

O. B. Frothingham

*Library of the Theological Seminary,*

PRINCETON, N. J.

BX 9869 .P4 F74 1880  
Frothingham, Octavius  
Brooks, 1822-1895.  
Theodore Parker

*Shelf..*



M 44





# THEODORE PARKER:

*A BIOGRAPHY.*

BY

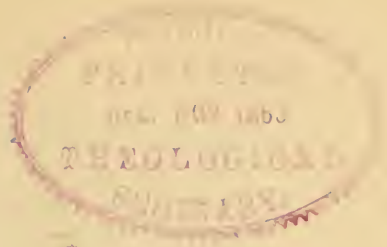
OCTAVIUS BROOKS FROTHINGHAM.

---

NEW YORK  
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
182 FIFTH AVENUE  
1880







## P R E F A C E.

---

THE friends of Theodore Parker's ideas, as well as the lovers of his person, thinking that his day was not done, but was rather about to break, have long wished that he might be introduced to a new public by a new biography. The "Life" by John Weiss, written as soon as possible after Mr. Parker's decease, and published in 1863, for obvious reasons failed to command the attention it deserved. Being issued in two large volumes, it proved to be too heavy for general circulation, besides being too costly for general purchase. Another drawback to popular favor was found in the space given to letters and discussions, which, however interesting in themselves, and however important as contributions to thought, had the effect of blurring the outline of his individuality. But a disadvantage more serious, perhaps, than either of these, was the publication of the work at a time when the destinies of the nation hung on a thread, and the crowding events of the war pushed into obscurity nearly all memories, and allowed the public eye to rest only on such men as the combat made famous.

The clearing-away of the war-cloud displays once more the figure of Theodore Parker as one of the

nation's true prophets, and at the same time reveals a country prepared in some degree to receive the best results of his thought and experience. In the hope that these results may be appreciated better than hitherto, this memoir is written. The author's aim has been simply to recover and present the person of Mr. Parker with all simplicity, omitting some details which Mr. Weiss's valuable biography will supply to the more searching student, and making prominent the mental and moral traits which concern the miscellaneous public.

The present biographer, in addition to the materials that were placed in the hands of Mr. Weiss, has been intrusted with many private letters and personal reminiscences, which enable him to fill out his picture with more delicate touches. From old sources and new it has been his delightful task to extract the qualities of the man in such a way, that the records, literary and historical, may reveal, and not cumber or cloak, his form. Should the portrait be unfaithful or inadequate, the artist alone will be at fault.

Or rather let me say, should it be unfaithful; for inadequate it must be in the judgment of many, and chiefly of those who knew Mr. Parker most intimately. There was more in him than any one mind, even the most candid and sympathetic, could see; and there was much in him that few, if any, were ever permitted to see; the private journal, to which he committed his most secret thoughts, containing many things of deep significance as illustrations of his interior life, which could not with the least propriety be published, even when their meaning is clear, and which often need interpretation. None of them exhibit qualities inconsistent

with a very noble character ; but some of them point to secret recesses of feeling which cannot be uncovered.

A few months before his death, to an intimate friend who put a question in regard to his literary executor he said, "If any one writes my life, I think it will be George Ripley : he, better than any one, understands my philosophy, and what I meant to do."—"But the *personal* life," said the friend : "who will write that ? When one has achieved such a character as yours, we long to know what elements have been wrought into it."—"That life," he answered with deep emotion, "cannot be written. I have been asked to employ these few remaining months in preparing an autobiography. But it must be written in tears of blood, if at all." It never was written ; and only so much of the interior life as a plain record of thoughts and actions exhibits can be disclosed. That will be quite enough for those who did not know him well : it will be all that is desired by those who did.

O. B. F.

NEW YORK, October, 1873.



# CONTENTS.

---

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER I.  |      |
| BIRTHPLACE AND PARENTAGE . . . . .                | 1    |
| CHAPTER II.                                       |      |
| HOME AND BOYHOOD . . . . .                        | 10   |
| CHAPTER III.                                      |      |
| TEACHING AND STUDY . . . . .                      | 28   |
| CHAPTER IV.                                       |      |
| DIVINITY HALL . . . . .                           | 41   |
| CHAPTER V.  |      |
| THE CANDIDATE . . . . .                           | 57   |
| CHAPTER VI.                                       |      |
| WEST ROXBURY . . . . .                            | 88   |
| CHAPTER VII.                                      |      |
| THE FERMENT OF THOUGHT . . . . .                  | 125  |
| CHAPTER VIII.                                     |      |
| THE UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY . . . . .               | 147  |
| CHAPTER IX.                                       |      |
| EUROPE . . . . .                                  | 183  |
| CHAPTER X.  |      |
| THE CONFLICT RENEWED . . . . .                    | 210  |
| CHAPTER XI.                                       |      |
| THE PASTOR . . . . .                              | 241  |
| CHAPTER XII.                                      |      |
| THE PASTOR.—SPECIMENS OF CORRESPONDENCE . . . . . | 252  |

|                                     | PAGE. |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| CHAPTER XIII.                       |       |
| THE PREACHER . . . . .              | 332   |
| CHAPTER XIV.                        |       |
| THE REFORMER . . . . .              | 352   |
| CHAPTER XV.                         |       |
| THE FIGHT WITH SLAVERY . . . . .    | 376   |
| CHAPTER XVI.                        |       |
| THE KANSAS WAR . . . . .            | 435   |
| CHAPTER XVII.                       |       |
| FAILING HEALTH . . . . .            | 477   |
| CHAPTER XVIII.                      |       |
| THE DEPARTURE.—THE SEARCH . . . . . | 508   |
| CHAPTER XIX.                        |       |
| THE ETERNAL CITY . . . . .          | 521   |
| CHAPTER XX.                         |       |
| TRIBUTES . . . . .                  | 537   |



# THEODORE PARKER.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTHPLACE AND PARENTAGE.

A STRANGER, visiting the place where Theodore Parker passed his early years, did not find it attractive. Exploring the neighborhood on a fair spring-day, he asked a man who was mending the road where Theodore Parker was born. The man leaned on his spade, stared at the traveller, looked puzzled, and replied, "Dunno."—"Are you a new-comer here?"—"No, sir: lived here, man and boy, nigh on to forty year."—"Are there no Parkers about here?"—"Yes: there's tew lots on 'em."—"I wish to find the *old* Parker place," said the stranger. "Older'n creation, both on 'em," was the reply. "The *Captain* Parker place is the one I want."—"They run to cappens," was the exasperating rejoinder: "but I guess you had better take that 'ar road to the left, and go about a mile; then turn down a lane, and at the end there's a monnerment that must be set up for Cappen Parker." The traveller, obeying the direction, found the monument that preserves the great preacher's memory.

This incident tells many things: the limited influence of a great man's name; the power of association to glorify

I I

ordinary spots ; the absence of neighborly feeling in rural populations ; and the crudeness of society within ten miles of the great city. What the tourist found on arriving at the place of his quest was much the same as what the boy whose name led him thither used to see. There was the old bell-tower, which had rung out the alarm on the eve of the battle of Lexington, and had done humbler service since as a workshop ; the broad stone ledge behind the house remained ; meadow, orchard, wood, were unchanged ; the ash-tree planted by Theodore — which showed its grief at his death by bearing but one crop of leaves instead of the two it displayed during his life — still held its place ; the double-headed pine, that seemed a wonder, was as much as ever a feature in the landscape : but the old house was gone.

That was a hundred years old when Theodore saw the light ; having been built in 1710 by his great-grandfather, John Parker, who, with children and grandchildren, came to Lexington (then called Cambridge Farms) from Reading. John Parker was a grandson of Thomas, who came to America in 1635 in a vessel fitted out by Sir Richard Saltonstall, with whose family he was connected by marriage. He settled in Lynn ; received, as one of the earliest settlers of the town, forty acres of land ; and was made a freeman the year after landing. In 1640 he removed to Reading, was one of seven who founded the first church there, and there died in 1683. He was a man of character. His descendants were also serviceable in their places ; doing their part as land-surveyors, councilmen, adjudicators of claims, teachers, militiamen, drill-masters, lieutenants, and captains. They had the fighting-temper in them, and made themselves felt in hard battle. Hananiah, the only grandson who did not come with John to Lexington, — a lad of eighteen, — was serving in a Massachusetts regiment engaged in Virginia.

If we trace the family across the water to England, we



find its roots deep down in the soil. Thomas came, perhaps, from a Lancashire stock, which was early transplanted to Yorkshire, where some of them still live in a stately mansion-house of the time of Queen Elizabeth. The first who bore the name in England was a Norman, Johannes Le Parkerre. He followed William the Conqueror, and was keeper of the royal parks; whence his name, variously spelled Parkerre, Parkre, Parchour, Parker. The name occurs frequently in history in different connections. Seldom good Churchmen, they were scattered much at the Reformation. Some were executed under Queen Mary; some were Puritans under Cromwell. But others were true to the royalist party; lost their lands in consequence, and regained them when the king "came to his own again." The Parkers in England now are commonly Churchmen and Tories. The religious and political traditions of the family are mixed. The non-conformist blood, Puritan and Quaker, found its way into the New World.

Theodore's grandfather, John Parker, born 1729, was a marked man. He was a sergeant in the French and Indian war, and present at the capture of Quebec. A parishioner of the Rev. Jonas Clark, who had done his share in rousing the people to indignation against the British claims, he was ready for war when the time came; answered at once the summons to resist the British at Lexington; was present himself, though suffering from illness, which exposure developed into a fatal disease; drew up his troop of seventy men; bade every man load his piece with powder and ball; ordered them not to fire unless fired upon; but added, "If they mean to have a war, let it begin here." At the battle of Lexington, Captain Parker took from a grenadier the weapon which, along with his own light fowling-piece, guarded the door of Theodore's study while he lived, and now hangs in the Massachusetts Senate Chamber.

The people of Lexington were, like the country people

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

