the chariot of thunder stoops to lead the blind by a way that they know not, and to gather the falling lambs in his bosom."[3]

2. The Fatherhood of God

God as love, rather than God as hate is Joseph Parker's overwhelming description of the Almighty. While he recognised that the theology of some men is a "frightful spectre, and they fitfully slumber on the slopes of a volcano," he chose, rather, to exclaim: "Behold! Behold! I call you to a God whose very terribleness may be turned into an assurance of security, and whose love is infinite, unchanging, and eternal!"[4] He could not remember the time when he did not know the love of God. In his autobiography he wrote,

> "My highest joy has been in solitary companionship with the Eternal spirit, my very heart going out after Him with ardent and tender desire . . . "[5]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 415.
2. Ibid., p. 197.
3. Parker, The City Temple, 1869, p. 278.
4. Ibid., p. 282.
5. Ibid., p. 81.

Again, in another place, he confessed, "My God . . . feels, sympathises, suffers . . . and is glad in the pureness of our joy . . . mourns in the bitterness of our grief."[1] To understand God through love is to understand everything else; He expresses Himself as "loving Father" in Jesus Christ. The parable of the prodigal son had a special fascination for Parker because of its description of God as Father, forgiving, seeking, and loving His children.

> "Children of God," he preached, "who are called to suffering, weakness, and great unrest . . . God offers you His hand. . . . Are you blind? He says, 'I will lead the blind.' Are you full of care? He says, 'Let me carry your burden.' Are you in sorrow? He says, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee! . . . So, you are not alone - not alone, for the Father is with you . . . "[2]

It has already been stated that, to some extent, Joseph Parker welcomed the shift from the sovereignty of God to the Fatherhood of God as right and needful. But we must likewise remember that Parker, while appreciating the change of emphasis and atmosphere, was not incapable of returning to the classic position on occasion. Early in his ministry he criticised the current conception, as set forth in the writings of Maurice and others, as "this parlour and nursery view of Fatherhood and sonship!"[3] To his mind, the idea was founded upon a fundamental misconception of the Scriptural doctrine of conversion. He recognised that "God is the Father of every tree in the forest, every bird in the air, every man on the earth . . . in <u>that</u> sense . . . the word Father is interchangeable with the word Creator." But,

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1. Parker, <u>The People's Bible</u>, Vol. 1, Genesis, p. 368.
2. <u>Ibid.</u>, Vol. XIII, Proverbs, p. 193.
3. Parker, <u>Church Questions: Historical and Moral Reviews</u> (Lond., 1862), p. 263.

because man is a sinner, the Fatherhood of God assumes a new and deeper meaning; it entails much more than God as "Creator."

The Bible depicts man as a stranger, and an alien, therefore, only by the Spirit of God alone do men receive the "spirit of adoption" and enabled to know God as Father. "To know and love God as Father," claimed Parker, "is a discovery, is a revelation of Jesus Christ. Then, and then only, God becomes Father and man his Son!"[1]

However, later in his preaching career, Parker tried to achieve a kind of equilibrium between the classic and the nineteenth century ideas of the Fatherhood of God. He would not argue over the finely drawn distinctions; it was a question of temperament and mental outlook; a man could choose one or the other version. For himself, he was not so much concerned with the particular emphasis as with the ensuing character.[2] In any event, there is only one Father; the term Father that we use, we use only temporarily, and with qualifications. What matters most is that God should be so pictured "that little children would run unto Him!"[3]

3. The Holy Trinity

The Trinity, as a doctrine, seems not to have played more than a very minor part in Parker's preaching. With his extreme dislike for any kind of theological dogma and speculation, Parker asserts the impossibility, indeed futility, of trying to understand the doctrine. In one sermon, he averred, "It is not necessary for us to explain the

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1. Ibid., pp. 260-275.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 414.
3. Ibid., Vol. XX, Mark-Luke, p. 393.

Trinity or to understand it. . . . The Trinity was declared by Peter in Acts. . . . He does not attempt to prove a Trinity."[1] It is enough to say that the Divine Trinity is brought within the region of credibility by the mystery of the tri-unity of every human being.[2]

Concerning the Holy Spirit

Not a few of Parker's sermons contain references to the Holy Spirit, and in addition, he devoted a book, entitled The Paraclete, to his thought on the third person of the Trinity. Even so, it will be found that the references in his sermons and the substance of his book are little more than statements of fact rather than explanations or definitions. For the most part, Dr. Parker is concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit, and not his person.

He is seen as the ever-present comforter. In exercising this function he was the sustainer of Jesus Christ, in fact, He was in Jesus Christ Himself, and could not be given to the Church as a distinctively Christian gift until after the Ascension. Did not Jesus say, "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you."[3]

Indeed, we learn of the real nature and work of the Spirit from Jesus Christ. The Spirit will not speak of Himself, for we can not understand the purely spiritual. Therefore, the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ. He does not make Christ, He explains Him; the essential work of the Spirit is revelation, not creation.

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts men of their sin and

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1. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. II, p. 86.
2. Parker, The Larger Ministry, p. 57.
3. Parker, The Paraclete, p. 97.

reconciles them to God. He teaches men that they cannot be right with one another[1] until they are right with God. Preachers are powerless to convert men if sinners "be not convinced of the hopelessness of being saved except by the grace of God and the Holy Spirit!"[2] As usual, Parker attempts no explanation of the miracle of regeneration, which the Spirit effects. He merely says, "it must be its own witness. It is not to be discovered by a spiritual chemistry known only to a few; it must be proved by a life which the rudest observers cannot but distinguish by its virtue and nobleness."[3]

The Holy Spirit guides mankind into all truth; He is the true educating force at large in the world. He prevents the Church from being content with a limited range of dogma and purpose, when it is invited to undertake "the mastery and enjoyment of a kingdom that cannot be measured." The Church cannot be anxious about uniformity in life and doctrine, when it is evident that the Spirit Himself delights in variety and contrast.[4] By the help of the Holy Spirit man is enabled to see beyond "the local, and the letter," to that which is spiritual and eternal. Parker remarked,

> "The Christian student sees a Christ . . . he did not see twenty years ago - the same, yet not the same; larger, grander. . . . A new music in His speech, an ampler sufficiency in His grace; a deeper humiliation in His cradle; a keener agony on His cross . . . "[5]

Paramount in Parker's thinking is the fact that the Holy Spirit is everywhere active and present. This is the dispensation of

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1. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. I, p. 337.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XIV, Ecclesiastes-Isaiah XXVI, p. 100.
3. Ibid.
4. Parker, The Paraclete, p. 109.
5. Ibid., p. 101.

the Spirit, the divine motion is towards spirituality, and the invisible. Man is not to remain content with the material, the outward, or the visible word. We are continually reminded by Joseph Parker that "every flower that opens in the springtime is a creation of the divine energy, a signification of the divine presence, a pledge of some further revelation."[1] In one poetical passage, Parker describes the activity of the Spirit:

> "You see that ship there, with the sails clinging as it were to the timbers, just drooping, without any flutter in them at all . . . the vessel is not stirring, is not making progress. Wait. The wind is rising, the breeze is coming, the sails are flapped out and filled, and away goes the vessel. She hath received the breath of Heaven. . . . Come, O breath of the four winds, and breathe upon us, that we may be getting on over the troubled waters, and hastening to our desired haven! You see these poor drooping flowers, folded up as if hiding themselves from some enemy. Poor chilled little things. They are beautiful, but they dare not show themselves. Wait a moment. There is an arrow of light breaking through the gloom; the sun is coming with his benediction . . . with his life, and these little chilled things begin to unfold themselves, and to say to the sun, 'Here we are! Thou hast made us thus beautiful!' O Spirit of the living God, baptise us with fire, give us the warmth without which there is no life!"[2]

Concerning Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is God, the uncreated and eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father, and the express image of His person, no less God than man. This is the basis of Parker's belief; he will not attempt any further definition. It may well be said that his thought rested on a Life - on the Life, teaching and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. When he spoke of Jesus, it was with simplicity and

1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. IX, 1 Chronicles X-2 Chronicles XX, p. 337.
2. Lucas, op.cit., p. 263.

high adoration, and above all practicality. To his City Temple congregation he said, "I will ask Him to meet with us here morning by morning, and to vindicate by the eloquence of His own speech, and the marvellousness of His own action . . . that He is at once the Son of Mary, and the begotten of the Holy Ghost."[1]

At once, the student is attracted to the title of Parker's three-volume series of sermons, published under the general subject of The Inner Life of Christ. In that title, we see the central concern of Parker's thought; it was with the "innerness" of Christ's life that he was mainly interested. He sought to reveal to the men of his day something of the heart and mind of Jesus. As he said, in the course of one sermon,

> ". . . . I have paid next to no attention to points of purely historical interest, as my one purpose has been to acquaint myself with the 'mind of Christ,' and with the 'travail of His soul.' Nineteen centuries do not separate . . . me and the Son of God. . . . Today, He walks with me; in many a sacred interview He makes my heart burn within me; and in all bread-breaking He reveals Himself in new light and tenderness."[2]

All the same, Jesus Christ is the pre-existent one; He came before He came in the flesh. As He comes now, "since His flesh was buried," so He came before His incarnation in Bethlehem. Did not our Lord Himself say? "Abraham rejoiced to see My day." Jesus Christ, declared Parker, came long ago as a "Guest, a nameless presence, a wrestling angel, a Cloud by day, a Fire by night, an Eye in the wheels of the chariots of Israel;" in a thousand ways He came to the Church

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1. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. I, p. 19. Parker also wrote Ecce Deus, meant to be complementary to Seeley's Ecce Homo. However, it is simply a presentation of Christ's life as interpreted by Parker.
2. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 6.

in olden time.[1]

But while Parker's thought is mainly concerned with the spiritual qualities and implications of Christ's life, he is nonetheless quick to assert that Jesus the God-Man was born at Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and lived in Palestine. The historic facts of Christ's life have great importance; they are not to be obscured in any event. The Incarnation is the radical mystery in the life of the Christ accepted by the Church. Without following the theologian into doctrine, we are bound to follow the historian into matters of fact. The historian introduces a man, under the name of Jesus, who was begotten as no other man was ever begotten. "In Jesus Christ alone," averred Parker, "we have a life which claims to have been produced immediately by a superhuman relation to the human body."[2] Yet, though so produced, "the Holy Thing" born of the Virgin did not "collide with the human race" as an unexpected antagonistic element, but took His place in the human family by a process which, on one side, "was fitted to awaken awe, and on the other, to excite sympathy."[3] Parker chose to emphasise his belief in the Man Jesus in this way:

> "Be quite sure of your Lord's humanity. Do not allow any section of the theological Church to steal that from you. . . . He was man, totalized man. It was no dramatic personage that quivered on the Cross. . . . The voice was human, the confession of need was human, the sense of isolation was human, the affection was human. . . . On the Cross was the MAN Jesus Christ!"[4]

Nevertheless, it is important to keep the two-fold character of

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1. Ibid., p. 18.
2. Parker, Ecce Deus, p. 2.
3. Ibid.
4. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. III, p. 260.

Christ's life in proper balance. That He was God and Man we must not forget. The duality of His nature followed Him every day; it coloured every word of His ministry; it revealed the glory, as well as the goodness of every mighty sign.[1]

But, how can we account for the Incarnation and the Atonement; the birth, life and sufferings of Jesus Christ? According to Parker's mind the key word, the answer to the query is only to be found in God's love and compassion. The love for stumbling, faltering, and sinful man, constrained Christ the God-Man, whom the "Publicans and sinners got round as cold people get round a fire,"[2] to come to earth, to suffer and die. This compassion, and love, motivates His disciples to service, and it leaves no room for exclusiveness. If any man, said Parker, who professes the name of Christ, shall say,

> "'Shall I go down to these people, or shall these people come up to me?' I say, you have taken Christ's name but you have left His spirit behind. Go down! Yes, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. . . . He who bore the image of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and whilst He did that, who are we, with a yesterday's ancestry . . . our mushroom dignity . . . our hateful selfishness, that we should turn aside in cold, frosted, awful respectability, and say 'shall we go down?'"[3]

Parker makes little reference to the Ascension of Christ, and when he does, it is merely to remark that its method "satisfies our imagination"; it was in harmony with His whole life.[4] Even the matter of Christ's Second Coming received scant attention in his sermons. All he chooses to say is that we cannot compute the movement

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 92.
2. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. II, p. 79.
3. Lucas, op.cit., p. 76.
4. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. I, p. 14.

of God. Furthermore, says Parker, "He may take ages to build a rock; yet He may take a night to begin and complete a whole dispensation of His providence!"[1] Yet, there is one important final fact relating to Jesus Christ. We must know and realise that He is the Contemporary of all ages, that He is always coming to us. He is incarnating Himself throughout history in all sorts and types of men. Whereas the fleshly Christ was local, was a Jew, the "spirit revealed Christ" is the brother of every man; where the embodied Truth walked within certain geographical limits, the spiritual truth is unlimited in range and inexhaustible in power.[2] For Joseph Parker, Jesus Christ is no longer a figure on a landscape or an historic personage, He is the First and the Last, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Concerning Providence

Through sermon and personal testament, Joseph Parker witnessed to the presence in the world of a guiding, governing Providence. Write Providence with a little "p," or a large "p," he used to say, call it force, fate, or necessity, or mystery, it is with us all the same. Said he, "O that men would believe that everything is settled for them - every soul a plan, every day a divine study, every one a divine care!"[3] Albert Dawson, sometime secretary to Parker, speaks of the preacher's deep belief:

> "I remember his standing up in his study, feet firmly planted on the ground . . . and saying, as he extended his arm and closed his hand, 'I believe in destiny.' That was

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1. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. I, p. 78.
2. Lucas, op.cit., p. 193.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 343.

> probably the first article in his creed. He added, explanatorily, 'If a man is destined for a certain position, no power on earth can hold him back!'"[1]

If Parker professed a profound belief in destiny, in Providence, he was always careful to distinguish between fate and providence; the one is a blind, and unreasoning necessity; the other, a gracious and purposeful government. Fatalism can play no part in the actions of men who are morally constituted. It is a contradiction in terms to assert that a man thus constituted can be fated. For this reason, Parker could not tolerate any mention of predestination. Predestination, defined in a narrow, parochial spirit, he believed to be not only impossible but a travesty on God's name and character. He said once, "By the very circumstances of our nature God has rendered predestination, of the narrow, selfish kind, impossible."[2] Still, God has allowed for differences in men, differences as to genius, force and general capacity; all kinds of accent and individuality have been permitted by providence. But, these differences bear little relationship to the eternal destiny of the soul. Parker explains,

> "The difference is one of expression and relation; but the root is fed by the same great bounty . . . differences of all kinds must be regarded within other boundaries than those which men attempt to set up as describing the fatalism of life. God makes no experiments upon His creatures. God did not create a man with the point of view of satisfying the divine wonder as to how . . . man could work out the mystery of life. The purpose of God is one."[3]

There is mystery in the providence of God; there is much that

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1. "Christian Commonwealth," December, 1902.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. III, Leviticus-Numbers XXVI, p. 215.
3. Ibid., p. 216.

we cannot comprehend, and certainly very little we can do to hasten the completion of His plan. Man's position is one of patient submission to God's will and purpose; God is just and He will do right. A glance at nature will teach us:

> "We sometimes think we could improve the arrangements of providence in this matter of the ground. A man standing in his wheat field is apt to feel that it would be an exceedingly admirable arrangement if he could have another crop of wheat within the year. He thinks it could be managed: he takes up the roots out of the earth and he says ' . . . Now I will command the ground to bring forth another crop,' and this agricultural Canute, having waved his hands over the fields, is answered with silence. That must be your law of progress!"[1]

We have learned the first lesson about God's providence when we know that the everlasting law of human life is labour, patience, expenditure, a step at a time.

Still, man is a free agent, and he can frustrate the purposes of God. But, while free, man cannot remain neutral before his opportunities, he must take one road or the other; he can do the right, or, he can choose the wrong. In this way, we sinners can thwart the will of God. It was so with Israel in the Wilderness. God's purpose was far advanced in the cloud, but the people at the foot of the mountain could not wait. At the very time when God had determined upon the election and consecration of Aaron to the priesthood, Aaron was spending his time in moulding the golden calf. Why is God's providence often blocked? In one sermon, Parker declared,

> "Because of the idolatry of the people for whom it was intended. Why tarry the chariot wheels of the King? - Because the people towards whom He was hastening . . . have prostituted their affections and turned their prayers to forbidden and helpless gods. Why should we blame Providence for slowness when the answer is in our own conduct!"[2]

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1. Ibid., Vol. I, Genesis, p. 140.
2. Ibid., Vol. II, Exodus, p. 276.

Yet, we are saved from despair and disobedience if we remember to take a comprehensive view of God's purpose. "Never let a man forget his own history," states Parker, "let him begin when he was in the cradle; let him set things which belong to one another together, and see what shaping and directing there has been in all the mystery of his being."[1]

Parker treats those who refer to life in terms of chance or luck harshly. In fact, those who attempt to disprove and disclaim any relation whatever to providence are like the railway carriage when severed from its engine - powerless. He illustrates this idea further in a parable:

> "Standing in a railway station, we once saw a carriage all by itself - no engine, just a carriage and nothing more. And the carriage said, . . . 'There is a notion abroad, an old fashioned but mistaken . . . notion, that it is needful to have a steam engine in order to draw a carriage. Gentlemen,' continued the Carriage, 'if you seek an argument to disprove that fallacy, look around.' And, we all looked around, and we all said, 'Carriage, this is very wonderful: you brought yourself into this staion apparently, now take yourself out of it.' The carriage is standing there still . . . it cannot turn a wheel. It was a detached carriage; the great engine that brought it along . . . went on, and it was left behind to spend its own momentum . . . there may be many human carriages. They have had fathers, mothers, ministers, schools, books, they have been brought up under Christian culture, taken so far along the line; by some means or other become detached - asked to be detached, and in spending their dying momentum they think that they are using an original force![2]

Be man indifferent or co-operative, God's will must be accomplished, and He may use evil to do His work. It was so with Cyrus the Persian. In becoming the first Gentile friend of the Jews he had the privilege of becoming both their liberator and restorer.

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1. Ibid., Vol. X, 2 Chronicles-Esther, p. 257.
2. Ibid., pp. 118-119.

How did this happen? The Bible explains, says Parker: "I have surnamed thee, I have girded thee: thou didst not know whose arms were round about thee, thou didst not know Me by name. . . . Men deny Me, curse Me, flee Me - I am still round about them."[1]

So it is that God guides, and purposes a plan for everyman. It is for each man to discover his place and to remain in present conditions until Christ authorises a change. God means to educate us through everything; Providence leads to redemption. Redemption involves Providence; Providence suggests redemption:

> "We stand in this faith today. We do not inherit our religion, we personally receive it, and personally repronounce the faith. . . . We are part of a great band of witnesses . . . it is a grand, massive, choral utterance of all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues, that God reigneth; that all that transpires in His universe is under His eye, and with Him are the resources of wisdom and strength. So, whether we remain here or go elsewhere, the bounds of our habitation are fixed; we do not urge providence, or seek to drive it; we say to Thee, ever-looking, ever-loving Father, 'As Thou wilt, here or there, or yonder, only fix the place, and we will build the altar.'"[2]

Concerning Man and his Sin

> "Man was well housed to begin with; he did not begin life as a beggar. What a chance man had in beginning life as a gardener! Beginning life in the sunny air, without even a hot-house to try his temper. . . . The air was pure, the climate was bright, the soil was kindly: you had but to tickle it with a spade and it laughed in flowers!"[3]

In these words of a sermon, Joseph Parker described man's first estate. In the Garden began that great system of Divine and human co-operation which is still in progress. There were trees, plants, herbs, and flowers, but a gardener was wanted to cultivate the ground. So it was,

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1. Ibid., Vol. XV, Isaiah XXVII-Jeremiah XIX, p. 203.
2. Ibid., Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 211.
3. Parker, Adam, Noah, and Abraham, p. 18.

that man became a kind of secondary creator, and he got something for his pains. But, this ideal situation was almost too much for him. He began to think that he had accomplished everything by his own skill and labour, quite forgetting who gave him the tools, skill and the time. It is so, averred Parker, in business:

> "It is easy for junior partners in old city firms to think that the 'house' would have been nowhere if you had not gone into partnership! But really and truly, odd as it may seem, there was a 'house' before you took it up and glorified it!"[1]

Within the context of the Garden, man was given ideal conditions to work in and responsibilities to uphold. He was informed by God of certain trees which he should not touch or eat. Modern man need not be troubled unduly over the meaning attached to these trees. Indeed, observed Parker, one can make them historical or parabolical, it comes to the same thing. Their presence indicated a permanent line separating obedience from disobedience. They suggest to us that all life is limited; and that whoever "breaks through a hedge a serpent shall bite him!" The trees in the Garden were not traps set to catch man; they were necessities of the case. Parker assures us that all life is cut on this pattern:

> "Let life alone if you would live. Receive it as a mystery and it will bless you; degrade it, abuse it, and it will slay you in great wrath. It is the same with light. Pluck the sun, and you will be lost in darkness . . . same with music. Open the organ that you may read its secret, and it will fall into silence."[2]

Equipped with his God-given freedom, man deliberately chose to do evil. Sin entered the Garden, and Adam and Eve were evicted.

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. 1, Genesis, p. 129.
2. Ibid., p. 130.

How did Sin come? Parker is not much concerned as to how sin came, and he is not overly interested in discussing the merits of the Biblical explanation. "What a vain wrangling of words," he complained, "there has been about this serpent talking! Look at it: glittering, lithe, poisonous - truly, it looks as if it might have done it!"[1] In any case, of one thing Parker is confident, "something has disagreed with the world!"[2] We do not trust, love, honour, and help one another; we are selfish, mean, irascible, and unforgiving.

We call the infection "sin," but what does that mean? Parker's thinking on the subject follows close by the interpretation of the Bible. Sin is that abominable thing which is hated by God; it is not being off-colour, but off-life, off-truth, away from holiness and all moral beauty. In the estimation of the Bible it is soul poverty, helplessness and utter ruin.[3]

It is to be remembered that Sin is an intruder into God's universe; it is not of God's manufacture. Indeed, it has crept into our common life, and in so doing, has created a breach between God and Man. Sin is the great divide, the separating influence on the earth. Onthis point, Parker alludes to St. Paul's understanding of sin:

> "It is very marvellous to see the Apostle's handling of the mystery of sin. He will not allow sin a large scope; he will not allow redemption and sin to sign on the same page, as if they were exactly coeval in duration; he snubs the intruder called sin . . . it is a question of time . . . of the present . . . a blight upon space; it is a wound inflicted far beyond the purpose of God."[4]

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1. Parker, Adam, Noah, and Abraham, p. 26.
2. Ibid., p. 25.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXV, Ephesians-Revelations, p. 357.
4. Ibid., Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 54.

Life, therefore, is cast in a precarious mould; let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Man's fall is often very slight, gradual; the beginning of spiritual declension is usually imperceptible and subtle. "The backslider," warns Parker, "may not fall at once: he falls from his singing into his forgetfulness - nothing more serious. He falls into a negative state, he does not instantly lay down the hymn book, and begin to blaspheme God."[1] Thus, the gradient that leads down to sin is not abrupt, indeed, it is hardly measurable by the finest instruments, but it is going down all the same. Man is to beware of the initial encounter with evil, and on guard against the first signs of complacency!

Above all, man cannot comprehend the true nature of sin by himself; only the revelation of God in Jesus Christ teaches him of the true import of sin, of the fall, wickedness and evil. Sin represents a severe blow upon the holiness of God. Still, while God is not, so to speak, alarmed for his personal government, nevertheless the offences against His holiness afflict Him with great sorrow. "The parent cares nothing for the mere blow of the child's tiny fist, but the passion which prompted it breaks his heart!"[2]

For Parker, man's fall as it is felt (not as "we are taught it"), is a total collapse. As he said on one occasion,

> "Teach a man anything, and he can contradict you, or argue against you, - but the fall as we feel it is a total fall. We have all gone together: . . . reason, imagination, conscience, will, understanding . . . describe the attributes and qualities of the mind as you will, yet there is the felt fact that we are the subjects of an awful apostasy."[3]

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1. Ibid., Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 339.
2. Lucas, op.cit., p. 390.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVI, Jeremiah XX-Daniel, p. 429.

And again,

> "Jesus Christ found a murderer from the beginning, and called him the devil; He found a liar from the beginning and called him the devil; he never saved a life; he never told the truth. Unless we really seize these verities we shall be living a kind of accidental life, calling this man true and that man false; this man honourable and that man dishonourable. . . . Nothing of the kind. These distinctions are vanity, except for immediate purposes, and social conveniences. The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, we are wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; and if we do not believe it, that is one bruise and one sore more!"[1]

In the role of fallen sinner, man is under the wrath of God, is the object of righteous anger. But, when God speaks of His anger being kindled against sinners, He condescends to use a human form of speech. He is not the victim of His passions; He simply adopts human forms, so that He may penetrate human understanding. His anger, avers Parker, assumes force in His punishment . . .

> ". . . Deliberate sin shall have deliberate punishment . . . the foolish man locks himself up in the darkness of his own concealment, and lays his plot . . . against the kingdom of light and honour . . . he says, 'None seeth me; I can do this, and none shall be the wiser!' . . . A man once talked thus: 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, take life quietly, enjoy thyself.' And one said to him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' That was the uncalculated element; that was the ghostliness that haunts us. Even when we are most rationalistic, when we are inebriated with our own philosophy, a sudden touch makes us white, and a whisper drives the blood thickly upon the heart!"[2]

Not only is there this matter of the fall, and God's anger and displeasure; there is also the solemn fact that sin infects and involves everything we are, love and cherish. Every man, Dr. Parker claimed, has done substantially what Adam did, and therefore, everyman

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1. Ibid., p. 329.
2. Ibid., Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 268.

is guilty. "Why theologise," he said, "about some immemorially historic Adam, when we have taken up all his bad doings and endorsed them every one?"[1]

But sin attaches itself to others, indeed, it is the radical virus in human nature and society. "We seem to have run into the easy but culpable method," says Parker, "of thinking that only one sin has been done. There is no sin that is only one sin!"[2] Every sin belongs to an innumerable progeny and ancestry, and the sin of the fathers is visited upon the children. Parker expands this idea in these words:

> "There is no licentious liberty. A man cannot drink himself to death, and be the only suffering party. . . . The drink you are taking into your blood now may turn some poor soul hell-ward a century hence; then the people will blame him, and call him a fool, and reproach him, and shut him up in gaol, and sentence him to penal servitude or to the gallows. It is you, you who ought now to be damned, but for the mercy of God!"[3]

Still, though man has fallen miserably, and much of God's image has been defaced, there is yet hope. Life is a tragedy, a mystery, a self-contradiction, a great agony. Men, asserts Parker, become angry with themselves, petulant and self-despising. Yet, we may all judge ourselves by our aspirations: What do you want? What do you desire or need?

> "If you can say," assures Parker, "'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee . . . that I want a higher life, a broader, clearer conception of duty, discipline and destiny', though you fall seven times a day the devil shall not rejoice over you. . . . Let us mock the Devil, and bring glory to God. How can we attain this position . . . but for Him who is the Son of Man, the Son

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1. Ibid., Jeremiah XX-Daniel, Vol. XVI, p. 126.
2. Ibid., Job, Vol. XI. p. 94.
3. Ibid., Ecclesiastes-Isaiah XXVI, Vol. XVI, p. 380.

of God, our Advocate with the father, the Daysman who is able to lay a hand upon both and make reconciliation?"[1]

Concerning Man and his Salvation

1. Atonement

In the nineteenth century, when men had shifted their thinking from the Cross to the Incarnation of Jesus, Joseph Parker stoutly affirmed: "I preach[2]. . . the power of the Cross, the One Priesthood of the One Priest."[3] Amid all the contradictions of his thought, he never failed to view the Cross as the basis of his life and theology. He knew no other resource. The very urgency of his own need kept him near the Crucified Christ. It was but rarely that he made use of quotations, but time and again throughout his writings, the student will find these lines:

> "A guilty, poor and helpless worm,
> On Thy kind arms I fall."[4]

Now and again, in the profound pain of his own necessity, he wrote and uttered words which recall the poignancy and self-abasement of

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 204.
2. In a sermon entitled "The Lord's Will," the text being ". . . . If the Lord will," (James 3:15) Parker began: "And Jesus used 'If': He said, 'If any man will come after me,' — 'Well, we will all come after Thee.' Sh! 'Let him take up his cross,' let him deny himself, let him kill his will, let him have no will, let his will be abolished; and verify and confirm the doctrine of absorption into the universe . . . 'I do deny myself.' 'You don't; you don't!' 'Well we had a week of self-denial.' No man can have a week of self-denial - not a week; the Lord will not have such tricks played except in a very partial and toy and baby sense. 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, . . . and in one sovereign act of obliteration let him deny himself with My will and purpose . . .' No wonder the Christian religion is not popular; it never was. The cross was never the darling of the mob." ("Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, July-December 1902, p. 215.)
3. Dawson, op.cit., p. 176.
4. Quotation in the "Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, July-December, 1902, p. 371, by J.H. Jowett.

the earlier pages of Bunyan's Grace Abounding. "Mine has been a poor life, full of sin. . . ."[1] Again, "I feel that I could sin with both hands earnestly, and that few could be mightier in doing evil work; yet, I also feel a powerful constraint Christ-ward, as if the Cross never ceased to hold me by an omnipotent fascination."[2]

The Cross is the "tear of the universe - the great, hot tear on the cheek of God!"[3] The Scriptures declare plainly that the Cross stands in direct relation to sin. Sin necessitated a condition which love alone could meet. Holiness never caused death. All that comes within what may be called the sphere of death (pain, misery, disappointment, tears), is due immediately to moral decay. Throughout the Bible this principle is constantly affirmed, but nowhere is it seen in full force of demonstration, but on the cross. "It was no trifle," Parker claimed, "which started the great drops of blood from the body of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, or that caused Him his exceeding sorrow on the tree. . . .

> ". . . There must have been something terrible about this moral putrescence which is called sin. It was no speck on the surface; it was poison in the blood. The tones heard at Calvary are not the harsh tones of vengeance; there is no scream of fury; no thunder of cursing: there is a wail of sorrow, deep, loud, long, as if the very heart of God had broken. It is the agony of love; it is the paroxysm of a lacerated and dying spirit. It was love that had failed in life, determined to succeed in death. It was dying innocence struggling with dead guilt!"[4]

In the Cross of Jesus Christ, man sees himself for the first

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 415.
2. "Christian World Pulpit," Vol. LXII, Dec. 10th, 1902, p. 371.
3. The City Temple Pulpit, Vol., VII, p. 162.
4. Lucas, op.cit., p. 384.

time as a sinner, and is made to realise the need for a complete change. "Not our will, but thine be done." That is the lesson man needs to learn; the school in which this great lesson can be learned is called the Cross. For Parker there is no other school. "Men may try to reason themselves into it . . . but all their labour will be in vain. We must be slain on Christ's Cross . . . the very last desire of our selfishness must be extinguished, and then shall we come into the joy and the infinite peace of walking with God."[1] The power of the Cross to forgive is wonderful, decisive and thorough; it includes cleansing, purification, and justification - the utter destruction of the "sin to which it is extended."[2] Furthermore, God's forgiveness covers up all past sins. "As for man . . . all his transgressions . . . shall not be mentioned unto him."[3]

Man's salvation and forgiveness -- the grace of God, was not an afterthought. God's grace was accomplished before the sinner was created! Joseph Parker sought to guard against any interpretation of the Atonement as an expedient devised in reply to circumstances which Divine omniscience had not forseen. Rather does he make plain that the Atonement has Old Testament antecedents, especially in the Jewish sacrificial system. "Even in Genesis," he said, "an altar burns; even there blood begins to mean some moral mystery."[4] All is indicative in character pointing to the work to be accomplished by Christ upon the Cross.

Generally speaking, Dr. Parker was not much interested or concerned over particular terms or phraseology in theology, yet the word "blood" held a peculiar fascination for him. The idea of the "blood

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1. Ibid., p. 170.
2. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. II, p. 28.
3. The People's Bible, Vol. XVI, Jeremiah XX-Daniel, p. 284.
4. Ibid., Vol.I, Genesis, p. 368.

of Christ" is central to his thinking on the Atonement. "We need such a broad, emphatic word - a word, that carries its own single and definite meaning so plainly that mistake is impossible."[1] Yet, no vulgar, material expression of the idea will do. Some have tried to find some other word to use instead of blood; a "dainty piety," he affirmed, "would force upon us a dainty vocabulary. But this is not refinement for it all stems from ignorance regarding the real meaning of the word: 'Blood is life, love, God.'"[2]

It will be remembered, that throughout his thinking, Joseph Parker has sought to tread some middle ground of mystery, mid-way between the rabid Evangelicals who, on the one hand, formulated their theories and made them final, and on the other hand, the Liberals who, sometimes framed their theories with more concern for the head than the heart, more awareness of the world, than the Word. In our consideration of his thinking upon the Atonement, it is well to refer to this strain in his thought. Here, he rebukes the extreme Evangelicals for trying to ascertain complete and final clear views of the Cross. "Clear views," he declared, "have torn the Cross into splinters. . . . Calvary is a place in the eternal counsel rather than a mere topographical or geographical term!"[3] Speaking on this point, he confessed:

> "I do not understand the Atonement. I humbly accept it because I deeply and unutterably need it. I have seen sin. My guilt and I have met face to face, and I have found in my own heart no answer to the tremendous charge. In the Cross I find what I need. I will not play the philosopher . . . I will pray. . . ."[4]

On the other hand, while he tried to comprehend the value and

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1. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. III, p. 342.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVI, Jeremiah XX-Daniel, p. 334.
3. Clare, op.cit., p. 133.
4. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 118.

meaning of the Moral theory of the Atonement, which the men of his time were teaching, he felt that they had missed their way. In one sermon on the "Cross of Christ," he indicated how far removed he was from their approach: "Christ was not a mere example, that Cross was never needed to be set up to explain to me the meaning of the word example. . . . It is not an example we need, we have had examples sufficient; why, we have not been able to follow even human examples:

> . . . . How far short we have fallen of our father's example at home, or our sweet mother's example, on whose face no man ever saw a look that was not holy, and out of whose mouth there never came a breath tainted with the devil's wickedness. We have had examples enough. . . . We want more than an example; we want somebody to take off the leprous robe, and give us newness of life. And that Some One must not be one of ourselves . . . must be God. . . . It must be God that dies."[1]

In the end, no single theory of the Atonement can be judged satisfactory or wholly complete. The subject is too large, and men are so diverse in their moods and temperaments that we must allow each one certain grounds. Parker sets the problem thus:

> "If to have a right view of the Atonement affects in any way the salvation and destiny of the soul, how can Isaac Watts and Frederick Robertson both be in the same heaven? James Martineau would characterise the poet Cowper's theology . . . as a 'coarse and wretched error', How then, can James Martineau and William Cowper find a common point of rest. . . . ?"[2]

As for Parker, who held to the substitutionary[3] death of Christ, but refused to explain his understanding of the doctrine, he felt that views of the Atonement were peripheral and superficial in character. "I dare not question," he said, "the Christianity of William Channing or James Martineau; in every respect they are immeasurably my superiors

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VII, p. 287.
2. Parker, The Priesthood of Christ, p. 170.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXV, Ephesians-Revelations, p. 285.

in character and in genius, in spirit and in service, they are as high as the highest amongst religious thinkers; yet my soul could no more live on their theology than my body could live upon ice!"[1]

He sums up his sentiments in the following characteristic language:

> "I do not receive the Atonement merely as a grammarian, logician, metaphysician, theologian. I cannot understand that cross - great, rugged, melancholy cross - if I look at it only from the eminence occupied by the scholar. . . . But when I feel myself in my heart of hearts a sinner, a trespasser of God's law and love; when I feel that a thought may damn me to everlasting destruction, that a secret unexpressed desire may shut me out of heaven and make me glad to go to hell to be out of the way of God's shining face, - then some man tells me Jesus Christ was wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities. . . . Let that be a gospel to your hearts, and let those who have been hesitating about this gospel drop their little wretched verbal criticisms, and hear this appeal, the appeal that claims creation in one unbroken circumference."[2]

2. Faith

For Joseph Parker, Faith is another imponderable in the great vocabulary of the Christian. Once more, we encounter a word which cannot be frozen into any single category or meaning. To have faith in God is to comprehend all reasons in one act.[3] Parker notes it as a word with wide appeal in ordinary life: business, commerce, industry - all make use of faith in some form or other, else life could not progress.

Again, we see faith in action upon the pages of the Old Testament. It was a motive to Moses, an insight into the purpose and direction of things - self-surrender, complete trust in God. All through the Old Testament it carries the idea of covenant-keeping,

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1. Parker, The Priesthood of Christ, p. 171.
2. Lucas, op.cit., p. 346.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. I, Genesis, p. 190.
4. Ibid., Vol. IV, Numbers XXVII-Deuteronomy, p. 373.

reality, and honesty to vows.[1] Just what faith actually entails, Parker finds difficult to explain. The best we can do, according to his way of thinking, is to illustrate and hint at its inner meaning and significance. He shows us in the Old Testament case:

> "And Abraham BELIEVED!' The moment Abraham believed he was truly born again. . . . Believed means supported, sustained, strengthened; Abraham nourished and nurtured himself in God. . . . That is faith. He took the promise as a fulfillment; the word was to him a fact. Thus he was called out of himself, out of his own trust, out of his own resources, and his life was fostered upon God, - he by-lived, lived-by, be-lieved, God!"[2]

Still, while faith has its roots in the Old Testament, its meaning is enlarged and filled out by the New Testament. By faith, man the rebel, the estranged one, is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Faith saves. How does this come about? It is that we, consciously sinful, listen to the appeals of God's love, believe those appeals with our whole heart, and say we will live by them.[3] We are saved, Parker averred, "when we take the marvellous plunge . . . crying out - my reason, senses can do no more for me; now, my God, I leap! Take me; leave me not O great Jehovah."[4]

In casting ourselves upon God's love and goodness in Jesus Christ, we are "justified by faith." Parker attempts to define this theological term in the following excerpt from a sermon,

> "Being justified' . . . has unfortunately become a theological term. . . . Let us substitute another word: - Therefore, being made right, - being rectified, having that which was crooked made straight . . . having now become right - not by works, which it was impossible ever to do, but having become right by a new and greater life, by a sixth sense, called faith - a great and glorious harvest has befallen our lot."[5]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. IV, Numbers XXVII-Deuteronomy, p. 373.
2. Parker, Adam, Noah, and Abraham, p. 126.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XX, Mark-Luke, p. 328.
4. Ibid., p. 362.
5. Ibid., Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 38.

The result of justification, of being made right all over, is a spiritual result indicated in the words "peace with God" - the great peace. This comes as a result of the secret operation of faith in the heart of man. When man tries to achieve "peace with God" by works he inevitably fails in the attempt. It is true that men are making every attempt to be right with God; "they are writing," states Parker, "new schedules of discipline . . . going to rise earlier, eat less, subdue themselves . . . but not until men are lifted by the Cross, the Christ, the blood mystery, can they have peace with God!"[1]

But faith not only reconciles us to God, and brings peace to our hearts and minds - it does more; it equips us to meet life with power and strength. It sustains us in our common life. . . .

> " . . . it is by faith we overcome the present, and the present truly is the great enemy and besieger of our souls, simply because it is the present: it is so near, so large, so clamorous, so importunate: all its supposed blessings are here on the spot . . . and not having far and keen outlook over things boundless, we may be tempted to snatch the immediate prize . . . Lord increase our Faith!"[2]

Moreover, not only are we, by faith, enabled to overcome the present, and persevere against sorrow and adversity, but we dare to be active, to pioneer and adventure under God. So, Parker preached, "don't pick your trembling steps across the stones pioneers have laid for you; show the originality and daring of profound faith in God."[3] In this sense, Parker rejoices over faith, indeed, it is the preacher's practical word. "We walk by faith, not by sight. Faith is not indolence, nor fatalism . . . it is a burning power. . . .!"[4] In short

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1. Ibid., p. 41.
2. Ibid., Vol. VII, 1 Samuel XVIII-1 Kings XIII, p. 200.
3. Ibid., Vol. I, Genesis, p. 199.
4. Ibid., Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 279.

to have faith in God is to be, observed Dr. Parker, like a sea-going ship . . .

> ". . . not a little craft meant for river uses, nor a toy boat to play upon the shore of the sea, when the sun is shining, and the south wind is as sweet breath of a sleeping child; this faith is meant for the wide waters of the great deep, where the storms have scope for their fury, where the stars are as guideposts. . . . This is faith: not a mere nodding of the assenting head, but the reverent risking of the loving . . . heart. . . . To have God in the heart, ruling the understanding, the conscience, and the will, is to sail down the river, enter upon the great ocean, and pass over the infinite waters into the haven of rest."[1]

3. Election

The doctrine of Election has to be rethought and recast. It has been profoundly misunderstood. It is good for us, thinks Parker, to realise what it is not. The laws of election are not arbitrary, fixed, and wholly independent of the conduct of those whom God elects. God elects character, purity, nobleness and obedience. He never says to any man, "Thou art damned, therefore, I will not plead with thee!"[2] On the contrary, He is always pleading, inviting men to believe and be saved.

As Christians, we cannit view election in anything but inclusive terms; because you are "elected, you go out and seek the man who is on the outside."[3] The man who says, "Thank God, I am safe, whatever may become of anybody else," simply knows nothing about the spirit of Christ![4] There is only one thing more disagreeable to Parker's mind than the man, who is continually considering whether he is elected or not,[5] and that is the man who thinks himself

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1. Ibid., p. 239.
2. Ibid., Vol. XVI, Jeremiah XX-Daniel, p. 315.
3. Ibid., Vol. XV, Isaiah XXVII-Jeremiah XIX, p. 257.
4. Ibid., Vol. XIV, Ecclesiastes-Isaiah XXVI, p. 341.
5. Ibid., Vol. XXV, Ephesians-Revelations, p. 87.

accredited to sit in judgment upon the rest of his fellows, and to allocate them to heaven or hell, as his "ignorance or indigestion may permit." The Church, he declared, "has been ruined by its self-appointed saints. They are odious every one of them."[1] He further exclaimed:

> "Christianity is now a game of selfishness . . . resolving itself into who can get into heaven? Who can safely escape hell? . . . a question that ought never to be asked; it is the worst and meanest selfishness. Who can fight best, suffer best, give most, do most, wait most patiently? . . . these are the great questions . . ."[2]

In the final analysis, God's call exempts no man from the responsibility of living life to the fullest. For men to say, "If we are called to heaven, we'll get to heaven; if we are elected to be saved, we need not make any effort about it," is the worst wickedness. Throughout his sermons, Parker sounds the note that "belief in election should not keep men from striving!" Every man is born to realise some purpose. Find that purpose out, he urged, and fulfill it if you would lovingly serve God.[3]

4. Conversion

That a man should be saved and experience the joys of conversion, Parker contends is the miracle which the Christian Church sets out to achieve. The process of the new birth is mysterious and ineffable. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." God brings man to Himself by varied and different avenues; there is no standard experience of conversion. In all, we must maintain our concern for "conversion of quality as well as for the conversion of quantity."

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1. Ibid., Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 38.
2. Ibid., Vol. XXIII, Acts XVI-Acts XXVIII, p. 450.
3. Ibid., Vol. XV, Isaiah XX-Jeremiah XIX, p. 287.

There are thousands of ways to come to God; the ways we come count for little, compared with the matter of getting there!

The burden of Parker's thinking on this subject is bound up in the hope that every man will ultimately be converted and turn to God. Let these words from one of his sermons express his hope:

> "May no wanderer be lost! . . . Some of us will get in with difficulty, but, thank God, we will get in. Some will swim, some will seize boards, others will clutch broken pieces of the ship; but if we only all land! That is my heart's desire and prayer to God."[1]

5. Good Works

Nothing is more important than that religion should invade life with goodness, kindness and strength of character. The believer, reiterated Parker again and again, "is to let his light so shine, that his good works may be seen - that men may glorify God."[2] Always the practical preacher, Joseph Parker recognised that philanthropy united those whom speculative theology sought to divide. Men should not be satisfied with a kind of abstract goodness; that which they believe, and profess is to be translated into action and beneficent service.[3]

Good works are always an outgrowth of deep rooted faith in God. Furthermore, as Christians, we are to follow the example set by Jesus Christ who went about "doing good." "I want men to be able to say," Parker remarked, 'we are poor, and illiterate, but the Christians have been kinder to us than any other people.'"[4]

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1. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. III, p. 237.
2. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. I, p. 139.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XII, The Psalter, p. 383.
4. Parker, The Inner Life of Christ, Vol. III, p. 372.

It was the conviction of Joseph Parker that a man's "character is his eloquence; a man's spiritual reality is the argument that wins in the long run."[1] Whoever does Christ's work is Christ's kinsman, and by using this principle, he felt that there were more good men in the world than the Church or religious men reckoned in their craze for statistics![2] It was with deep regret and shame that he admitted the fact that the vast preponderance of effort made for the elevation of the race represented but a small section of professing Christians![3] Indeed, he later affirmed that perhaps some have been discarded and cast out, who have all the time been Christ's bondmen.[4] And again, he claimed: "When the sifting time comes it will be the Church that will supply the dust bin!"[5]

Some people in the Church, Parker explained, are afraid of good works lest they be ostentatious, yet nevertheless, we must do good or evil, for to "do nothing is to do wrong!"[6] The world is entitled to see proofs and evidence of our Christianity, of our new birth. The Apostle Paul serves as an excellent prototype in this instance:

> ". . . . Let a Saul of Tarsus be converted, and you convert an army terrible with banners. He will not let the Church fall asleep. He will not let the world allow him to travel through all its plains and cities incognito. Many of us will manage that little task. We can go

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1. Lucas, op.cit., p. 309.
2. For example, Parker said, "John Stuart Mill surely was not far from the kingdom of heaven when he entered into all . . . deep speculations and mysteries of philosophy, metaphysics, and psychology . . ." (Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VI, p. 284.)
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXI, St. John, p. 388.
4. Ibid., p. 145.
5. Ibid., Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 167.
6. Ibid., Vol. XXV, Ephesians-Revelations, p. 371.

> through the house, the place of business, the market and the exchange, and come out at the other end without anybody identifying us! Saul of Tarsus will presently show us how to go through the world. He will never pass without recognition, and no town will he be in without setting up his holy testimony."[1]

6. Holiness

What is the nature of Holiness, or Sanctification? Holiness is not something we can describe adequately; it is not a quantity we can see in its completeness. We cannot walk round it and say, "This is the limit thereof."[2] Certainly, human conceptions of perfection and purity, when contrasted with the "blazing glory" are as nothing.

For Joseph Parker, Holiness is aspiration, is to be found in the inner deeps of the heart; "is always another say of splendour which we have not seen, a brighter beam of the ineffable effulgence which has not yet struck upon our vision."[3] Holiness is the result of the continuous working of the Holy Ghost, in His capacity as the regenerator and sanctifier of human nature. The progress of this miracle is slow and gradual. It has been so with most great Christians:

> "St. Paul himself did not claim that it was completed in his own case: 'I count not . . . myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, I press toward the mark for the prize of my high calling is Christ Jesus.' And in the same connection he says, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I FOLLOW AFTER.'"[4]

God requires time for this final miracle simply because man is indisposed towards the highest goodness. Man retards the miracle of

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1. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. II, p. 228.
2. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XXV, Ephesians-Revelations, p. 6.
3. Ibid.
4. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. II, p. 340.

Holiness by his very nature: "Partly good he is willing to be; good for the occasion, and then at liberty to return to his old ways. To be good as God Himself is good is not in his heart."[1] Still, the miracle of Holiness operates; this is the miracle, that any man should ever have felt any desire towards Holiness in the first place!

According to Parker, there is encouragement in knowing that men need not wait for absolute holiness; it is, indeed, a growth, the miracle is at the beginning, not at the end, - as he says, it is "in the prayer for mercy, not in the completed character. He who still wishes to penetrate the opposition, and find his way to the other side; that endurance until the end shall be saved. He is the man in the way of Holiness!"[2]

Concerning the Sacraments

Everything in the shape of ceremonial and external religion was intensely repugnant to Parker's nature. It is, therefore, not unnatural to find him stoutly opposed to the general appreciation of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Indeed, he so much disliked the undue estimate of the Sacraments that he did not give them their due, and would have agreed with A.B. Bruce, that it would well if, for a time, they were abandoned.[3] Parker attached his own meaning to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, looking upon them as beautiful symbolic acts, but he did not believe that either did anything to strengthen the life of the Church.

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1. Ibid., p. 341.
2. Ibid.
3. Nicoll, Princes of the Church, p. 178.

1. Baptism

We understand Baptism aright when we comprehend the meaning and significance of the Baptism of Jesus Christ. His Baptism was not unto repentance, but rather, one of sympathy, that He might share with His brethren in their experience.[1] In His Baptism, Christ identified Himself with Moses and the Prophets, and John the Baptist; He thus took up the old dispensation and ended it by the introduction of a better one.[2]

Our Baptism is rooted and grounded in the Baptism of Jesus; moreover, it goes back to the practice of circumcision.

> "Beautiful, too," exclaims Parker, "is Christian Baptism when regarded as the expansion of the idea of circumcision. It well befits a tenderer law; circumcision was severe; Baptism is gentle: circumcision was limited to men-children . . . was established in one tribe, one family, one line of descent; baptism is administered to all . . . it is the universal rite . . ."[3]

When a child is brought for Baptism, something more than a little child is baptised; it is human life - human immortality.[4] In Baptism, observed Parker, you sprinkle water upon a new creation ("It does not follow that you must have water!"),[5] precious enough for Christ to die for. At the same time, we may be inaugurating a king, or a priest, or a deliverer.[6]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVIII, St. Matthew I-XI, p. 77.
2. Ibid., Vol. XX, Mark-Luke, p. 12.
3. Ibid., Vol. I, Genesis, p. 217.
4. Parker, The Apostolic Life, Vol. II, p. 70.
5. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XVIII, St. Matthew I-XI, p. 77. ". . . if you want the Atlantic have it; if the drop of dew trembling on the rosebud will suffice, take it, but they are both nothing but ritualism.
6. Ibid.

Still, properly speaking, Baptism means being buried with Christ. Did not Christ say, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; how am I straitened till it be accomplished." That, declared Parker, "is the Baptism in which we are to be buried with Christ." It was with intense feeling, that he preached:

> "Your self-conceited, pompous ritualism must be banished from the Church, whether circumcision or baptism, and the great spiritual thought must be realised in all the fullness of its glory. If there be those who imagine that being put into so much water they are buried with Christ is baptism, then they know not the spirit of Christianity . . . only they are . . . baptised who have been buried with Him in Gethsemane!"[1]

2. The Lord's Supper

This Sacrament is a memorial banquet, and the simplest of feasts.[2] Men, however, have turned the simple meal into one grotesque and complex ordinance. In the sense in which we employ the word, Parker believed Jesus founded no sacraments. While, the Church in one of her aspects has established seven, and most of the churches accept two; Christ established none. Parker averred,

> "All this functional, mechanical arrangement, and sacrament is so far away from the love-scene, the love-feast of the old, old, time . . . the less our poor fingers have to do with these elements the better!"[3]

Parker strongly maintained that anyone might preside over the Lord's Supper, and he confessed that he would rather have received the emblems from the hands of his own mother than from those of many ministers.[4] He had a simple intimation printed in The City Temple

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1. Ibid., Vol. XXV, Ephesians-Revelations, p. 57.
2. Ibid., Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 265.
3. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VI, p. 138.
4. Nicoll, Princes of the Church, p. 179.

Pulpit:

> "On the first Lord's Day . . . in the month we have the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as it is called, and I invite everybody to it - the worse the better; if the heart really wants to seek God and confess Him, no matter in what crudeness of language . . ."[1]

Concerning the Devil

"'And the Lord God said — ' 'And the serpent said —,' and they both spoke practically on the first page of the first book in the Bible; the devil was nearly as instantaneously present as was God . . ."[2] With these words, taken from one of his sermons, Joseph Parker declared his certain belief in the Devil. There is a sense in which the Devil belongs to God as certainly as does the first archangel;[3] he is "like the huckster who comes to your back door and puts in his foot so that you cannot shut it!"[4] He is God's slave; he is a beast capable of infinite barking, but "the chain is on his throat, and beyond his chain he cannot go."[5]

Why do we speak of the existence of the Devil? Just because there is so much devilishness in the world![6] For some purpose and education which now lies completely beyond our comprehension, it would seem to be needful that Satan should accompany us throughout the whole journey of Life.[7] "I would gladly deny his existence," said Parker, "I would gladly say to you, 'Fellow-men, never believe in evil, or in the evil one; take another quaff of the boiling and

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VI, p. 6.
2. Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 21.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XI, Job, p. 461.
4. Ibid., Vol. XIII, Proverbs, p. 449.
5. Ibid., Vol. XVIII, St. Matthew I-IX, p. 86.
6. Ibid., Vol. XI, Job, p. 15.
7. Ibid., Vol. XVII, Hosea-Malachi, p. 394.

foaming wine, jump higher in your dance in the air, and call them fools who preach and prate of hell and suffering and the devil."[1] But it is not so. From beginning to end, the Bible is full of the presence of the evil influence, the "slime of the serpent is upon every page, his fang thrusts itself through all the rose leaves and summer beauty of life and time."[2]

The Satanic one is accomplishing his work even now and he will continue to work until he is "burned out by one look of God!"[3] While his time is limited, yet his programme remains ever the same; he trades on men's weaknesses. As he came to Christ after a fast, he comes to men now when they are weary or weak and least able to resist.[4] God has permitted him to inflict "Bereavement, Poverty, Pain and Humiliation,"[5] but, if these four dogs can bite us, they cannot kill the true child of God. While the devil "lives in negative," our task is to seek for the positive, the constructive, the eternal.[6]

Concerning the Church

Joseph Parker was a convinced and consistent Nonconformist. His Nonconformity took shape in the strenuous days of the Church rate fights, and he loved to tell how his father's furniture was sold, because he would not pay. It was his firm conviction that only those who were ignorant of English history could be ashamed of the badge of Nonconformity. "The Chapel is poor," he said, "yet it is a

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VII, p. 23.
2. Ibid.
3. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. XIX, St. Matthew XII-XXVIII, p. 53.
4. Ibid., Vol. XVIII, St. Matthew 1-XI, p. 106.
5. Ibid., Vol. XI, Job, p. 20.
6. Ibid., Vol. XXIV, Romans-Galatians, p. 349.

comma in the punctuation of a history, not wanting in dauntlessness, in sacrifice, or in holy tragedy . . ."[1] And again, he averred:

> "As I thought of the time when Nonconformity was under some circumstances punishable with death, when hundreds of the most conscientious ministers were silenced, imprisoned, and excommunicated; as I thought of them in the swamps of Holland and the wilds of America . . . when I remembered that fine and imprisonment, and torture, and murder, could not quench the inspiration of liberty and faith, I could look the old Church in the face and thank God for my forefathers!"[2]

Because of his background and unswerving loyalty to the cause of Independency, which was his life blood, Joseph Parker had a certain pity for Nonconformists who went over to the Established Church. For himself the desertion of the cause to which he was bound by ties so dear would have been an act of spiritual suicide.[3] One cannot underestimate the hold which Nonconformist principles had upon Dr. Parker, indeed, the chief controversy of his life was upon matters connected with the development of Congregationalism. On many issues pertaining to Congregational policy and organisation, he chose to disagree with his colleagues. "Congregationalism," he remarked, "has always seemed to me to be rather a spirit than a body - rather a principle than an organisation."[4] In the early years of his London ministry he took his stand in the Congregational Union against consolidation and organisation. Parker represented the critical attitude to the union and gave expression to the general suspicion of centralisation in a speech on "Organised Congregationalism" in the Assembly of 1876. Fear lest the ministry and the churches, their

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1. Parker, Weaver Stephen, p. 101.
2. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
3. Nicoll, Princes of the Church, p. 179.
4. Parker, A Preacher's Life, pp. 258-259.

preaching and worship, should all be forced into one mould and all individuality repressed, was still widespread, and it found natural expression in the minister of the City Temple.[1] Parker was severe on the tendency of some men to assume leadership in the denomination. He said: "There are no hereditary or prescriptive leaderships in Congregationalism. We have leaderships, but they are natural, not mechanical!"[2] Furthermore, he protested that organisation was turning the Union into a politico-religious debating club. Speaking on this point, he observed:

> "What an amazing amount of so-called 'business' we have to do! We have to disestablish the Church, modernise the Universities, rectify the policy of School Boards, clear the way to burial grounds, subsidise magazines, sell hymn-books, play the hose upon Convocation, and generally give everybody to understand that if we have not yet assailed or defended them it is not for want of will, but merely for want of time."[3]

The conclusion of the matter was that the Congregational Churches were first and the Union second. "The Churches might possibly do without the Union - the Union could not exist without the Churches."[4]

However, in 1901, elected to the Chair of the Congregational Union for the second time in his life, Joseph Parker delivered an address which represented a radical departure from the convictions held and expressed in 1876. Nobody reading what Parker had to say

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1. Peel, op.cit., p. 263. It is interesting to note here the fact that the City Temple was unique in its expression of Congregational principles. In fact, while there was a congregational board and elected deacons, and other officers, the overall administration of the life and activity of the City Temple was almost wholly in the hands of Joseph Parker.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 264.
4. Ibid., p. 265.

about organised Congregationalism in 1876 could have foreseen that in 1901 he would be the propounder of a scheme for a United Congregational Church. But then, Parker's movements could never be predicted with any certainty. So it was, then, at the beginning of a new century he suggested this outline of a new Congregationalism:[1]

> "(1) A simple but pregnant name - The United Congregational Church; (2) a vital and sympathetic relation of all Congregational institutions to one central and governing purpose and discipline; (3) perfect harmony between autonomous churches and a consolidated and representative Congregationalism; (4) a self-assessing and autonomous Independency contributing to the general good of all the churches; (5) a Ministry carefully guarded, well supported in service, in retirement, and in old age; (6) a profound doctrine and an aggressive policy; (7) a creedless but potent and ever-enlarging Faith; (8) an eager brotherliness of spirit towards all other communions and a not less eager spirit of brotherliness towards one another."[2]

For a hundred years Congregationalism had been trying to discover how to unite freedom and fellowship and keep the advantages of both. Parker felt that his own scheme met the need for a balanced synthesis.

Allied with his feelings for Congregationalism was his sympathy with men of other denominations, especially with those in the Established Church. He longed for, and to some degree worked for, the unification of the Church. If the Church could not be united in doctrine, and intellectual opinion, it could be united in affection and confidence and sympathy. He said, "Probably no man in the world preaches to more clergymen of the Established Church than I do. They

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1. According to Canon R.J. Campbell, this radical shift in Parker's relationship to the question of organised Congregationalism was brought about by the influence of W.R. Nicoll, who encouraged Parker and even suggested the scheme to him.
2. Peel, op.cit., p. 352.

rank amongst my most cordial friends and encouraging supporters."[1]

Parker demonstrated his willingness to submerge the non-essential matters in order to achieve some type of harmony in the Church in a sermon entitled, "On So am I; or Human Similarities." (2 Corinthians XI, 21-22). He addressed a word to the major groups: to those in the Established Church, he said,

> "You and I both believe that the Church ought to be established . . . we may . . . differ somewhat in our definition of an Established Church. . . . I should not think of establishing the Church by law; I should as soon think of establishing God's works as of establishing God's word. I should as soon think of establishing the light of the sun, and appointing legislators to watch over the movements of the stars, as I should think of appointing legislators to look after the purity of God's doctrines and the vitality of God's word. I believe the Church is established - 'On this rock will I build my Church' . . . and in Christ's establishment of the Church I find all the establishment I want."[2]

Again,

> "Are you Dissenters? So am I. The world could never get on . . . but for political and religious dissent. The world would fall into stagnation, if men did not take different views of things . . . but, if we are only dissenters, then we are a miserable horde; if we live in dissent, and breathe in dissent . . . and as never easy but when we are dissenting from somebody . . . then, I say, I have no sympathy with that kind of intellectual activity . . ."[3]

Furthermore, Parker confirmed his belief in the High, Low, and Broad Church of the time. He felt that the Church could never be too high: "Ye are a city set on a hill which cannot be hid." "High," he was wont to say, "in all that is pure in doctrine, consistent in

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1. Parker, The City Temple Pulpit, Vol. VI, p. 276.
2. Parker, The City Temple, 1869-70, p. 100.
3. Ibid., p. 101.

life and noble in spirit . . ."[1] Fearful that the Church was going 'to die' of respectability, was "muffling herself up in silks and satins and velvets . . . set down in easy places, and enjoying herself while the devil [was doing] his work almost without interruptions," led Parker to sympathise with the Low Church. But, of course, his interpretation of "Low" was his own. As he himself said,

> "If you mean by a Low Church a Church that is down, down into the ditch, and the gutter, and the cellar, that goes down to seek God's likeness where God's image can hardly be seen by reason of the overgrown animalism of human nature . . . I am also of that same Church a member."[2]

Finally, by his own definition of the term, he was a solid adherent of the Broad Church contingent. He disliked narrow churches because he fervently believed that there was nothing narrow or self-enclosing in Christianity. He said,

> "If there are persons that wrap their little sectarian garments about them and say, 'We are the people of God, and there is no other people that belong to Him,' then are they liars, and the truth is not in them. . . . I trust that we all belong to the Broad Church, that we hail a brother, whatsoever be the temporary name by which he is known in ecclesiastical life; and that we allow heart speak to heart, and know something of the free intercourse of brotherly unity in Christ Jesus."[3]

Apart from practical consideration Joseph Parker did not have much to say about the Church as a body. To be sure he cared little for sacerdotalism and thought that the institution of the Church and its diverse forms of worship should only be viewed as

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1. Ibid., p. 101.
2. Ibid., p. 102.
3. Ibid., pp. 103-104.

mediums through which men might see the spiritual glory of God.[1] The great duty of the Church is to realise the presence and influence of the invisible.[2]

Furthermore, the Church must be adaptable, flexible, ready to march out upon the world. "The Church," he said, "should not be huddled in a corner, like a sheep in a thunder-storm, but out everywhere, offering the Gospel."[3] What Christ did His Church must do in His name and Infinite Strength. The Church must recognise that she, in her own way, is the continuation of the incarnate Christ. "When we see the Church," he said, "we should see at heart an outline of the majesty and beauty of her Lord."[4]

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1. Parker, The People's Bible, Vol. V, Joshua-Judges V, p. 100.
2. Ibid., Vol. II, Exodus, p. 36.
3. Ibid., Vol. XIX, St. Matthew XII-XXVIII, p. 166.
4. Parker, Studies in Texts, Vol. I, p. 172.

CHAPTER VI

EPILOGUE

CHAPTER VI

EPILOGUE

It has been the purpose of this study to investigate the life and work of Joseph Parker in as full a manner as possible within the bounds of our subject. We have already considered the results of that study and the fulfilment of that purpose. Our work is completed. In pursuing our task we have made it our purpose to read most of the published works of Parker, and everything published by others which have made reference to him. The foregoing chapters are designed to represent that which these materials have had to say concerning our subject. What we shall say in this brief section, therefore, will be by way of a very broad and general summary and personal appreciation.

Perhaps there is not a little significance in the fact that this initial investigation of Joseph Parker, the first to be undertaken since his death, is the work of an American. For Parker himself clearly demonstrated his interest in and admiration for the people of the United States on numerous occasions, and in various ways. America, he felt, was emphatically the new world; "in conception, in impulse and in eternal hopefulness, it was uniquely and vitally new."[1] Through the honorary degree conferred upon him by the University of Chicago; the six visits to the American continent; and by virtue of of his published sermons and his firm friendship with Henry Ward

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1. Parker, Might Have Been, pp. 114-115.

Beecher, John Gough, David Swing, and Theodore Cuyler, he was inextricably bound up with the United States. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the people of the North American continent played no small part in giving Joseph Parker his rightful place in the judgment of the religious world.

There has been no attempt to study Parker as an Ecclesiastic, except so far as was necessary to fill in the picture of the person and work that properly belongs to our subject. In this sphere, however, we believe a large and important place must be given to him for the unique work he did through the City Temple, in breaking down all parochial and denominational barriers. While it is true, he was not personally equipped to put his ideas into full operation, nevertheless, we are left with the conclusion that he was far in advance of his time in his conception of the ecumenical Church. It greatly disturbed him that the Christian Church had to express itself in so many denominations and, when these divisions became real and rigid obstacles to friendship and co-operation, he was especially depressed. His own City Temple was symbolic of his deep desire for Christian fellowship and communion. He made the City Temple a church without a prefix, save only that of Protestant Christian. The City Temple as a church was re-union actualised. By his own design, preachers were never invited to its pulpit on the basis of denominational allegiance, but only provided that it was known that they had a good answer to the question, beloved of Customs officers: "Have you anything to declare?"

Again, we have given no real consideration to Joseph Parker as an author, principally, because he gave no real thought or time to that part of his ministry himself. It is true he took an unusual

interest in the world of books and journalism, and even prepared numerous volumes of a religious and fictional nature for publication. As he himself said in his autobiography: "A glance at a page at the beginning of this book, the page entitled Bibliography, will show that mine has been a busy pen."[1] Still, his literary achievements, apart from the pulpit, are not memorable. He felt that England ought to have a daily religious newspaper, and in company with several others sought to push the scheme forward in many directions. It never, however, came to maturity. Later, with a view of putting the idea to a practical test, at the solicitation of the editor, he took charge of the evening paper, The Sun, for one week. The experiment could not be said to have been a failure, for the circulation was greatly increased, but the time was too short to enable a proper judgment to be formed as to how far a daily newspaper, conducted on Christian principles, would be a success.

We must reiterate, even at the risk of being monotonous, that the one great imponderable in this work has been the personality and nature of Joseph Parker himself. He has haunted, perplexed and generally eluded us when we have sought to explain and describe him. We say here, as we have said in one way or another before, that to depict him as coming within conventional lines in any but merely external aspects and relations in his thought and action may be to draw an interesting image, but it is a caricature rather than a true picture. Throughout, the complexity and contradiction of his personality has been the stone of stumbling. We have discussed him, and we

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 223.

have debated him; we know his faults as well as we know our own, probably a little better. Whatever his faults, and most of them were self-confessed, he was a vital and original figure. He belonged to the Alexandrian order of men that can never rest content and satisfied while any world remains unconquered or inconquerable. Born when England was in a heroic mood, he was one of its countless heroes; and his life story is a success story from beginning to end.

To some extent, our task has been accomplished at a disadvantage for Parker left little material pertaining to his own early and private life. The facts about his early home are sparse and not infrequently fictional and fanciful in character. He believed that when men came to know his ancestry, advantages and disadvantages, trials and sorrows; when people knew him altogether, they would judge his life and its achievement aright. As he said, "When men have been in mysteries about me I could easily have blown the clouds away but for others, so I have borne the cold laugh and the hard work because of things they did not know, and I could not venture to explain!"[1]

Joseph Parker, of course, was a preacher first and last and those who knew him best did not spare themselves in declaring his pre-eminence in the pulpit. When we speak of him as a preacher we use that term as he used it to denote the "speaking" function of the ministry. He cared little or nothing for the sermon as a piece of literary art. Indeed, one could almost say that his life was set in direct opposition to the science of homiletics. He determined to

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1. Parker, Tyne Chylde, p. 1.

try to kill the sermonic lecture and to introduce talk and in doing so he sometimes gave the impression that he wanted no sermon composition at all. In any case, generally speaking, Parker's sermons do not read well - at all events in our day and generation. Indeed, he himself recognised their lack of compactness, continuity, and composition; he was assured that no printed sermon of his showed more than a third of his preaching power. Still, he published them as spoken, to be read the world over.

It is our conviction that Joseph Parker retained the inward as well as the outward ear of his London congregations, consisting largely of men, for several outstanding reasons. He did so, first, because he was an orator; a member of that select race and divinely gifted order, possessing its singular combination of its insights into men's hearts and minds with an artistic sense in the use of language and, above all, a rich imagination. As one of the greatest dramatic preachers of all time he made his pulpit a stage, whereon he made Biblical characters and truths come to life. His choice of words and breadth of vocabulary was no less remarkable. Like G.K. Chesterton, he led words into the pulpit, first in single file, then four abreast, then in regiments; the feats they performed were hair-raising![1] As a preacher-orator he gave the fullest freedom to his personality and to the many sides of his complex nature. As he said, "If I have spoken in parables, who will rebuke me? If I have resorted to mockery, what son of Elijah will distrust the instrument? If I have been playful and ironical, who will insist that a large

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1. Newton, River of Years, p. 166.

vein of our nature should be cast out as worthless?"[1]

Joseph Parker believed that for the very highest preaching power, it was essential that the preacher should get from his audience as much as he gave them. He should be able to come into the pulpit and speak freely, and he should find that many of his best thoughts and phrases come to him as he speaks. This was Dr. Parker's great power. He wrote well and often with special brilliance, but he hardly wrote so well as he spoke. He had the power of carrying on a dialogue with his congregation. As one said, "He anticipates and expresses the unspoken thoughts of the listeners, and then answers it, and thus the talk goes on, and every one is taking part in the sermon."[2]

He retained, and perhaps even increased, his audience, secondly, because he talked to men habitually, but with constant freshness and point, of things in which he firmly believed, and which they knew to be of the most intimate concern to their welfare here and hereafter. Dr. Parker did for the mere art of preaching what Thalberg was said to have done for music as a virtuoso, by introducing a new era in style. He laid great stress on experience in a preacher, which he defined as "passing the Gospel through the blood of the soul." In his preaching and religious thought, he was in sympathy with the most aspiring sentiments, but the sentiments were those of the heart rather than of the head. He bracketed angels with the man in the street. He cured many a heartache, but, as one said, never gave a headache. Here we were disappointed in that he did not

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1. Parker, Might Have Been, p. xiv.
2. "British Weekly," Vol. XXXII, 2 October, 1902, p. 561.

explore in more searching detail the doctrines that formed the framework of his message. But then we remember how much he detested theological formulation, and how impatient he was of system, form, or whatever looked like finality.

As we have seen, and tried to say, Joseph Parker's thought represented an attempt to achieve a kind of balance at a very difficult time; a balance between extreme evangelicalism on the one hand and rational liberalism on the other. "Order and dogma," he averred, "we must have; but the moment they leave the point of absolute simplicity they mischievously interpose between the soul and Christ."[1] In one sermon after another he brushes aside all irrelevancies, all magic, all superstition, all controversies about rite and ceremony and liturgy, and turns us to the serious business of learning how to live. When men sought to ask him about this rite and that dogma, this order and that Church policy - all marginal, he simply said, "I am not interested, for I have seen the Centre. This grips me." For Joseph Parker the Centre is Jesus Christ. Everything Christ did was two-fold, as was his personality. He imagined a kind of "dream ladder" as representing the personality and teaching of Jesus Christ. The foot of the ladder, the beginning of the teaching, is always on the earth - always accessible, strong in reason, in accord with experience: while the head of the ladder, the "full reach and glory of the teaching," goes up into heaven, whence it came, "the sublimest mystery of thought, the final point in aspiration." Neither the foot of the emblematic ladder nor its head must be regarded alone:

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1. Parker, The Priesthood of Christ, pp. vii-viii.

in the one case, says Parker, "we should be rationalists, earthlings, patrons; in the other case we might be mystics, sentimentalists, dreamers - the ladder is one . . ."[1]

With what words can we appropriately bring this dissertation to a close? We have lived with Joseph Parker for some time. We have read his sermons and digested his thinking; he has made us laugh and he has carried us along in the fire and emotion of his dramatic oratory, and in reading his prayers we, too, have learned to pray. We wanted to study a great preacher and we have been satisfied beyond measure. He has gone from the earth - great, rugged, lovable, incomprehensible figure that he was. He has gone to be completed in that land where the giant and the child in him have been made one forever more. Throughout these pages we have tried, often in vain, to measure and appraise his worth and even now we are assured that we have but scratched the surface of his life and work. For the marvellous gifts that made him the preacher he was, and the power he deserved to be, few have a more profound admiration than we. He loved to be independent, and he was what he loved to be. No man would have lost more than he by subjection to a system; no man gained more from the courage that dared to stand and think and speak alone.

What real effect did Joseph Parker have on his own generation? Who can fully say? His power was local and international. In one instance, his preaching caused a young London chemist[2] to think on and adopt the Christian ministry as his life's work. Again, the

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1. Parker, A Preacher's Life, p. 92.
2. Now the Rev. Ebenezer Rees, Congregational minister, Enfield, Middlx.

force of his preaching, the suggestive nature of his thought, and the enthusiastic fellowship of his City Temple exerted no small influence over the life of one young Indian student, Mahatma Ghandi. Indeed, it needs little imagination to understand how deeply Ghandi's heart and mind were influenced by the characteristic and challenging nature of Parker's sermons and the friendly nature of the congregation where all racial and national barriers were forgotten and all men were brought within the Fatherhood of God. Years afterwards, Ghandi overheard some of his Hindu followers speaking unkindly of Englishmen, and he stopped them at once by saying,

> "I cannot allow anyone to speak against Englishmen in my presence, for when I was a student in London, I had four friends especially. One of them was Dr. Parker of the City Temple which I used to attend, and there was a fellow student . . . an Englishman, and the others were two maiden ladies of Dr. Parker's congregation who threw open their house to myself and friend. I can never forget the kindness of these people to me, who was not one of their own race."[1]

When Leslie Weatherhead surveyed the destruction of the City Temple he tells us that he saw the marble figure of Joseph Parker, "thrown from its pedestal, but still erect, with that proud, magestic, serene strong face, scorched by the glare and chipped by the blast of bombs, but still challenging evil to do its worst."[2] We, too, have seen and heard that man, calling and challenging us and our colleagues in the ministry to greater industry in our work, deeper devotion to the Word, and unyielding allegiance to Jesus

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1. From an article by William H. Blunt, and contained in the Archives of the City Temple, London.
2. Weatherhead, op.cit., p. vii.

Christ. Indeed, all men felt that life was larger, more exalted and ennobled because the great soul of Joseph Parker passed through it.

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