

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL CHARACTER IN THE MINISTRY.

BY A. P. PEABODY, D.D., LL.D., CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

LIFE never originates spontaneously. In all the realms of animated nature it is uniformly derived and transmitted from pre-existent life. So say all our scientists, whatever may be their theories as to the mode in which life first began upon the earth. This law of nature has equal scope in the universe of mind and soul. No nation has reformed or civilized itself without an initial impulse from beyond itself. No isolated man has, without the action of other minds, raised himself from ignorance or saved himself from sin. In the nation, in the man, as in the animal or the plant, there is development, progress, growth; but the germ comes from life already in existence. Only life can kindle life.

Spiritually we have or may have two pedigrees. From the first Adam—one or many—have been transmitted the traits that adapt us to our earthly habitation; from the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, we have the germs of the heavenly life. The heritage from the first Adam is ours inevitably, nor would we rid ourselves of it if we could; for there is no part of our native humanity which may not be so purified and hallowed as to be worthy of immortality. But that which alone can sanctify the earthly and make it heavenly must come from Christ, and almost always through those who are already His. It may, indeed, come from Him immediately, and we therefore circulate the Scriptures where the living voice and the living example cannot reach. But in Christian communities, where the Bible is ostensibly known, it excites little curiosity or interest unless there be those who breathe its spirit, feel its power, and attest the Divine that is in it by its embodiment in their own characters. Were we to ascertain from every Christian in this country the influence that first arrested him in guilt or doubt or indifference, we should find in nine

**A MAN OF SORROWS, AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF.**

A COMMUNION SERMON.

BY CHARLES H. PARKHURST, D.D.  
[PRESBYTERIAN], NEW YORK CITY.*A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*—Isaiah liii. 3.

THIS entire chapter is prophetically descriptive of the character and work of Jesus Christ. It is a portion of the Scriptures that it is natural to select whenever, as on Communion Sabbath, our minds and hearts are to be drawn toward that which is most deeply and earnestly significant in the spirit and in the intention of our Divine Redeemer. We know that we have not come to the most determinative feature of His experience and mission while on earth, till we have apprehended him as a burden-carrier, and as one who was weighed down and saddened by the pressure of His burdens. What this verse and this chapter prophetically anticipate the Gospel record of His life shows to have been historically fulfilled. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. No other impression admits of being left upon us by the perusal of the New Testament story. It is tragedy pure and solid; wrought out to be sure with certain touches of light and beauty, but touches added in such a way as to bring out in only stronger relief the tragic features of earnestness and pathos.

Upon all of that we shall be agreed. We want to go on from that and say furthermore that the more deeply we enter into the meaning of Christ considered as the Divine Man, the more distinctly revealed it becomes to us that what His life was our life is intended to be. That general truth we have dwelt upon here at other times, and the repetition of it is unnecessary, except to refresh our minds with the fact. I believe that in our best and truest Christian moments nothing less meets the demands of our own minds and hearts, than that we should become in-

wardly in our animating spirit, and outwardly in our relations with the world in which we live, reduplications in small of Him whom we call Master. That we try to satisfy ourselves with less than this we should all be prepared to admit. There are instincts and there are impulses and ambitions that shrink from coming under the sovereignty of a commitment so cordial and entire. That accounts for the disproportionate emphasis so customarily laid upon the commercial feature of the atonement. It is pleasant, it fits our languid and criminal tastes to believe that Christ's work was accomplished by His sacrifice upon the cross, in such sense that we are saved by the sheer transaction of crucifixion. It passes as the orthodox view of redemption. It looks, too, as though Christ Himself intended that we should recognize a degree of truth in that view. But let it be said that that is the easiest and the smallest part of the entire matter; and because it is so easy and so small is one reason of the heavy emphasis which an orthodox Church has always laid upon it. Contractedness of mind and poverty of life finds in the view material which helps to keep the mind satisfied with its contractedness, and the life cheerful in spite of its poverty. It is easier and it is lazier to believe in a Christ that is going to pay my debts for me, than it is to grow up in Christ into a Divine endowment, that shall be itself the cure for insolvency and the material of wealth Divine and inexhaustible. You have really done nothing for a poor man by paying his debts for him, unless in addition to squaring his old *accounts* you have in such manner dealt with *him* as to guarantee him against being similarly involved in the time to come. Emphasize as we may the merely ransoming work of Christ, we are not made free men by having our fetters broken off, and we are not made wealthy men by having our debts paid. It is not what Christ delivers us from, but what He translates us into that makes us saved men in Christ. That

brings us on to the clear ground of the positive feature of Christian character ; and there is no more distinct or comprehensive way of stating that positive feature than to say that it involves being in our limited capacity exactly what He was in His infinite capacity. Christ as we know Him in history is nothing more or less than the ideal man actualized. The essential features of Christ we are therefore to look upon as prescriptive. Christ's being, His experience, His relations to men, the attitude in which He stood toward what concerned His contemporaries, the feelings which their concerns excited in Him—all of that becomes practically just so much direct ordinance binding itself upon us closely and authoritatively. What He was in His Divine way we are bound to become in our human way.

With this presentation of the case, what then are we to do with a feature of Christ like that brought to our attention in the text : " He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief " ? If His sorrow had been an accident of His life, we should not then be in a situation to lay upon it any great amount of emphasis, at any rate so far as any prescriptive references are concerned. But clearly we have to do here with something that is at the farthest possible remove from the accidental. You have but to read His life as either of the four evangelists has recorded it, to appreciate the fact that heavy-heartedness constituted a permanent ingredient of His experience. It was a part, and no inconsiderable part of His life, to be troubled, concerned, and sorrowful. This being so, unless we are in error in thinking that Christ's life in its fibre and complexion is to be accepted as a model for all earthly life that is distinctively Christian, then we have a matter in hand just now that is worth looking at and worth looking into with a good deal of seriousness and painstaking.

In approaching the question, let it be said that no fair reading of the nar-

rative of Christ's life will leave the impression that sorrow of heart was a grace that Christ cultivated. The pathetic was not a temper of spirit which He encouraged in Himself or in others. Heaviness of mind was not a thing to be sought in and for itself. There is no gainsaying the fact that one great object of His mission was to make the world glad. Still for all that He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. It needs also to be said that for us to be heavy-hearted merely because Christ was, to be sorrowful by a sheer act of imitation, is distinctly repugnant to everything like Christian sense, and at the farthest possible remove from all that deserves to be called Christian sincerity. Pure simulation is coarse affectation, and the finer the original that is simulated the more despicable the counterfeit. These disclaimers are thrown in to secure against misapprehension. The tone of our text is of a kind to excite prejudice, not to say antagonism, and it is the part of prudence to relieve the case of all unnecessary embarrassment. Neither can we leave out of the account all those passages, especially in the New Testament, where particular praise is accorded to gladness of heart. You will remember that the second of the recognized fruits of the Spirit is joy. We must be careful always in our attempts to arrive at the intention of Scripture, to attain a position which shall secure the consent of all the parts. So that while we are concerning ourselves just at present with the matter of Christian heavy-heartedness, we must do it in the light of all that Scripture has to say about sentiments of a warmer and cheerier complexion. Nevertheless, when all these caveats have been entered and gladness of heart eulogized to the fullest extent, authorized by multitudinous expressions occurring throughout the entire Scriptures, it still remains beyond dispute that our Lord's life was lived in shadow, and that He died at last less because of the nails and the spear-wounds, than He did of a broken heart.

If, then, as said before, it is true that to be Christ and to be a Christian are so related to each other that what was essential in the experience of the one will be reproduced in the experience of the other, we have matter on hand that it behooves those of us especially who bear the name of Christ to bend our minds to in searching and devout inquiry. Our Lord's sorrow, as becomes easily apparent from the perusal of this entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, as well as from the study of the Gospels—our Lord's sorrow was due to the load which He undertook to carry; to the purpose that was upon Him, and to the strain He suffered in trying to accomplish that purpose. It can be expressed in one way by saying that He came to interfere with the natural current of event. And it made Him tired. And a man, even a Divine man, is less apt to laugh when He is tired. A good deal of what we call our gladness of heart, if we will care to scrutinize it, is simply the congenial luxury of drifting down the current of event. If you are pulling your boat up-stream you will be sober while you are about it. *Strained* powers are serious. It is the farthest from our thought to disparage exuberance or even hilarity; nevertheless, it remains a fact that hilarity is feeling out at pasture and not feeling under the yoke. It is steam escaping at the throttle because it is not pushing at the piston. Let no one go away from here and say that we have been discouraging merriment. There is nothing that some of us need much more than we do merriment; but at the same time you cannot be merry when your muscles are stiffened to a purpose. It is physiologically, ethically, and psychologically impossible. That is the point; and it may not be quite possible when once a purpose has fastened itself upon you to shake that purpose off. I venture to say that Christ could not shake His purpose off. He was here to stay the downward drift of event; the purpose was too vast to be easily flung aside, and His muscles

were too solidly knotted to it to be easily unknotted and relaxed. And we shall have to go on and say that it was an inherent part of Christ to have a purpose and to be mightily bent to its achievement; and not only that, it was an inherent part of Christ as the Saviour of this world to seize upon the current of event and of history and to undertake to reverse it. Exactly that was the genius of the Christ-mission. He couldn't have been Christ and not have done it.

Now that brings us to a point made a moment ago. If it is a part of the very essence of the Christ-life to do that, it is just as much a part of the very essence of the Christian life to do that. We may struggle against the pulling of that truth, but we cannot burst its bonds nor break its imperialism. You cannot drift down the tide of event and be a Christ man or a Christ woman. The world is to be saved; the tide is to be reversed. Man inspired of God is to do it; and you cannot buckle yourself down to that problem in Christian whole-heartedness and not grow sober under it. A thousand torchlights and ten thousand brass bands will not convert the world-tragedy into a world-comedy, nor crinkle the fixed lines of your seriousness into merriment. Now you see the philosophy of the sober Christ. He flung Himself against forty centuries of bad event, and the Divine Man got bruised by the impact. He stood up and let forty centuries jump on Him; He held His own, but blood broke through His pores in perspiration, and about that there is nothing humorous.

The edge of this truth is not broken by the fact that Christ took hold of the work of the world's saving in a larger way than it is possible for us to do, and that therefore the burden of His undertaking came upon Him in a heavier, wider, and more crushing way than it can come upon us; and that therefore while it overwhelmed Him in sorrow, our smaller mission and lighter task can with entire propriety leave us buoy-

ant and gladsome. All of that conception of the case lacks dignity and reach. You can't take hold of a great matter in a small way. It is true we cannot reach round the world and carry it. Neither did Christ. He took hold of the world at a point; He took hold primarily of a dozen men, but in grasping them He felt His hold upon the entire world back of them, all the nations about them, and all the centuries forward of them. He felt the universality of His specific endeavor. Your foot covers but a few inches of space, and yet the entire globe responds to your foot-fall. You undertake to pull up from the ground a rooted tree; perhaps you do not seize it by the trunk, but though grasped by the smallest branch, as soon as you begin to pull, the entire tree down to the last fibre of its deepest root resists your traction, and the instant you commence to solidify yourself to the wrench, you begin to feel to the last thread of your muscle that it is nothing less than the whole tree that you are pulling at, and as the branch begins to straighten out you settle yourself together, and if you laugh it is when the last root lies out in the clear. To be sure, it is but a speck of the great world that we can take hold of, but if our work is done with the animus with which Christ did His, we shall feel the entirety of the great world that that speck groins into, and the superb reach of our intention will make our work as sobering and solemnizing as ever Christ's great work made Him. To a Christian, appreciating the intimate connections and the wide relations of His service, seriousness is inevitable. There will be no affectation in it and no assumption about it. The contribution which our service renders may be a small one—that has nothing to do with it; but if we feel the vastness and the universality of the purpose toward which our little contribution is paid, that feeling will put tension into the muscles of the face and iron out most of the smiles.

We have spoken of the sobering effect

of work done with a Christian appreciation of the momentous purposes which such work is fitted to subserve. It is but a step now to go on from that and speak of the saddening effect necessarily flowing from the circumstances under which in this world Christian work has to be done. It was the love which Christ had for the world that made Him sad while doing His work in the world; and the infinitude of His love is what explains the unutterableness of His pain; for the world in which Christ fulfilled His mission was a suffering world. Now a man who is without love can be in the midst of suffering and not suffer. A loveless spirit grieves over its own pain, but has no sense of another's pain, and no feeling of being burdened by another's pain. Love has this peculiar property, that it makes the person whom we love one with us, so that his experience becomes a part of our own life, his pain becomes painful to us, his burdens make us tired. The mother feels her child's pain as keenly as though it were her own pain, perhaps more so. In its Divine relations this is all expressed in those familiar words of Scripture, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." He was not simply sorry for their suffering, He felt their suffering as His suffering, which is what we mean by sympathy. Sympathy is the form which love takes in a suffering world. Love is the finest type of communism, and as such obliterates the distinction between what is mine and what is yours, so that between two who love whatever either suffers the other suffers. So that living as you do in the midst of a world of suffering people, the depth of your love will be measured by the intensity of your suffering. It is serious matter that we are upon, and I am anxious that it should be made perfectly clear. Take, if you please, the case of two mothers, each with a suffering child, and let us suppose the suffering of the two children to be identical in intensity. Now of the two mothers, the one who suffers most when her

child is in distress will be the one of the two who loves her child the most ; or, as just said, the intensity of her suffering can be taken as the measure of her love. If, therefore, a person living in this world, which is still very much the same world in point of needs and distresses that it was when Christ came into it, is nevertheless able to get along without any particular sense of burden—others' burdens, I mean—succeeds in being buoyant and happy, except when he has some discomfort or grief of his own, all that can be said is that the one thing which primarily makes a man to be a follower of Christ—viz., love—he is without. We cannot have the heart that Christ had, and not in the same degree have His suffering. We may be sound in our doctrinal position, fight doctrinal heresy as though it were an exhalation from the under world, be instant in our attendance upon the means of grace, steadily participate in the service memorial of our Lord's dying love, but a loving heart is what makes out the major part of the whole Christian matter, a heart, therefore, that feels others' burdens and griefs as though they were its own ; and one cannot have such a heart in the midst of this world and not have an aching heart. It is aside from the mark to say that that makes of the Christian religion a gloomy religion. The gloom is not in the religion, the gloom is in the world, and sorrow of spirit like that of our Lord is simply the way tender-heartedness like that of our Lord is certain to be affected when the shadow of the world's suffering falls upon it.

Now these things cannot be gotten away from. This is not heaven. Christ found no heaven here, and if we have His spirit it will be just as difficult for us to find a heaven here as it was for Him. No loving mother can be happy while her child is suffering, and Christian tenderness of heart stands related to any known suffering in quite the same way that a mother's tenderness of heart stands affected toward the pains of her own child. Here, then, is a cri-

terion, by means of which we can tell something as to how far we have gotten along in our approaches to the likeness of Christ. Christ's love for man was so tender and passionate, that man's sufferings and sins wearied and agonized Him. This I had rather not push any farther. You see the point. I have no anxiety as to the correctness with which the case has been presented. The principles are clear and their application entirely simple. If we nest ourselves in our comfortable homes, and are satisfied to remain there ; if we merge ourselves in our favorite pursuits, and find in them a welcome retreat from the vexations and discomforts that prevail outside ; if what we know about the wickedness of the world, its pains and privations, still permits us to move along our own way in quiet and contentedness, with an occasional prayer of thanksgiving, perhaps, that God has been more considerate of us than He has of others, we may be very excellent members of the community and valued members of society, the pets, indeed, of the polite social circle in which we move, an ornament to the fraternity of science or letters or art with which we may be affiliated, but we would do better not to call ourselves by the name of Christ, unless we think it is consistent to bear His name at the same time that we are destitute of His Spirit.

It would be matter of regret to me if anything that has been said this morning should be interpreted as though insufficient value were accorded to the amenities of life, or any slur put upon life's refinements and every-day interests. That has not been intended ; but there has been a point made, and I am sure we see it—that is, if we are sufficiently sincere to face it. You can throw the matter off by saying that you do not want to trouble yourself with those things. Very true ; but is it not a fact that if you were right you *would* want to trouble yourself with those things ? Is it not clear that it is love's very nature to do that ? When one who loves you does you a service

and you say to him, "Do not trouble yourself," the answer he is sure to make to you is, "Why, it isn't any trouble, it is a pleasure." So Christ in coming into the world didn't "trouble" Himself. He did not mix Himself in the distresses and needs of men because He felt obliged to; He loved men so much that He wanted to. A man says, "I don't think I am fitted to minister to the needs of troubled and ignorant and sinful people." Very likely not; but you know, sir, that there is only one supreme qualification for ministering to them, and that is to love them; there is no genius so productive or so skilful as affection; and if you love them enough so that their need is felt as your own need, and you are personally saddened by their distress, you will not only know how to minister to them, but the only way by which you can relieve your own sympathy will be by ministering to them. There are a good many heresies that are bad enough to exclude a man from the Church, but I question if there is more than one heresy that is bad enough to keep a man out of the kingdom of heaven—that is, the heresy of trying to be in heaven to-day, at the same time that the world is full of men who by their sins and burdens and distresses are already in hell to-day. When we come to the Lord's table and celebrate His death, let us remember Him as the Man with the burdened heart, and that the one best title to a place at His table is fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

#### THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL EVILS.

BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D.  
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*It came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.—Neh. i. 4.*

NINETY years had passed since the returning exiles had arrived at Jerusalem. They had encountered many

difficulties which had marred their progress and cooled their enthusiasm. The Temple, indeed, was rebuilt, but Jerusalem lay in ruins, and its walls remained as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar's siege, some century and a half before. A little party of pious pilgrims had gone from Persia to the city, and had come back to Shushan with a sad story of weakness and dependency, affliction and hostility. One of the travellers had a brother, a youth named Nehemiah, who was a cupbearer in the court of the Persian king. Living in a palace, and surrounded with luxury, his heart was with his brethren; and the ruins of Jerusalem were dearer to him than the pomp of Shushan.

My text tells how the young cupbearer was affected by the tidings, and how he wept and prayed before God. The accurate dates given in this book show that this period of brooding contemplation of the miseries of his brethren lasted for four months. Then he took a great resolution, flung up brilliant prospects, identified himself with the afflicted colony, and asked for leave to go and share, and, if it might be, to redress, the sorrows which had made so deep a dint upon his heart.

Now, I think that this vivid description, drawn by himself, of the emotions excited in Nehemiah by his countrymen's sorrows, which influenced his whole future, contains some very plain lessons for Christian people, the observance of which is every day becoming more imperative by reason of the drift of public opinion, and the new prominence which is being given to so-called "social questions." I want to gather up one or two of these lessons for you this morning.

I. First, then, note the plain Christian duty of sympathetic contemplation of surrounding sorrows.

Nehemiah might have made a great many very good excuses for treating lightly the tidings that his brother had brought him. He might have said: "Jerusalem is a long way off. I have