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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—HOW CAN THE PULPIT BEST COUNTERACT THE INFLUENCE OF MODERN SKEPTICISM?

NO. VI.

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THE subject of this symposium has already been so ably and exhaustively treated that but little remains to be said. At the same time, the idea of a symposium is that a single theme should be discussed by a variety of minds, each one occupying a different standpoint and looking upon it at a different angle of vision; thus making the total result equivalent to the effect of a manifold stereopticon which exhibits all sides and views of the object before it.

The answer to the question which embodies the theme will depend, first of all, upon our conception of what the specific function of the Christian pulpit is. Undoubtedly there is a great variety of sentiment in the Christian world to-day upon this point. The theories range from the level of the lyceum platform, with its discussion of the current topics of the day, finding its themes in telegraphic items and police reports, up to the highest sacerdotal conception of the ministry, in which the duty of the pulpit becomes the simplest homily of ethical or evangelical truth, as a merely incidental—possibly an integral—part of the highest sacramental function known to the Christian church.

At whatever point in this ascending or descending scale we choose to take our stand, it will be generally conceded to-day that the business of the pulpit is not to be a teacher of philosophy, and in the impatience of the average congregation with what is known as doctrinal teaching, that it is scarcely to be a teacher even of theology.

There was a conception of the function of the pulpit prevalent a hundred years ago in New England, in which every man who undertook to be thoroughly furnished for its work, deemed it necessary first to master and assimilate some existing philosophic system as the foundation upon which to build in safety the superstructure of his theological system. If that necessity be a real one and the details of metaphysi-

cuse. Encourage all to speak, if they have a thought which they would utter, or offer a few words of prayer, if the Spirit prompts, rising or remaining seated, as they choose. Sometimes ask questions; *always encourage questions*. Look for a large meeting. Let the church and world see you prizing these social religious gatherings. Soon others will begin to prize what you hold in high regard. Men and women will be attracted, the unchristian will be as Christian. Inquirers will come. Souls will be saved, and God glorified.

Brethren, gather up the forces. There is a vast amount of undeveloped talent in each of our churches. Call it forth; *bring it forth*. There is growth in action, not in idleness. Many a man waits for encouragement and guidance.

DR. JOSEPH PARKER'S THURSDAY NOON SERMON.

BY REV. CHARLES PARKHURST.

THIS is a historic event in London. On the 14th day of July last this week-day service reached its eighteenth anniversary. Such a method of religious work called for great faith and courage in its inception, for London is painfully conservative. "We have always done so," is the stereotyped explanation for all English customs and practises. It was my privilege to hear him on this occasion. Though it was exceedingly heated for London, and vacation season, yet a large congregation was present to hear him, including many clergymen, several from America, a large element of business men and a generous proportion of women.

Dr. Parker is in the prime of a most vigorous manhood. He has the look of perfect health. This fact will be of interest to the large number of American friends who ask anxiously "if he will probably live to complete his great work, 'The People's Bible?'" Voluminous as this work is to be, he seemed to me, as I listened to him, to have many such great liter-

ary enterprises in him. He is so wonderfully fertile. Great thoughts flash out to surprise and charm you, and yet you feel there is an immense reserve power. Having once seen him you will never forget him. It is a most striking face and head, Roman, shall I call it? I have likened him to Wendell Phillips, but it is a more expressive face. It is the typical face of a judge on a bench. In Dr. Parker a most able lawyer was spoiled in making a most remarkable clergyman. With face closely shaven, with hair brushed back, just thinning a little on the top of the head, clothed in surplice, he stood in his own pulpit on that day to speak to a most expectant congregation. God gave him all the native qualities of an orator. He has but to use them well, and he knows how to do it. He is a genius. I have heard many clergymen on both sides of the Atlantic, but there is none with whom I can compare him. He reminds me, in his methods and manners, of Mr. Beecher, and, as you listen to him, you are impressed with the fact that Mr. Beecher was his ideal and model. Genius, however, cannot imitate. He must be himself, unique, individual.

He is an actor, and might have been the rival of Irving, and yet, best of all, his acting is all unconscious. I never saw in the pulpit, except in Mr. Beecher, such power of facial expression, and such sweep of intonation. In gesture he is a master, and yet never artificial or overwrought. His sweep of scornful utterance and explosive climax, is terrible. If he should give free rein to this, it would be repulsive in the pulpit. He impresses you most by his suggestiveness. While you wait for him to develop one line of thought, there flash out a volume more. In rhetoric he is classic, never lacking the fit and best word. He collocates sentences with absolutely perfect English, and it seems to you as if they must have been specially chosen and finished in

the study. There is nothing, however, to indicate this as the fact. He has neither manuscript nor notes before him, and there is never any mental struggle, as if memory was treacherous. I do not think that he could memorize any more than Beecher. He is too great for that small art. There is never any change of word after it has left the lips. I repeat that Dr. Parker is an orator, and this is a rare gift in a London pulpit. The American preacher is decidedly superior to the English in oratorical expression. The clergy of the Established Church seem entirely to ignore the art of expression. The reading of the liturgy in "St. Paul's," last Sabbath, was decidedly the worst I ever heard. It was a medley between a whine and a sing-song, and it lacked the appearance of devoutness. For an hour and ten minutes I listened to a preliminary service in that grand cathedral that was most tedious, a weariness to the flesh and a paralysis to sincere worship. In striking contrast, Dr. Parker hastened the preliminary. Two verses of a hymn sung, then a most fitting prayer, and then the sermon. This noon service lasts just the hour between 12 M. and 1 P. M. In prayer he reminds you much in manner and expression of supplication to Joseph Cook.

His text was the simple word. "If;" not chosen fantastically but as an expositor, the "If's" of the 11th chapter of John. The sermon was so characteristic of him that I am confident his many admirers in America will be gratified with a very brief abstract, showing mainly the divisions. The greatness of Dr. Parker is shown, in that everything he says seems so natural, grows out of the theme, and yet you never get just what he is saying out of the word.

1. If, is that of *wisdom*. "If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not."

2. If, that of *imaginable folly*. "But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." How, in a most eloquent

passage, Dr. Parker characterized the evil doer as seeking the darkness and not the light. You could see the villain in his reprehensible work of rapine, treachery, debauch in the dark. Edwin Booth could not have been more impressive, and yet with Dr. Parker it was artless. He felt and said it, and hence he made you to feel and see it.

3. If, that of *human hope*. "Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep he shall do well." The disciples felt that Lazarus was dead. They wanted heaven to speak the language of hope, though their own hearts doubted it. It is noticeable in the preaching of Dr. Parker that he recognizes sympathetically that with many conscientious people there is a trial of faith, a difficulty in believing, a large element of men and women who, like Thomas, would believe, but are mentally holden. He utters no severe denunciation against these sincere souls, but speaks out their doubts frankly and tries to help them to believe.

We caught these sentences under this head as an illustration of his frankness with his hearers: "Who does not know what it is to have a doubter in the heart while the tongue is uttering theology and orthodoxies? Who has not lifted the soul in sincere prayer and have some demon voice echo through it 'Thou liar?' Who would have himself tried then by arithmetic lines and geometrical measures? The disciples were not insincere, though they tried to utter the language of hope when they did not feel it." Under this head, too, we caught this epigrammatic sentence: "Only in heaven can any creed be understood."

4. If, that of *ignorance*. "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." There is the tone of reproach in that statement. You are greatly interested while Dr. Parker is preaching on the Scriptures which he will occasionally read. The intonation of the passage is so expres-

sively done and yet so natural that you have with the reading an exegesis of the passage. You can anticipate what he is to say of the Scripture by the manner in which he reads it. Under this head was an apostrophe to death, such only as this master of thought and language could utter: "Death, the black, weird spectre, even it is the servant of God. What could the Lord do without death when he has so little earth to work upon? Let pagans die; Christians must languish into life. Beasts die, but man must be liberated. The child must be taken up like the dewdrop."

5. If, that of *faith*. "If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God." Here is the lens; it is faith. Can you see the stars without the telescope? If men will not use the lens shall they say that the lens has no power? When we read that a man has discovered a star we do not read that he discovered it with the naked eye.

6. If, that of *human despair*. "If we let him thus alone all men will believe on him." Here the Pharisee is holding a council. They are always holding councils or com-

mittee meetings. Many a good man has been killed because of it. "There are people who say that there are spots on the sun. There will be spots on the earth as long as they live." This last sentence drew from the congregation a responsive expression of merriment. Dr. Parker is a most keen wit, and does not hesitate, like Beecher, to use it often in the pulpit.

He closed his sermon by quoting two more ifs.

"If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The first verse was especially dwelt upon, and the assumption of sinlessness by those holding the tenets of sanctification or perfection was characterized as the incarnation of so much pride and conceit that there was no spot on this sinful earth good enough for such people to stand upon.

It was a suggestive and brilliant sermon, adapted to practical life, helping men and women amid intellectual conflict and the fierce battle of life to inspiration and light.

PREACHERS EXCHANGING VIEWS.

Service for Invalids.

In a little village in the State of New York there resides a Christian woman who has been blind and absolutely helpless for seven years. She was once an active member of the church, and now she greatly misses the church privileges which she formerly enjoyed. Her present pastor has made a practice of holding prayer-meetings at her residence once a month for quite a while. They have been union prayer-meetings, and sometimes more than twenty persons have been present, the most of whom have taken some part, the sister herself also participating. She greatly appreciates such services, and invariably thanks the attendants for their presence and sympathetic min-

istry. And they, too, are abundantly blessed in trying to cheer and strengthen their sadly afflicted sister. All are led to value, more than ever, their preserved eye sight and healthful use of their physical powers. It is an object lesson which the pastor can use well to remind his people of their privileges, and of the importance of constantly employing them to good advantage while they are so graciously favored.

Such meetings render a broad service. They help not only the helpless invalid and those persons who attend, but the pastor also. But the pastor who immediately preceded the present one did not attempt to render such a service to this sister; and whenever he called upon her, it was